

*The
Humble
Servant*



Looking Unto Jesus—The Humble Servant

Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Today we continue our series of looking unto Jesus and we look unto Jesus... The Humble Servant. And to do this we will consider a story that we find in John 13.

On Thursday night, before Jesus would be captured and crucified, he gathers his disciples together for one last meal. He tells Peter and John to go and prepare the Passover meal, to make everything ready. They are a little confused about where they are supposed to go and whom they

are supposed to talk to about this meal. They hadn't gotten the memo on where all of this was supposed to take place. So Jesus tells them that when they get into Jerusalem, they will meet a man with a pitcher of water and they need to follow him into the house where the meal will take place. This guy will show them a large upper room and that is where they need to get everything ready.

As Jesus and the disciples enter the room, they see a table that has been prepared for the meal. It was a long rectangular table and around the table were cushions on the floor that Jesus and the disciples would sit on during the meal.

And as they gather for the meal an argument begins to breakout

cleansed? Why would Jesus even want someone like me?

But Jesus as Jesus told Peter that night, if you don't allow him to wash and cleanse you, then you won't have any part with him:

1st Peter 3:21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Today Jesus is offering the same thing he was offering to Peter that night. He is right in front of you, wanting to wash and cleanse you, wanting to remove the filth of sin from your life, to bring you into the body of Christ. He is offering you the chance to be clean. Will you take him up on his offer?

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The Violet
By Jane Taylor

Down in a green and shady bed,
A modest violet grew;
Its stalk was bent, it hung its head
As if to hide from view.

And yet it was a lovely flower,
Its colour bright and fair;
It might have graced a rosy bower,
Instead of hiding there.

Yet thus it was content to bloom,
In modest tints arrayed;
And there diffused a sweet perfume
Within the silent shade.

Then let me to the valley go
This pretty flower to see;
That I may also learn to grow
In sweet humility.

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love, a love that that serves and lays down its life; a love that Paul describes in 1st Corinthians 13; a love that doesn't seek its own, but a love that pours itself out for the other person; a new kind of love that Christ came to show; a kind of love he shows here in the upper room; a love that he will show on the cross; and a love that, if we are going to be his disciples, we must show in our own lives, because it is through the love that we show for those around us and for God that the world will see God and come to him.

Will you Allow Christ to Wash You?

And the last thing that I want for us to notice is... Some people refuse to let Christ wash and cleanse them. As Jesus begins to wash the disciples' feet, he finally comes to Peter who initially questions why Jesus would wash his feet:

John 13:7-8, "Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this. Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash

my feet!"

Peter initially refused to allow Christ to wash his feet. Maybe it was pride. Maybe he felt that he didn't deserve to be washed by Christ. Maybe he was realized that this something that he and the other disciples should have been doing, instead of Christ. For whatever reason, Peter, initially, refuses to let Jesus wash him. But Jesus reminds him that if he doesn't submit to Christ and he doesn't let Christ wash and cleanse and serve him, then he would have no part with him. And Peter submits to Jesus and allows him to wash and cleanse him.

Today, many people refuse to let themselves be washed and cleansed by Jesus and his blood. Maybe it is pride and they think, "Why would I need to be cleansed of something? I'm a good person. Why would I need this Jesus to cleanse me of anything?" Maybe they feel unworthy and they don't know why they would deserve the cleansing power of Jesus Christ and his blood. With all of the things that I have done in my life, why do I deserve to be washed and

among the disciples. They begin to argue who was going to be greatest among the disciples. Who was going to be the boss among the disciples? And in this case, who was the most important among the disciples and who was going to get to sit next to Jesus at the important meal.

This is an argument or discussion that had already taken place, several times, earlier in Jesus' ministry. In Luke 9, just after the Transfiguration, the disciples began to argue who was the greatest among them. Jesus rebukes them for this attitude. But even after spending several years with Jesus, this argument still continues as they are in the upper room for this Passover meal. And as Jesus and his disciples are eating this Passover meal, he decides to build upon his words about who is the greatest in the kingdom by showing them and giving them an example to follow.

Jesus rises from the supper, removes his outer garment and takes a towel and ties it around his waist. Then he pours water into a bowl and begins to wash the disciples' feet. And he uses

the towel around his waist to wipe them clean. After he finishes washing their feet, Jesus removes the towel from his waist, puts back on his outer garment and sits back down at the table. He begins to teach the disciples about what they saw witnessed and experienced:

John 13:12-17, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

It is interesting to think about the timing of when this episode occurs and the timing of when Christ kneels down to wash the disciples' feet. This is literally hours before he is captured and led to the cross. This is just be-

fore he heads to Garden of Gethsemane and begins to wrestle with the stress and strain of the cup that is set before him. This is MINUTES before one of his friends will leave that table to betray him. This is, literally, the last time that he and his closest earthly friends will all be gathered together before the events that would eventually lead to Golgotha and a garden Tomb.

Instead of kicking back and having a party and reminiscing about old times and relaxing, Jesus takes this opportunity to not just speak to these men and teach about things that they would need to know after he leaves, but he provides them a crystal clear example of the self-sacrificial love and service demanded of his disciples in his kingdom, a glimpse into the heart of a servant that will be on full display the next day at Calvary. He does this by kneeling down and washing the feet of the men who had been following him for about 3 years.

So as we look unto Jesus as the humble servant, I want for us to notice 4 things from this story of Jesus and his example of ser-

vice. 4 things that we can learn by looking unto Jesus... The Humble Servant.

Jesus “Took on the Form of a Servant”

The first thing that I want for us to notice from this story: The King of Kings became a servant for you and for me. To appreciate what Jesus has done by washing these men’s feet, it is important to understand the circumstances surrounding something like foot washing during that time. While Jesus and the disciples settle into their respective cushions and the Passover meal is being served, Jesus unpretentiously rises from the table and wraps himself with a towel. He assumes the role of a slave or servant of the house to wash the disciples’ feet. This was not the job for Messiah. This wasn’t the task for the King of Kings. It was, after all, the job of the lowest servant in the house to wash peoples’ feet as they entered the house, before they ever started serving the meal. And this task that was the job of the lowest servant was carried out by our Lord and King. Christ displayed his leadership and dominion and

that might not treat us well?

The world would say, “No! If someone hits us, we hit right back! Someone says something rude or slanderous about us, we strike right back!” But Christ brought a kingdom that says, “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” And thanks be to God that Christ’s kingdom is built on this idea of loving your enemies. Because when my sin made me an enemy of God, He still loved me and gave his life for me. When my heart and actions betray God, when I do things that rebel against my king, He still loves me. He loves me and you to the end, just as he loved his disciples.

Towards the end of John 13, Christ sums up what he has been trying to get across to the apostles with a very interesting passage:

John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this

shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Jesus says that he gives them a NEW COMMANDMENT that they should love one another. But what was so new about this commandment? In the Old Testament, there were commands to love. Leviticus 19:18 says “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” So what was new or different about this love that Christ is encouraging his followers to display? Notice again what Christ said. He said “love one another, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU....”

That is what was new about this love. He commands them and commands us today to not just love our neighbors and those people that might love us, but to follow the example of Jesus and love as he loved and love all of mankind. To lay down our lives in love and service for even those people that might hurt us or betray us.

The love that Christ shows in this upper room and the love that he will display the next day on the cross is a self-sacrificial

us think that we are the bosses in jobs and in our homes. Pride will keep us from forgiving our brother when he has sinned against us. Pride will keep us from kneeling before our King. And on this night, pride kept the apostles from serving one another and serving Jesus.

He Loved Them (All of Them) Unto the End

The third thing that I want for us to notice is a phrase that we find at the beginning of the 13th Chapter of John:

John 13:1, "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved the unto the end."

Notice again that last phrase... He loved THEM unto the end. And that is the third thing that I want for us to notice...the love of Christ. John didn't say he loved some of them to the end. He didn't say that Christ loved the really good disciples unto the end. He said that he loved

all of them to the end. And why is this important?

Remember, by this point, Christ already knew what was about to happen. He knew that Judas was about to betray him. He knew that one of his friends was going to hand him over to the Jews for 30 pieces of silver. But also notice that Jesus washed all of the disciples' feet, even Judas. Despite the fact that Judas was about to do the unthinkable to Jesus, Christ still loved him and he still served him.

Do we do the same? I don't know about you, but it would be hard for me sit there at that table with someone who was about to stab me in the back and to share a meal with him, much less kneel down and wash his feet!!

Do we only serve the people that treat us well and show love to us? When our husband or wife treats us poorly, do we lash back with harsh words or actions? When we think we are getting the short end of the stick in our jobs or in our churches, do we respond with anger and pride? Or do we love them unto the end and respond by serving those

his greatness, not by feats of strength, but rather by acts of service

Hundreds of years before Jesus appeared on the scene, the prophet Isaiah described, in great detail, the coming Messiah. And one of the ways that Isaiah described the coming King was as a servant. He said this is Isaiah 52:13, "Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted." He continued the thought through the 53rd chapter and he concludes that chapter by saying, "My righteous Servant shall justify many..." And we see a glimpse into the heart and actions of this righteous servant as he kneels down and washes the feet of the disciples.

Philippians 2:4-7, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of

a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

Paul urges the Philippian Christians to follow in the example of Christ and take on this same

The king of your kingdom knelt down to wash the disciple feet. Will you?

mindset of service. He says that even though he is equal with God, he made himself of no reputation and took on the form of a servant. Do we follow this example? Do we take on the form of a servant?

Many people still struggle with this today. I struggle with this, at times, today. We think that the greatest is the biggest and the baddest. Just think about the country that we live in. We have a presidential candidate who loves to say, "Let's Make America Great Again!" And how are we going to make America great again? We are going to have the biggest, baddest military that world has ever seen. We will be richer than your wildest imaginations. We will be so powerful and so great that the world will bow down

before the GREATNESS of America!

This feeds into our mindset today. We think greatness in our careers is rising up the corporate ladder and sitting in that corner office and getting that big paycheck every two weeks. We think greatness in our churches is having influence and power and getting our way. But when Jesus speaks of greatness, he says something totally different. He says, “The greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). And this is so counterintuitive to what people expected from the Messiah. They expected a military ruler to overthrow Rome, someone to “Make ISRAEL Great Again.” But instead, the Messiah would be an humble carpenter from Nazareth who would bow down and wash his disciples’ feet and would lay down his life on a cross.

In the kingdom, it is the humble, the meek, the peacemaker, THE SERVANT that is the greatest. The king of your kingdom knelt down to wash the disciple feet. Will you? Will you humble yourself and serve God and

serve his people? Will you serve your wife or husband?

James 4:10, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up”

Christ, the King of Kings, came to earth as an humble servant. And we, as his disciples, must follow his example.

When we are Worried About Who is Boss, Nothing Gets Done

The second thing that I want for us to notice from the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples is this: When we are worried about who is boss, when we are concerned with who is the greatest, the job doesn’t get done.

As the disciples entered the room that night for the Passover meal, they most likely saw the seating arrangement and began arguing about who was going to sit in which seat. And, as we mentioned, this was not anything new. The disciples argued, on more than one occasion, about who was going to be the greatest.

And the problem was that they weren’t concerned with being GREAT in the kingdom of God. They weren’t concerned with having a seat at the table that night with Jesus. They were concerned with being the GREATEST. They were concerned with who was going to have the BEST seat at the table. And the root of the problem was pride.

C.S. Lewis once wrote “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man... It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition is gone, pride is gone.” And over and over again the scriptures teach about the danger of Pride:

Proverbs 21:4, “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the unplowed field of the wicked – produce sin.”

Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

On this night, as Jesus and the disciples entered the upper

room, pride got in the way of the job getting done. As they entered the room, one of them should have realized that someone needed to wash, at least, the feet of Jesus. Instead, they were too busy arguing about who was going to be the greatest. And instead of the job getting done, nothing happened.

Doesn’t that happen today? In our homes, when the husband and wife let pride infect their relationship, instead of having a home that carries out the will of God, we get wrapped up in our pride and the home becomes a place of conflict instead of a place that nurtures discipleship. In our churches, when we are too busy arguing about who is in charge and who is the most important, instead of having churches that are lighthouses for the lost and sanctuaries for the saved, we have churches with bitterness and fighting that drive people away.

Pride led Satan to rebel against God. Pride leads us to destroy our relationships, our homes, our churches. Pride will make us think that we are in charge of our own lives. Pride will make