



Serving Like Jesus

Kicking It Off: Share a time when you were resistant to letting others see or help with a "dirty" area of your life. What did you learn through that experience about vulnerability and receiving grace?

Read:
John 13:12-17

Summary

The sermon centers around the symbolism and practical implications of Jesus washing his disciples' feet at the Last Supper. This act demonstrates the two aspects of salvation: the one-time justification that occurs when we place our faith in Christ and the ongoing process of sanctification as we daily surrender to his cleansing.

Justification is being washed from head to toe, cleansed completely by Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross. It is a free gift available to everyone, no matter how dirty or undeserving we may feel. The only question is whether we recognize our need for this cleansing and humbly receive it in repentance and faith. God's Word reveals the depth of our fallen condition, which can be painful to face. But hitting rock bottom is what creates a hunger for the Savior.

However, even after this initial cleansing, we continue to pick up dirt as we walk through the messiness of this world. That's where sanctification comes in - the lifelong process of having our feet washed by Jesus as we allow him to confront and cleanse the

daily sin in our lives. Like Peter, we often resist this process, wanting to hide our filth and manage it ourselves. But Jesus says we have no part with him unless we open ourselves up to his cleansing.

This is where the church community plays a crucial role. We are called to be a fellowship of foot washers, humbly serving one another by sharing our struggles and pointing each other back to Christ. It requires vulnerability, honesty, and grace as we stumble forward together, recognizing that none of us have it all together. Authentic community is the context in which sanctification occurs.

But what makes this foot washing meaningful is not the act itself, but the reality that the God of the universe stoops down to perform it. The same is true of our acts of service, whether big or small. On the surface, church potlucks, Sunday school lessons, and nursery duty are just ordinary activities. But when done in Jesus' name and with reliance on his Spirit, they take on supernatural significance.

Ministry is not about impressive results that make much of us, but about quietly and faithfully serving others with Christ's love, trusting him to bear fruit in his own way and timing. Like Paul, we can embrace our weakness, knowing it is a vessel for Christ's power to shine through us. So in all we do as the body of Christ, let us serve with the humility and love modeled by Jesus. Not out of duty or for our own glory, but with utter dependence on God's Spirit to work through us. As we plant and water gospel seeds through lowly acts of service, we trust the Lord to produce the growth for his glory alone. This is the essence of serving like Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. In John 13, Jesus washes his disciples' feet, a task usually reserved for the lowliest of servants. He then commands them to do the same for one another. **What does this act of foot washing symbolize in terms of our ongoing sanctification as believers?**
2. The sermon explains that justification is a one-time event where we are cleansed from head to toe and given a new identity in Christ. Sanctification, on the other hand, is the ongoing process of daily having our feet washed from the grime we pick up walking through this world. **Why is it important to distinguish between these two aspects of salvation?**

3. Like Peter, we often resist letting Jesus wash our feet. We want to hide our dirty areas and deal with them ourselves rather than bringing them into the light. **What holds us back from being vulnerable about our struggles, and how can we cultivate greater openness and authenticity in our church community?**
4. The sermon emphasizes that ministry is not about impressive results or showcasing our own abilities, but about humbly serving others in simple ways and trusting God to bear fruit in his timing. **Can you share an experience where you saw God work powerfully through a seemingly small or insignificant act of service?**
5. As we serve and minister to others, it's easy to slip into doing it out of duty or for our own glory rather than as an overflow of God's love and grace in our lives. **What are some practical ways we can keep our hearts aligned with Jesus' heart as we serve, and avoid burning out or becoming self-righteous in the process?**

Bible Passage

John 13:12-27

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

Outline

- I. Being Washed from Head to Toe
 - A. Justification: the one-time cleansing that occurs when we put our faith in Christ
 1. We are made right with God and given a new identity
 2. All our sins are forgiven, no matter how bad (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
 - B. The gospel invitation is for everyone to be cleansed by Christ's blood
 1. We are all equally in need of this washing
 2. The question is whether we recognize our need and want to be cleansed
 - C. God's Word reveals our fallen condition and need for cleansing

1. It can be depressing to face our brokenness
 2. But hitting "rock bottom" creates a hunger for Jesus
- II. Having Our Feet Washed
- A. Sanctification: the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ
 1. We still pick up "dirt" walking through this world even after justification
 2. We need to have our feet washed daily
 - B. Resisting the sanctification process
 1. Wanting to cover up our filth and deal with it ourselves
 2. Not letting Jesus or others near our dirtiness
 - C. Allowing Jesus to wash us
 1. We have no part with him unless we allow him to cleanse us
 2. True community is being real about our struggles and pointing each other to Christ
 - D. The church as a community of foot washers
 1. Embracing a lifestyle of honest, grace-filled fellowship
 2. Stumbling along together in the sanctification process
- III. God's Work Through Human Instruments
- A. Jesus' touch is what makes even mundane acts of service meaningful
 1. The disciples had their feet washed by servants before, but not their Lord
 2. His presence transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary
 - B. Our acts of service can have supernatural impact when done in Jesus' name
 1. Potlucks, Sunday School, nursery duty - ordinary activities on the surface
 2. But when done with reliance on God's Spirit, they bear eternal fruit
 - C. Ministry is not about impressive results that highlight our abilities
 1. It's about humbly and faithfully serving others in love
 2. Trusting God to work through us in spite of our limitations
 - D. In all we do as the church, let us serve like Jesus
 1. Not out of duty or for our glory, but with sincere love
 2. Completely dependent on God's Spirit to produce the growth

Notes

I believe that Jesus washing the disciples' feet at the Last Supper was a powerful example of servant leadership. As the leader, he humbled himself to perform this menial task usually done by servants. When Peter objected, Jesus explained the deeper spiritual significance - that the disciples were already cleansed (justified) through faith, and only needed their feet washed (ongoing sanctification).

This act of footwashing symbolizes the two aspects of salvation - the one-time justification that occurs when we put our faith in Christ and are cleansed from head to toe, and the ongoing process of sanctification as we have our feet washed daily from the grime we pick up walking through this world. Justification changes our identity and makes us right with God, while sanctification is the process of becoming more holy and Christlike over time.

The gospel invitation is for everyone to be cleansed and justified by Christ's blood, no matter what sins are on that list in 1 Corinthians 6. We're all equally in need of this washing. The only question is whether we recognize our need and want to be cleansed. None of us are perfect or able to justify ourselves. Admitting our faults and bringing them to Jesus in repentance is the starting point.

While society promotes its own ideas of right and wrong, I believe God's Word is the ultimate standard of righteousness we should look to. Sanctification is the lifelong journey of learning to walk in obedience to God's ways rather than the world's or our own.

When I'm honest with myself, studying God's Word makes me realize just how fallen and in need of cleansing I truly am. It can feel depressing to face that, but hitting that "rock bottom" is what creates a hunger for Jesus. We like to minimize our own sin and think we aren't that bad compared to others. But coming to terms with my brokenness shifts the focus to Jesus' greatness rather than my own.

I don't go to church because it's full of good people, but because we are all looking to Jesus together. It's freeing to admit to one another that none of us have it all together. When someone shares their struggles with me, I'm not there to judge or even to provide the solution myself. I'm just a fellow broken person pointing them to the only One who can redeem and restore - Jesus.

Baptism is a one-time event that justifies us and grants us a new identity in Christ. But sanctification is the ongoing process of having our dirty feet washed daily. Just like Peter didn't understand at first, we can be resistant to this process. We want to cover up our filth and deal with it ourselves rather than letting Jesus or others near it.

But Jesus says we have no part with him unless we allow him to wash us. True community happens when we are willing to show one another our dirty, smelly feet - the sins and struggles we are dealing with - and humbly serve each other by pointing one another back to Christ. My desire is for the church to embrace this "foot washing" lifestyle of honest, grace-filled fellowship as we stumble along together in the sanctification process. We are justified in an instant, but gradually becoming more like Jesus happens in the context of authentic community.

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The significance of Jesus washing the disciples' feet was not in the act itself, but in the fact that it was God incarnate humbling himself to perform this menial task. The disciples had experienced the pampering of servants in wealthy homes, but having the Lord they worshipped stoop to clean their dirty feet was a powerful statement. It demonstrated that his presence and touch are what make even the most mundane service eternally meaningful.

As we gather for potlucks, teach Sunday School, or volunteer in the nursery, the same principle applies. On the surface, there is nothing special about these activities that couldn't be replicated by any secular organization. The food, the lessons, the childcare - in and of themselves, they are just ordinary things.

But when done in the name of Jesus and with reliance on his Spirit, the most insignificant acts of service can have a supernatural impact. We may never see the fruit or get the credit, but that's okay. Our role is simply to plant and water seeds of the gospel through humble, faithful service. God is the one who brings the growth, often in ways we can't anticipate or perceive in the moment.

Ministry is not about impressive results that highlight our gifts and abilities. It's about quietly and consistently loving others in Jesus' name, trusting that he will work through us in spite of our limitations. Like Paul, we can be content with weakness, knowing Christ's power is made perfect in our humility and insufficiency.

So in everything we do as the church, whether gathered or scattered, let's serve like Jesus - not out of mere duty, and not for our own glory, but with

sincere love and complete dependence on God's Spirit to bear eternal fruit through these small seeds we plant and water along the way. As his presence permeates even the lowliest tasks done in his name, lives will be transformed for his glory alone.

Serving Like Jesus

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In John 13, we see Jesus, mere hours before his betrayal and crucifixion, taking on the humble task of washing his disciples' feet. This act alone speaks volumes about the heart of servanthood that should characterize all who claim to follow Christ.

But Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes on to teach his disciples that this kind of humble, self-giving love is not just a nice gesture, but the very essence of what it means to be his disciple. "I have set you an example," he tells them, "that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). True discipleship is not just about accumulating head knowledge or even putting on a good spiritual show. It's about getting down on our knees, rolling up our sleeves, and serving others with the same sacrificial love that Jesus himself embodied.

What is significant to me is that Jesus chose to teach this lesson in the knowledge of his own impending betrayal. He knew that one of his own,

Judas Iscariot, would soon sell him out for a pocketful of silver. And yet, even in this dark moment, Jesus remained steadfast in his mission, fulfilling scripture and confirming his identity as the Messiah. The fact that Jesus chose to teach about humble service and sacrificial love in the face of his own betrayal teaches us several lessons.

First, it highlights the unwavering commitment of Jesus to his mission. Despite knowing the pain and suffering that lay ahead, Jesus did not shrink back or lose sight of his purpose. He remained resolute in his determination to fulfill scripture and to lay down his life as a ransom for many. This steadfast obedience, even in the darkest of circumstances, is a powerful example for us as his disciples. It challenges us to remain faithful to God's call on our lives, even when the path ahead is difficult or uncertain.

Second, Jesus' actions in this moment reveal the depth of his love for his disciples, even for Judas, the one who would betray him. The fact that Jesus washed Judas' feet, fully aware of the treachery in his heart, is a stunning display of grace and mercy. It reminds us that God's love extends to all people, even those who have turned their backs on him. As followers of Christ, we are called to embody that same radical, unconditional love, even toward those who have wronged us.

Jesus' foreknowledge of Judas' betrayal and his willingness to embrace the cross serves to confirm his identity as the Messiah and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In this moment, we see the convergence of God's sovereignty and human free will, as God works through even the sinful choices of human beings to accomplish his redemptive purposes. It is a mystery that reminds us of God's ultimate control over history and his ability to bring good even out of the darkest of circumstances.

So what does all of this mean for us today? As disciples of Jesus, we are called to follow in his footsteps, serving others with humility and love, even when it costs us dearly. We are called to remain faithful to him, even in the face of betrayal or persecution. And above all, we are invited into the same intimate, abiding relationship with Jesus that the beloved disciple enjoyed.

1. Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet and his subsequent teaching on humble, self-giving love reveal that true discipleship is about more than just head knowledge or outward appearances. It's about embodying the sacrificial love of Christ in tangible ways.
What are some practical ways we can "wash one another's feet" and demonstrate the heart of servanthood in our daily lives and relationships?
2. Jesus' unwavering commitment to his mission and his display of grace and mercy toward Judas, even in the face of betrayal, serve as powerful examples for us as his disciples. They challenge us to remain faithful to God's call and to extend unconditional love, even in difficult circumstances. **Can you think of a time when you were called to love or serve someone who had wronged you? How did you respond, and what did you learn from that experience about the radical nature of Christ-like love?**