

Jesus Provides SRENGTH for Service

Our story today is found in John 13 – where Jesus washes the disciple’s feet. We are going to watch the story unfold on video but you can follow along with your verses in the notes.

Play video of THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ccpPXaBnbQ>

Text: John 13:1-17

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

² And supper being ended, the devil having 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 to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, “Lord, are You washing my feet?”

⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.”

⁸ Peter said to Him, “You shall never wash my feet!”

Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part 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, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean.”

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Imagine the scene. *(When lights come back up after video – lights are on the two actors dressed in biblical attire who came out on stage during video. One plays Jesus and one plays a disciple. They act out the washing of feet. When they are done Jesus hands the towel to me.)*

This foot washing takes place on night of the last supper – the night that Jesus would be betrayed by Judas, then arrested in the Garden and then crucified at Calvary.

Everything had been prepared for this last supper with the disciples. However, there was one thing was missing. It was the custom of the day to have a servant, with a basin of water and towel in hand, to wash the feet of the guests before they ate. The reason? In those days people would walk wherever they went on dirty, dusty roads in Israel. These men wore sandals there were no paved roads. Animals would share these same roads. This is the reason foot washing was a custom. Because their feet would have been quite dirty.

But on this night at this gathering of Jesus and His disciples - there was no servant there to clean their feet. They couldn't eat the meal without washing their feet. So who would do the job normally reserved for a servant?

I can just see the disciples looking around wondering who would do it? Then out of the blue, as a picture perfect lesson in servanthood, Jesus, the Messiah, The King of Kings, the Son of God, the Great I Am, the Lamb of God, rose to the task of a slave.

Jesus lays aside His outer garment, picks up a towel, takes a water basin and begins to wash the feet of the disciples. **The King became a servant.** Jesus the King should have been the one being served – getting his feet washed – but Jesus is THE SERVANT KING. He humbles Himself and takes on the lowest position in the room. **The one who made them served them.**

We can imagine it was pretty quiet in this room when Jesus did this – and it would have taken a good amount of time to wash the feet of 12 men. There was probably lots of uncomfortable shifting around and nervousness. Perhaps there were some tears.

Most likely the longest 30 minutes or so of their lives. It was a powerful example Jesus was giving them. It was one each of them never forgot.

When the task was completed Jesus gives this command.

- *"You also ought to wash one another's feet." John 4:14*
- *At this scripture Jesus gets up and hands the towel to me*

What did He mean by this? What does this mean for us?

Did Jesus mean we should have actual foot washings? Some churches teach that. I grew up in a church that did that. We would have foot washing services one Sunday night per month.

I think what Jesus was saying when he said *“You also should wash each other’s feet”* what he was saying was *“You should serve each other.”* The whole context of this conversation is serving.

- **Matthew 20:26 & 28** (Living Bible), *“Anyone wanting to be a leader among you must be your servant. And if you want to be right at the top, you must serve like a slave. Your attitude must be like My own. For I did not come to be served, but to serve.”*

There are other commandments to serve in the Bible (Scripture interprets Scripture)

- **1 Peter 4:10** *“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”*

If we are followers of Jesus – we are called to become like Jesus by serving other people.

Disciples serve. Followers of Jesus serve. It’s just what we do if we are to be like Christ.

Why the commandment to serve?

SERVING IS THE WAY IN

Let me show you what I mean by that

- *“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God” **John134:3***

John makes a point to let us know Jesus was not insecure about who He was. He was God’s Son. He knew where He had come from. And He knew where He was going. That gave Him the wherewithal to serve.

It’s difficult for people with a poor view of themselves to serve others. If we see ourselves as a victim, or broken or flawed we can tend to be more selfish or self-focused. Everything becomes about us – or what someone did to us. Or we do things for others out of wrong motives – guilt or condemnation or codependency.

Jesus was illustrating a powerful principle here – the more I know who I am in Christ the more free I am to serve others.

Serving others means I gain my value from who I am in Jesus and not others opinion of me.

Serving is the way in because it’s also the way in to influencing others for Christ.

- John Maxwell puts it this way. Leadership is influence.
- If you want to make significant impact on others, serve them with excellence.

I think we see this in the story of Daniel in the Old Testament. He is taken away from his home country and is made a slave in Babylon. Rather than playing a victim, He chooses to serve his captors with excellence. Over time Daniel rises to such incredible influence that he becomes second in command in the whole nation. THROUGH SERVING WELL. In a sense, he was washing the feet of the leaders of Babylon by serving them.

The greatest leader who ever lived was Jesus. The reason he was the greatest leader who ever lived was because He was the greatest servant.

Don't worry about being a leader, worry about being a servant. The more I serve, the greater influence I will have.



"I see God in every human being. When I wash the leper's wounds, I feel I am nursing the Lord himself. Is it not a beautiful experience?"

- Mother Teresa

III - Mother Theresa syndrome – Mother Theresa was a poor, Roman Catholic nun. She was famous because she served. Her primary way to serve was through operating a home for people who were dying in Calcutta, India.

These were the poorest of the poor. Many had leprosy. She did not bring them in to her home to heal them – she couldn't. They were going to die. She brought them in so they could die with dignity and so that they would not be alone. She served the least influential people in the world. But it gave her such moral credibility that she could walk into Congress and everyone would listen to what she had to say She won the Nobel Prize and the Catholic Church canonized her and made her a saint.

Don't focus on being a leader – focus on being a servant and God will make sure you have influence. **Serving is the way IN.**

Another lesson about serving from this story is . . .

SERVING IS THE WAY UP

- In Luke's version of what happened on this night when Jesus washed the disciples feet, He goes a little deeper into what was going on in the room.
- **Luke 22:24** "*there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest*"

Who is the most important? Who is the most significant? By washing their feet, Jesus turns everything upside down by illustrating the greatest is the one who serves.

- **Matthew 23:11-12** *“The greatest among you will be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

In our culture we are preoccupied with our own importance aren't we?

We become obsessed with the number of likes on our social media posts or the number of followers we have on social media. The problem is our preoccupation with our own significance robs us of the ability to serve others.

True significance comes from serving God's purposes – which is serving others well.

The way up is down. The greatest is the servant.

- In the body of Christ – the leaders are the servants. Not the ones with the most talent or skill or gifts or personality.
- Serving is what will get rewarded. Serving well leads to promotion. Serving well will result in the favor of God.
- That's why the test of spiritual maturity our Christlikeness is in our willingness to serve.
- **A servant leader does not measure his effectiveness by the numbers of people he controls, but the number he serves.**

We think the way up is competition being better than everyone else – doing something better than other people – the way up is down. Bill Hybels calls it in his book DESCENDING INTO GREATNESS. If you serve others you will be great.

The last reason we will talk about why we ought to wash one another's feet through serving is

SERVING IS THE WAY OUT

- *“...supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him “* **John 4:2**

Jesus washed Judas' feet. The one who sold Him out. These same feet Jesus washed would soon walk from this meal to sell out the Savior.

But that's not even the whole picture. John specifically mentions that the devil had already entered into Judas' heart. Why did he include that little bit of information? We don't know if that means Judas was demon possessed or not but John specifically mentions this detail because He was inspired by God to do so – Because Jesus . . . In a sense, he was washing the devil's feet.

Jesus was practicing what He preached. Remember the sermon on the mount?

- **"Love your enemies. Do good to those who treat you badly. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who are unkind to you." Matthew 5:44**

Jesus was clearly demonstrating that serving others (in particular your enemies, those who have hurt you, those who have betrayed you) is a way out

The Bible says you don't overcome evil with evil – you overcome evil with good.

Remember what Jesus said while He was washing their feet? You don't understand what I am doing now. But you will later.

Imagine the disciples after the crucifixion and resurrection - reflecting on this night when Jesus washed their feet – Jesus said you also ought to wash one another's feet. I think John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, remember, put it together, hold on a minute, Judas was there that night – and he as filled with the devil – Jesus meant we are to wash the feet of our enemies. . . .

How did Jesus wash the feet of Judas? How do you wash the feet of the people who have hurt you? How do you wash the feet of those who have betrayed or wounded you?

It might be as simple as praying for them. Perhaps it's as simple as asking God to bless them and their families. It might mean something else but the principle illustrated here by Jesus cannot be ignored. Love your enemies – serve them – bless them.

When you serve others – you will find it's a WAY OUT

- Perhaps you bound by the past of abuse or neglect or abandonment. Perhaps your way out is serving others who have also been abused or neglected or abandoned.
- Perhaps you have been wounded by loss perhaps your way out of the hurt is by serving others who have also had loss.

It sounds almost impossible and if we hadn't read it with our own eyes here – Jesus washed Judas feet who had already been filled with the devil – we would hardly believe it.



III – One of *Martin Luther King's* most famous sermons was titled, "*Loving your enemies*". He was in jail at the time he wrote it, imprisoned for daring to suggest that American Negroes should have the same civil rights as other Americans. During his lifetime he had received death threat after death threat, he'd been

accused of being a communist, his house had been bombed, and he was jailed over 20 times. Yet

*in this sermon he said "hate multiplies hate...in a descending spiral of violence". But "love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend" for it has "creative" and "redemptive" power. **MLK changed history by washing the feet of those who hated him.***

There is so much divisiveness and conflict in our culture – what would happen if we determined to do what Jesus did - to serve others – even those who disagree with us – even those who hate us – if we served them like Jesus served Judas?

Who is your Judas? How can you serve them?

One more thing . . . serving others is a **way out of the valleys of life** . . . when we are in a funk . . . (sadness, unhappiness, slump). Some spend so much time and money just trying to be happy.

I will never be happy if my primary concern is being happy.

- **Albert Schweitzer** said, *"The only really happy people are those have learned how to serve."*

Jesus hands us a towel – and says you also ought to wash one another's feet. What does that mean?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS – How do we wash the feet of our . . .

- **FAMILY** – What does it mean to wash the feet of your family?
 - We know that conflict happens in our homes when we are selfish – the cure for selfishness is serving like Jesus.
 - Relationships flourish when we serve each other selflessly.
 - When a husband and a wife make a decision to serve each other – rather than serve themselves – powerful things can happen – watch this bride and groom demonstrate this at their wedding.
 - **VIDEO – Groom washes the bride's feet**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZqPZ3Mv3Lw>
- **WORK** – What does it mean to wash the feet of the company or people you work for or with? Most people don't make the connection with your employment and serving Jesus.
 - *"Don't just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ's servants doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God."* – **Ephesians 6:6 (The Message)**

- Wherever you work – whomever you work for – whomever you work with – wash their feet – serve them.
- It's a witness – A way in
- It will result in your promotion – it's a way up
- When you get promoted you won't be in your current position – it's a way out
- **CHURCH** – What does it mean to wash the feet of the body of Christ?
 - Here are a few examples of what that might look like
 - Did you receive a greeting and a bulletin this morning when you came in to church?
 - Did you enjoy having a sound system so you could hear things better?
 - Did you enjoy having someone teach your children this morning?
 - That happens because someone is SERVING . . . they are serving you – the body of Christ.
 - **"... serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13 (NLT)**
 - Our vision is that everyone serves – if you have 30 minutes or 3 hours per week. find a place to serve.
 - **How do I find out where to serve? GROWTH TRACK.**
 - Next week is Growth Track Step 3 and 4. This is how it works.

COMMUNITY – What does it look like to wash the feet of our community?

- Homeless ministry
- Food Pantry
- **Honor Our Heroes ceremony**
- **Community Serve Day**

I am sure on this night when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, if they would have had it to do over again – they would all say – Jesus let me wash your feet. I think we would too. We would have no problem washing Jesus' feet. It would be an honor to serve Him.

But Jesus didn't say wash my feet

Jesus said "You ought to wash one another's feet." That is a little more difficult. But we are commended to wash one another's feet.

What does that look like in your life? What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about this message? Take a moment and listen to the voice of God.

ALTAR CALL FOR SALVATION

PRAYER FOR PEOPLE IN NEED