

Serve Humbly  
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John 13

Opening Question: **What is your idea of GREAT customer service?** Today's lesson is about compassionate, humble service to others. **In our society today humbly serving others seems to be the exception rather than the rule. Why do you think that is?**

It's the night of Jesus' arrest, and chapters 13-17 of John's Gospel document for us His "farewell address" to His twelve disciples. His last opportunity to prepare them for what is to come. Verse 1 of this chapter says He "loved them to the end." Though He is facing a horrible death and separation from God the Father, Jesus is consumed with LOVE. He teaches them about that love with an OBJECT LESSON.

John 13:1–11 (ESV)

1 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. 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.

- **Why was it customary to wash feet? Who would have performed this task?**
- **How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus suddenly did this for them?**
- Verse 6: Good old, impulsive Peter speaks up in typical impulsive Peter fashion:

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." 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.

- **Question: How does what Jesus just said in verse 10 speak to our SALVATION versus our need for ongoing CONFESSION of sins?**

Though we've been washed in the blood forever, our feet still get dirty when we walk through life! When we receive Jesus' free gift of salvation our eternity is settled, but sin still dirties our feet. Even the saved need the Spiritual hygiene of regular confession and forgiveness.

Jesus continued in verse 10:

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.” 12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, 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 also should do just as I have done to you.

- **Question: What usually keeps people from humbling themselves to serve others in a self-sacrificing way?** Look at verse 3 again. **What does it say Jesus knew that made Him SECURE enough to humble Himself in such a lowly act of service?**
- One might say, “Well this is Jesus the Son of God that’s why He could do this.” True, you and I don’t have the same status as Jesus, but our SIGNIFICANCE and SECURITY as believers comes from the same source.

Because God has given us the love of Christ, and because we’re His children, we don’t have to STRIVE for position or significance, we can humbly serve others. That’s really IMITATING Christ and following the “example” he gave.

What if our PRIDE gets in the way? Here’s what Jesus says...

16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

- **What does that verse say to us about humbling ourselves to serve others?**

Imagine being at the judgment seat of Christ and Jesus says, *“We just looked at the video of all the times you refused to humble yourself and serve others-----do you think you’re better than me?”*

The fact is: Based on verse 16...if we believe we’re too good to humbly serve others...we must think we’re BETTER than Jesus. Wow, that’s a convicting thought!

17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

- How many of us DO everything we KNOW we SHOULD DO? Show of hands? **Why?**
- **What does verse 17 say will result if we DO these things Jesus has taught us?**
- How does the KJV render it?
- How often do we stumble through life saying, “I wonder why God seems to bless others more than me? They seem to be happier in the Christian life!”

We’re ALL blessed more than we deserve, but true RICHNESS and HAPPINESS in the Christian life comes from OBEDIENCE to Jesus’ teaching.

Jesus continues as he says to those around the table...

18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture 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.

- Before the meal was over, Judas would be on his way to betray Jesus. To turn Him over to those who planned to kill him. He sold out his Master for cash!
- **By the way, do you think Jesus washed the feet of Judas? How do you think that felt for Jesus? For Judas?**

Max Lucado wrote:

*"Please note (in verse 12), he finished washing their feet. That means he left no one out.... He washed the feet of Judas. Jesus washed the feet of his betrayer. He gave this traitor equal attention. In just a few hours Judas' feet would guide the Roman guard to Jesus. But at this moment they are caressed by Christ..."*

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."

- In verse 20 Jesus conveyed on the disciples and on us, our credentials as AMBASSADORS for Christ.
- Jesus said, "YOU represent ME. You have MY SEAL and ENDORSEMENT."
- "When they see the one I sent THEY SEE ME."
- **That's encouraging, but why might it also be INTIMIDATING?**
- With our appointment as AMBASSADOR comes some special instructions.
- Jesus is leaving them soon, and he has a NEW COMMANDMENT for them and us.

John 13:33–35 (ESV)

33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

- **How well does the church, the body of Christ keep this new commandment?**
- Verses 34 and 35 should be put on a plaque and posted wherever a church leadership or business meeting is held. Church leaders, *"Love one another the way I have loved you. By this everyone will know you are MY disciples."*
- Just like today, Jesus had problems back then with "bickering disciples."
- **What were the twelve always bickering about? (Mark 9:33-35; Luke 22:24-26)**
- No doubt because of how the disciples were jockeying for position and prominence, Jesus decided to teach them a very real lesson by washing their feet.

John MacArthur writes:

*“Just try to imagine in your own mind the pain and the sorrow that must have just penetrated those disciples' hearts. Here they were bellyachin' about who would be the greatest, and so concerned about that that none of them would humble themselves to wash each other's feet, and so Jesus stooped and began to do it. Can you imagine how that must have gripped their hearts? The pain that must have shot through them, the regret, the sorrow? That one of them hadn't had the joy of kneeling and washing the feet of Jesus? What a painful and profound lesson. Humility is the service of love. And sadly to say, the Body of Christ, those of us who love Jesus Christ, is full of people who are standing on their dignity when they ought to be kneeling at the feet of their brother.”*

- Jesus commands are clear, for them that night, and for us today:
  - “Wash each other’s feet, the way I’ve washed yours.” (V. 14)
  - “Love one another, the way I’ve loved you.” (V. 34)
  - SERVE each other and LOVE each other. Then they’ll know you’re MY DISCIPLE.
- There’s one more painful lesson in this text. A lesson for “good ole impulsive Peter.”

John 13:36–38 (ESV)

36 Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” 37 Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” 38 Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

- We all know what happened, in just hours Peter denied even knowing Jesus.
- Though Peter failed, Jesus still loved him. Though Peter failed, Jesus still USED him as the earthly founder of the church.

Isn't it reassuring to know if one of the greats like Peter can fail and yet be forgiven, we can be too? Though we fail, Jesus will still love us, and can still use us.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- This week, we need to turn our “FOOT WASHING, LOVING OTHERS RADAR” on.
- Here's what I mean: When our kids were little and we'd be looking for a parking spot at the mall or at church, Susan would tell them, *“Turn on your parking radar and help me find a spot.”*
- As Christ followers, we've been given a RADAR called the Holy Spirit.
- This week we need to access that built-in RADAR by asking the Father to direct us to someone who needs HUMBLE SERVICE.
- We also need to turn on that radar to help us spot times when we might not be as loving toward others as we need to be.
- Once our radar has pointed out the situation, we need to DO what Jesus taught us.
- As Jesus said, “That's how they'll KNOW you're MY DISCIPLES.”