

Invitation into Servant Leadership

Jesus washes the disciple's feet

Greatest Hits Series – Part 10

John 13:1-20

March 15-16, 2025

Introduction

- Inward Perspective Trap - **The more our eyes remain on ourselves the more disappointing this life will seem. Why? Because we are so close to what's being analyzed that we will find fault and problems continually.** We will find so many problems that we could spend our entire human experience overwhelmed to the point that we can't help anyone else with anything.
- Limited Tools – Although Scripture doesn't say this explicitly, my educated guess is that **God chose not to build humans with all the tools to fix themselves so that interdependence would be required.** In other words, if we spent all of our time isolated trying to fix our lives, we actually lack the ability to solve it independently. God gave the people around us some gifts, talents, and abilities to restore and mature us.
- The Beauty of Others-Centeredness – Sometimes the healthiest things for us need to be forced because we may or may not do it. I believe that's the reason why the **Bible commands so many principles.** One such principle is **others-centeredness.** It means that **our primary view is not on ourselves but on others and while we serve them, and they serve us, and God oversees the operation, we are all healed and blessed.**
- Paul's commands – Paul the Apostle says, in Php 2:3–4, - *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* He goes on to explain his foundational premise: **Because Jesus** came here, let go of all His glory, emptied Himself, and came here to love us and serve us to the point of death. If our King had this perspective and focus, then we ought to follow suit.

The Highest Calling of a Believer is to SERVE

- Why servanthood is so important – it's more than practical, it's transformational. From our understanding the greatest and most common sin of mankind is pride. It's what separated Lucifer from God and separated us as well. Therefore to combat the Achille's heel of created things, God institutes a discipline, an exercise, a practice, called serving.
 - Healthy vs. unhealthy serving – have you ever burned out on serving and felt taken advantage of? Is that because of your expectation or because of a highly toxic environment? **Healthy serving is serving with the right heart and the right mindset in the right way.** Unhealthy serving is where any of those breakdown.

- Last Week Recap – **Lazarus was raised from the dead** and we learned that Jesus is the commander of all life and death. This means (at least) that we are safe and confident that He will protect us through our death and get us to heaven one day.
- This Week – according to the Gospel of John, we enter into the last night of Jesus' freedom. It's the **Last Supper**. For the rest of John's gospel we listen to Jesus' long and final teaching to His team and then we see Him betrayed, arrested, and murdered on a cross, only to rise again victoriously. **Today/tonight we read how Jesus kicked off that final evening.**

Lesson

- The Last Supper
 - Jesus and his disciples have a final meal
 - *John 13:1-4a – “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴ rose from supper.”*
 - Now before the Feast of the Passover, - One of the great festivals of the Jewish people where males above a certain age were required to make a visit to Jerusalem. Passover celebrates the last great judgment on the Egyptian empire that was holding the Hebrews/Jews in slavery. After that the Jews were released into Moses hands and emerged a nation into the desert. But in order to make sure there was a separation between those who died from the angel of death and those who lived in mercy, the blood of a lamb was painted on the doorframe of the house and the Angel of Death would PASS OVER that home and go to the next. This was a **foreshadowing of how Jesus, our pure, sinless, sacrificial lamb, would die on the cross, shed His blood so that it would be applied to the lives of all who would believe in Him as Savior and Lord, and in time (eternal) death would pass over them and they would have eternal life.**
 - when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, - **It is not clear WHEN Jesus knew all of who He was, nor to what degree along the way** (e.g. did a 3 year old grasp that they would die on the cross for the sins of the world? No.). Part of the package of entering humanity was limitation. Jesus relied fully on the Father and Holy Spirit to reveal what He needed to know when He needed to know it. Which is why John highlighted that by this time in Jesus' earthly experience, **it was made clear to Him that His time to die was near.** Jesus knew that He was going to the cross soon and that made it crunch time to get all the final teachings out to His team before He departed.
 - having loved his own who were in the world, - I think there is something deeper here in this line than I can grasp at this moment, but the simple

view is that it is here that clearly explains how Jesus interacted with His team. **It was not simply practical; it was deep love and care. Jesus was not just on mission and keeping hardened in heart toward those He served. He was all-in.** Prophecy said that he wouldn't lose any that were His. In Jesus' Bread of Life sermonette He explained that anyone that comes to Him would be safe with Him and He wouldn't push them away, but would see to it that they were loved, cared for, and given eternal life.

- Jn 6:35–40 – “Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- he loved them to the end. – Jesus never gave up on any of His team. He loved them from the beginning, through good and bad times, and all the way to the end, dying for their protection. **The reason why this matters to us today is that whatever He did for them and to them, He would do for and to His followers today (us).**
- During supper, - This is the last supper. A significant amount of teaching, bonding, and impactful moments in the gospels occur around a meal table and this is the most significant. Jesus is having dinner with His guys on a holiday (Passover). They've done this at least twice before with Him and in between had a million meals. They do not know that this is going to be the last time they 'break bread' with Him.
- when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, - John is the narrator and telling us things that the current audience doesn't know. Only Jesus and Judas know what is happening. John says that the entire betrayal piece was orchestrated by Satan/the devil. He wanted to get to Jesus and found a weak link in the team to get there. He had stirred up the heart of Judas in some fashion (scholars debate on what Judas was thinking in the process, but no one knows) to turn against Jesus and make money in the process. We know from other gospels that **Judas had already made contact with the Jewish leaders and made a deal to hand Jesus over to them in a way that they could secretly arrest Him and not have a riot on their hands.** Yet, here they are at the last supper and Judas is among them, but no one knows.
- Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, - In addition to being told that it was His time to die, the Father and the Holy Spirit made it clear that **everything He needed was deposited into His spirit to do what He had to do** (“given all things into his hands”). I'm not sure what this entails to be honest. It seems like an equipping phrase, but equipped for what? Final ministry? The cross? Authority to accomplish His final acts? All of it?

- and that he had come from God – there was an assurance and confidence in Jesus’ spirit that He was the Son of God, had come from heaven, was connected to the Father in a unique way, was the Messiah. This assurance was going to be important in the days to come where all of it and His resolve would be tested through temptation, trial, torture, and torment (internal and external). **The Father made sure He had what He needed to get the job done.**
 - and was going back to God, - The destination after all the torment was critical. Jesus knew that torment wasn’t the end. **He was going to be walked THROUGH the valley of the shadow of death by the Father and Holy Spirit,** just as He had walked so many others through it in their lives. He knew that at the end of this difficult path was glory and safety. **This is why we (human beings) need to firmly know our eternal destination is secure in the hands of Jesus, so that we can live our lives with boldness and confidence to obey fully.**
 - Heb 12:1–2 – “*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*”
 - rose from supper¹ – Although we’ve probably read this story a million times and just blew past this, this is a key phrase to bring meaning into this passage that may have been lost. What part? The **odd timing** of Jesus doing the act of foot washing. This is a living parable and Jesus wanted it highlighted. Foot washing was common in that day and location but **it was usually done when guests arrived at the house, or BEFORE the meal. Jesus was doing this DURING the meal, which was highly unusual.** It meant that He was making it odd to highlight that point. It wasn’t a normal foot washing but a teaching moment.
- A Shocking Move
 - Jesus washes the disciples feet
 - John 13:4b-8a – “*He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” ⁷ Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” ⁸ Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.”*”

¹ “Thomas describes two occasions when footwashing commonly took place: either “as a sign of welcome,” or “where the washing precedes a meal or banquet” (*Footwashing*, 46–47). Here Thomas comments, “Clearly, the Evangelist is underscoring the importance of the footwashing by its unusual placement, with Jesus interrupting the meal to perform it” (83–84). So too B. J. Malina and R. L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary*, 223: “Since the foot washing in the scene depicted here is not upon arrival, something else is going on.” NICNT

- He laid aside his outer garments, - The outer garment would be the 2nd layer of clothing they typically wore. They would have an under, light, tunic, almost like a quasi-underwear garment, and then they would have a thicker outer garment, which is what everyone else would see. Usually the inner one would be closest to the skin and wore continually while those wealthier would change out their outer garments. Jesus is preparing to do some manual labor and get a bit dirty and wet (certainly His sleeves), so He practically removes the long sleeved outer garment.
- and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. – This too is a practical move because He’s about to work with water and so anyone who is going to do foot washing knows that they need a towel at the ready. Since you need both hands for the task, it’s best to tie it around your waist as you move about to do your job.
- Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him² – What washing feet was all about – It was a service act. The practicality was that walking in the ancient world was largely on dirt and in fancier homes it would bring that dirt in (whereas poorer people had dirt floors inside too). It was not only practical but a way of honoring someone by humbling yourself to care for them. This meant that the people who washed others’ feet were almost always considered in some regard in less status than those they washed. However, it was common for a poor host to wash the feet of those who came over for dinner. They didn’t have slaves and washing up upon entry to a nice meal was customary. But normally wives would wash their husbands feet. Slaves would wash their masters feet. But here we have a turn of events. Although Jesus could have been seen as the host of the meal and could wash the feet of the invitees, it was VERY clear that He was the boss of the group and if He was doing the normal washing it should have been when they walked in or right before dinner. The timing of this means that something else is happening (as mentioned above). Why would the big dog wash the rest of their feet? That’s not how it works.
- He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?”³ – Peter is freaking out. The way this is written in Greek is a staggering of words as if he can’t believe it and certainly doesn’t agree with it. Peter has a VERY high view of Jesus. Anything that would demean Him or dishonor

² “Footwashing by a host (if he was poor), or by the host’s slaves, was a gesture of hospitality. Slaves washed their masters’ feet after a journey, wives the feet of their husbands, disciples the feet of their teachers. If Jesus was in any sense the host of this “supper,” his action may not have been quite so extraordinary (despite Peter’s misgivings) as it is commonly represented. What was extraordinary, as we have seen, was the timing, and presumably the fact that Jesus had never done anything like this before.” NICNT

³ “‘You, Lord, are washing my feet?’ ” The placement of the personal pronouns accents each one, highlighting Peter’s incredulity; literally, “Lord, you? Of me? Washing the feet?”²⁷ Clearly, Peter is scandalized. To him it is inappropriate that “the Holy One of God” should lower himself to perform such menial service for one so unworthy.” NICNT

Him was considered the worst (which makes his betrayal that much more ironic).

- Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” – It’s not clear in the Grammar if Jesus is talking about Peter understanding the foot washing teaching or that Jesus is the Messiah and he’ll realize after the resurrection, but for now the point is the same: **you aren’t supposed to know everything in this moment, so I need you to trust me that I know what I’m doing. Hang in there kid.**
 - Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet⁴ - **Peter can’t be patient and feels compelled to interrupt what is happening to stop it. He can’t imagine a scenario where this is right.** He can’t imagine upsetting the whole authority structure and what the ramifications could be if Jesus keeps on this path. It all seems wrong and, oddly, to honor Jesus, he tries to stop the process demanding that Jesus not wash his feet now, nor ever! Peter probably made all teaching moments take longer.
- Super Bath
 - The theological implications of spiritual cleansing
 - *John 13:8b-11 – “Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”⁹ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.”¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”*
 - Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.”⁵ – Peter is talking about what he can see, but Jesus, as normal, takes it deeper. Jesus says, and they actually understand it this time! **If you don’t let Me cleanse you, you aren’t truly with Me and won’t have my blessings. Now, this is something that Peter understands.** He knows that Jesus is the holder of all good things. Peter knows that the whole reason he has been on the crazy suicide mission with Jesus is because Jesus is the Messiah, and all the difficulty will be worth it to take part in the glorious kingdom to come. Jesus is talking Peter’s language here. He is saying, if you truly want all that I have for you, you need to let me do this.
 - What Peter may not have understood – I have a hard time believing that Peter understood more than that (above). But what Jesus was truly saying to all those that would read this later in the Bible, is that **if Jesus isn’t the one to deal with your sin, there is no hope. If we do not**

⁴ “Peter insists, “You shall never ever wash my feet!” (v. 8a). As in several other places, the combination of an emphatic negative with an expression meaning “forever”³³ strengthens the assertion (in this case the denial) to the point of redundancy.” NICNT

⁵ “Quite simply, Jesus is telling Peter that refusing the love about to be displayed in the washing of his feet would simply prove that he was not one of Jesus’ “own who were in the world” (v. 1), but belonged instead to “the world” itself.” NICNT

surrender and put our faith and trust in Him, we have no cleansing of sins. It ONLY comes through Him. He is the ONLY way to heaven. I don't think the disciples could fathom that layer of depth in the moment (only on reflection).

- Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"⁶ – with new information Peter changes his story and of course he has to be extreme. He blurts out, 'well if that's the case then wash my whole body!' If he had time I would have assumed he would have started to undress. ☺ His explosive response was a demonstration showing how all-in Peter was and how much he relied on Christ for anything important. He wanted EVERYTHING Jesus had for him. It's a sweet heart posture for sure.
- Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. – Jesus, again, took the opportunity not just to teach in the moment but to lay down a teaching that would last for thousands of years. He said, 'if you have taken a bath and go out to dinner at a friends house, when you arrive you only need to wash your feet, which were in the dust, not take another bath.' This is a practical parable that they would all understand. But what did He mean by this spiritually? It's actually very, very important. It means that if Jesus cleanses you in conversion (you surrender to Him and put your faith and trust into Him as Messiah and Lord), in that moment you are clean in the deepest way. Your spirit is made pure. All sins are accounted for. Your eternal destiny is dealt with and secured. BUT, you and I are still in this world and sinning. What do we do with that yuck? Although it sticks to us it can't get into our spirit. But it needs to be cleansed for daily reasons (sin gets in the way of the flow of blessing from the Lord at times and it can disrupt connection with the Lord in some ways – e.g. guilt, shame, isolation, correction, discipline, etc.). So, daily sins are CONFESSED out and relationship is restored. It's not a full 'getting saved' again (bath), but a washing or spiritual cleansing relationally and spiritually.
- And you are clean, but not every one of you." – Jesus calls out that most of the team is 'clean' in the deepest way. Meaning, they are saved as they have accepted Him as Lord and Savior and are following Him. BUT, not all of them. This must have been daunting to hear. Remember, they don't have a clue about anything going on with Judas.

⁶ "On the face of it, it is difficult to tell whether Peter is being serious here, or ironic. Is he expressing his devotion to Jesus, or simply reducing the whole thing to an absurdity? We are reminded of Nicodemus, who replied to another of Jesus' "unless" pronouncements by asking, "How can a person be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?" (3:4). Or we might think of Peter himself in other Gospels who "did not know what he was saying" when at the transfiguration he proposed, "let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Mk 9:5//Mt 16:4//Lk 9:33). The second is the more likely parallel. Throughout the Gospel tradition, Peter is known more for his naiveté than for irony. Mindless as it may be, his comment is probably sincere, and, more important, it gives Jesus the opportunity to make a point to all the disciples, and to the reader." NICNT

- Truly, truly, I say to you,⁷ - This is an 'amen, amen' statement. It is a common way in that day to say, 'I need you to pay close attention to what I'm about to say because it's important and I'm serious about it.'
- a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.⁸ – Here's the principle team: No follower is greater than the one they follow. No slave is greater than their master. No messenger is more important than the one who sends them. In other words, **in human roles, we see power structures of authority**. It is the same in this team with Jesus and the guys. IF Jesus is the boss, and He is, then whatever He says and does, goes for all. They do not get to argue that it doesn't apply to them. They are not in charge. **They don't get to dictate terms of what they will and won't do**. They aren't the authority. And the same goes for all of Jesus' followers (us).
- If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them – Jesus explains that it's one thing to understand what He's saying and agree with it, but the blessing comes with putting it in action. **They need to DO what He commands, not just agree in theory. And this is perhaps the greatest challenge to Christians today** (living beyond just thinking about it).
- Master and Commander
 - Jesus prophesies the immediate future
 - *John 13:18-20 – "I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture [Ps 41:9] will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'¹⁹ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."*
 - I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. – Jesus goes back to a prior statement He made about not everyone being clean and builds on it. He had just been talking about the reality of being a follower of Christ, being a true Christian. The problem with this message in THAT room was that not all were on board. He didn't want to give false assurance to the betrayer who was in their midst.
 - But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' – Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 where the Psalmist explains that one of his own team was against him. Eating bread is a sign of fellowship and connection. Lifting a heel against someone is a metaphor of turning on them and attacking them. Jesus is of course calling out Judas who was part of the team, loved on, provided for.

⁷ "Jesus continues with an "Amen, amen" formula, the eighteenth so far in the Gospel (the most recent being in 12:24)." NICNT

⁸ "That is, if the one greater is not ashamed to be a servant (even a "slave") to his subordinates, why should they be ashamed to be servants to each other? Surely, Jesus insists, "a slave is not greater than his lord." NICNT

- The story to follow – right after this conversation Jesus calls out blatantly that there was a betrayer in the room and everyone freaks out and can't imagine who it is.
- I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. – Jesus explains that He is calling His shots ahead of time so that no one thinks He was ignorant of it. He knew what was happening the whole time. They need to be VERY clear that Jesus was tracking on it and adjusting for it. He was not ignorant. It didn't just happen. No one pulled anything over on Jesus. It was exposed early, and Jesus was dealing with it. The enemy didn't win.
- Truly, truly, I say to you, - again we see the double amen statement of importance... This next phrase seems to be a bit of a non-sequitur to me in some ways. The only connection I see is to highlight that when Judas betrayed any member of the team, **he was betraying Jesus, but even more important he was betraying Yahweh**. What this suggests perhaps is that Judas did believe in God but didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah and even if he was, this was a selfish opportunity. The problem with that is that perhaps Judas thought that turning against Jesus wouldn't impact his stance with Yahweh and that he would still be a 'good guy' and get his reward in heaven. Jesus is explaining that's not the case.
- whoever receives the one I send receives me, - my followers, my apostles (sent ones). Whoever receives Christians receives Christ by connection.
- and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me – Whoever (Christians) who receive Jesus Christ, receive the Father who sent Him by connection. It's all a chain. Father sends the Son, who sends the Christians into the world. All are on the same team and connected. To receive any is to receive all.

Conclusion

- A Poured Out Life – **Two of our greatest Christian heroes: Jesus and Paul spent their lives pouring out for others**. They both died for the sake of the ministry. **What then ought to be our goal** and what should we highlight as glorious but to serve the Lord all of our days and finish poured out for others.
- How do we Serve people daily? – when you hear serve others what should that mean to us? We can't serve others to the degree that Jesus did, by dying for their sins, but that wasn't what Jesus was telling His followers to do. He was saying that **every Christian has a mandate to be alert to the people and needs around them and any need they see highlighted by the Lord that they can help with, they should do it**. It's in the practical help like: checking on someone who is emotionally hurting. Helping a neighbor with groceries during a tough time. Paying for someone's meal that can't afford it. Taking time out of your day to listen to the heart of another. It's that stuff that goes a long way. Ministry doesn't have to be official to be legit.
- Altar Call & Invitation – **If Jesus lowered Himself to save us, what ought we to do?**