

Summary

What does true humility look like when God takes on human flesh? This powerful exploration of John 13 reveals one of the most stunning demonstrations of servant leadership in all of Scripture. We witness Jesus, the King of Kings, taking up the basin and towel—the implements of the lowest house slave—to wash thirty dirty feet. This wasn't a ceremonial act with clean, perfumed feet; this was Jesus kneeling in the dust and grime of the road, serving an unserved need that none of His disciples would humble themselves to meet. The passage challenges us to understand that authority in God's kingdom isn't earned through power or command, but through humble service. We're reminded that knowing about humility isn't enough—Jesus emphasizes that blessing comes in doing these things. The account also confronts us with the sobering reality of Judas' betrayal, demonstrating how the same sun that melts wax hardens clay. Even as Satan entered Judas, Jesus continued to serve him, offering the honored piece of bread. This teaches us that Jesus' love extends even to those who reject Him, and His humility in going to the cross was the ultimate act of service. The question for each of us becomes: what need exists around us that we consider beneath our dignity to serve? Are we willing to let the mind of Christ, who made Himself of no reputation, transform how we love one another?

calvary
chapel
gulf coast



Points

Title: The Authority of Humility: Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores John 13:1-38, focusing on Jesus' final evening with His disciples before the crucifixion. The central message emphasizes that true authority in Christian leadership comes not through power but through humility and service. Jesus demonstrates this by washing His disciples' feet—taking on the role of the lowest house slave—to teach them that love manifests through serving others' needs, regardless of how undignified the task may be. The sermon stresses that knowing these principles is insufficient; believers are blessed when they actually do them. The pastor connects Jesus' act of humility to the greater humiliation of the cross, explaining that just as feet touching the dusty world need repeated washing, believers need ongoing cleansing through repentance while their salvation remains secure. The message concludes with Jesus' "new commandment" that His followers would be recognized not by their knowledge or power, but by their love for one another demonstrated through humble service.

Key Points:

- Authority in the church is earned through humility, not power; you cannot change hearts through commands alone
- Jesus' foot washing was an example to follow, not an ordinance to ritualize—it demonstrates serving unserved needs regardless of how undignified
- The one-time cleansing of salvation (the "bath") doesn't need repeating, but ongoing cleansing from worldly contact (washing feet) requires continual repentance
- Jesus loved His disciples "to the end" and "to the uttermost," demonstrating agape love through service
- Motive matters to God—our service should be for Christ's recognition alone, not human approval or false humility
- Believers will face a judgment of reward (the bema seat) where works will be tested by fire to reveal if they were gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble
- God's sovereignty and man's responsibility work together, as demonstrated in Judas' betrayal—it was prophesied yet Judas remained accountable
- Christians should be identified by their love for one another, not merely by doctrinal knowledge or association with Christ
- Pride can manifest even in our desire to be recognized for our humility
- The church often knows much but does little; blessing comes in doing, not just knowing

Scripture References:

- John 13:1-38 (primary passage)



- Zechariah 13:7 (strike the shepherd and the sheep scatter)
- Matthew 16:21-23 (Peter rebukes Jesus about going to the cross)
- 1 John 1:5-10 (walking in the light and confession of sins)
- John 6:70 (one of you is a devil)
- Philippians 2:1-11 (the mind of Christ and His humiliation)
- 1 Corinthians 3:11-17 (foundation of Christ and works tested by fire)
- 2 Corinthians 5:9-17 (judgment seat of Christ and new creation)
- Psalm 41:9 (betrayal prophecy—he who ate my bread lifted his heel against me)
- Matthew 26:14-16, 24 (Judas' betrayal and better if he had never been born)
- Exodus 12 (Passover fulfillment)

Stories:

- ****David and Ahithophel's Betrayal**** (Psalm 41:9, 2 Samuel): The pastor recounts how David's trusted advisor Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather, betrayed David by joining Absalom's rebellion, likely due to anger over David's adultery with Bathsheba. When Absalom rejected Ahithophel's counsel, Ahithophel went home and hanged himself. This Old Testament betrayal prefigured Judas' betrayal of Jesus.
- ****The Upper Room Scene****: The sermon vividly describes the setting where Jesus and His disciples reclined at a U-shaped table (triclinium) for the Passover meal. None of the disciples had taken up the basin and towel to wash feet when they entered, preferring dirty feet to the humiliation of servanthood. Jesus rose after supper and performed this task Himself, shocking Peter who protested that Jesus should never wash his feet.
- ****Peter's Denial Foretold****: The sermon references Jesus' prediction that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed, noting how crushing this must have been to Peter who genuinely wanted to lay down his life for Jesus but was still bound by pride.
- ****Judas' Departure****: The narrative describes how Jesus gave Judas the honored piece of dipped bread, after which Satan entered him, and Jesus told him to do what he was going to do quickly. The other disciples didn't understand, thinking Jesus was sending him to buy supplies or give to the poor, showing how Judas' betrayal wasn't obvious to the group.



Scripture

Scripture References from the Sermon

1. **Daniel 9:25-26** - Prophecy of 173,880 days
2. **Zechariah 9:9** - Messiah riding on a donkey
3. **John 12:7** - Mary's anointing for Jesus' burial
4. **John 12:20-36** - Greeks seeking Jesus; Jesus speaks of his death
5. **John 12:34** - The people's response about Christ remaining forever
6. **John 12:37-50** - Unbelief despite signs; Jesus' final public words
7. **Mark 11:11-19** - Jesus entering Jerusalem, cursing fig tree, cleansing temple
8. **1 Kings 8:41-43** - Solomon's prayer concerning foreigners
9. **Matthew 16:21-27** - Jesus predicts death; Peter's rebuke; taking up the cross
10. **Romans 6:1-14** - Baptism into Christ's death; dead to sin, alive to God
11. **Matthew 3:13-17** - Jesus' baptism and Father's voice
12. **Matthew 17:1-8** - Transfiguration
13. **Galatians 3:13-14** - Christ becoming a curse for us
14. **Psalm 89:34-37** - God's covenant with David; seed enduring forever
15. **Micah 4:7** (referenced as verse 7, quoted verse 4) - The Lord reigning forever
16. **Daniel 7:13-14** - Son of Man coming with clouds; everlasting dominion
17. **Psalm 22** - Description of crucifixion and resurrection
18. **Isaiah 52** - Suffering servant
19. **Isaiah 53** - "Who has believed our report?"
20. **Isaiah 6** - Blinded eyes and hardened hearts; Isaiah's vision
21. **John 10:30** - "I and my Father are one"
22. **John 3:16-20** - God so loved the world; condemnation and light
23. **1 John 2:22-23** - Denying the Son means not having the Father
24. **Exodus 12** - Passover lamb (spotless sacrifice)
25. **Leviticus** (general reference) - Sacrificial system
26. **Romans 6:10-11** - Died to sin once for all; alive to God

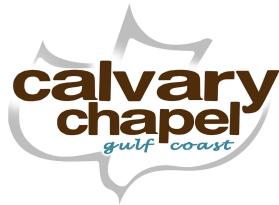
Additional Relevant Verses Aligned with Sermon Themes:

Death and Resurrection Theme:

- **1 Corinthians 15:36-38** - Seed metaphor for resurrection
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** - New creation in Christ
- **Colossians 3:3** - Died with Christ, life hidden with Christ

Glorifying God Theme:

- **John 17:1-5** - Jesus' prayer to glorify the Father
- **1 Corinthians 10:31** - Do all to the glory of God



Taking Up the Cross/Death to Self:

- **Luke 9:23** - Daily cross-bearing
- **Galatians 2:20** - Crucified with Christ

Serving Christ:

- **Colossians 3:23-24** - Working as unto the Lord
- **Matthew 25:21** - Faithful servant rewarded

Hardened Hearts:

- **Hebrews 3:7-8** - Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts
- **Proverbs 29:1** - Hardened neck will be suddenly destroyed



Quotes

Authority is not earned by power. You can command people, but you'll never change the way they think or the way they feel by your commands. The authority that you desire is earned by humility, never by power.

Part of the problem with the church is how much the church knows and how little it does. Jesus says the blessing comes in doing these things.

Never seek recognition from anyone but Jesus for the service you offer. Be careful your humility is never false humility, which is actually pride seeking to be recognized in your humility.

The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. Jesus' gross act of humility only steeled Judas' resolve, as no king would bow himself to do this.

By this all will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another. It is how we are to be identified as followers of Christ, not by our knowledge of scripture or even by our association with Christ.

The work of salvation is finished. You only need to have your feet washed to be cleansed going forward. Those parts that touch the world are those parts which require repetitive cleansing through repentance and prayers for forgiveness.

It was a humiliation for God to take on human flesh, and it was a humiliation for God in flesh to depart the glory of heaven for the corruption of this world which had, by and large, in human pride, rejected its creator outright.



Discussion Questions

In what ways does Jesus' act of washing the disciples' feet challenge our modern understanding of leadership and authority in the church and in our daily lives?

How can we distinguish between genuine humility and false humility that seeks recognition, and what safeguards can we put in place to guard our motives when serving others?

Considering that Judas witnessed all of Jesus' miracles and teachings yet still betrayed him, what does this reveal about the relationship between knowledge of God and true faith?

How does the tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility, as seen in Judas' betrayal, affect our understanding of free will and divine foreknowledge?

Jesus says in verse 17, 'If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.' What is one specific act of humble service you know you should do but have been avoiding, and what holds you back?

How does understanding that 'authority is earned by humility, never by power' transform the way we approach influence and relationships in our families, workplaces, and communities?

What does it mean practically to 'love one another as I have loved you' in a world that often equates love with feelings rather than sacrificial action?

Reflecting on 1 Corinthians 3 and the judgment seat of Christ, how does knowing that our works will be tested by fire for their motives change the way you approach ministry and service today?

Peter's pride for Jesus prevented him from accepting Jesus' path to humiliation and death. In what ways might our pride for God or our religious convictions actually work against God's purposes?

How can the church today be more recognizable by its love for one another rather than by its doctrinal knowledge, programs, or public presence?



Small Group Guide: The Humility of Christ

Opening Prayer

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to understand the depth of Christ's humility and how it should transform our daily lives.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when someone served you in a way that surprised or humbled you. How did it make you feel?

Key Scripture

****John 13:14-17**** - "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."

Summary Points

1. ****Jesus demonstrated ultimate humility**** by taking on the role of the lowest servant
2. ****Authority is earned through humility****, not power
3. ****The blessing comes in doing****, not just knowing
4. ****Love for one another**** is how the church should be identified
5. ****Motive matters**** - serving for recognition versus serving Christ

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. ****Why do you think none of the disciples took up the basin and towel before Jesus did?**** What does this reveal about human nature and pride?
2. ****Peter initially refused to let Jesus wash his feet.**** What was really behind Peter's objection? Can you relate to his response?



3. **Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me" (v.8).** How does this connect to the cross and our need for cleansing?

Personal Reflection

4. **The sermon emphasized that "authority is not earned by power but by humility."** Where have you seen this principle demonstrated in your life or in others?

5. **Jesus said we are blessed "if you do them" (v.17), not just if you know them.** What is the difference between knowing about humility and actually practicing it? Share an example from your own life.

6. **Have you ever been "humiliated by somebody else's humility"?** How did that experience affect you?

Application & Challenge

7. **What is an "unserved need" in your circle of influence** that you could meet this week, even if it feels beneath your dignity?

8. **The sermon warned about "false humility, which is actually pride seeking to be recognized."** How can we guard against this in our service to others?

9. **Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.** How does knowing there will be a judgment of our works and motives affect how you serve today?

10. **Jesus gave a "new commandment" to love one another as He loved them (v.34-35).** What does it practically look like for your group/church to be known by this kind of love?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Humility is not weakness** - it's the pathway to true spiritual authority
- ✓ **Service is the demonstration of love** - Jesus loved them "to the uttermost" by serving them
- ✓ **Knowing is not enough** - blessing comes from doing what we know
- ✓ **Motive matters to God** - are we serving for recognition or for Christ?
- ✓ **The church should be identifiable by love** - not by knowledge, power, or programs



Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice:

****Option 1: The Unserved Need****

Identify one need in your community, workplace, or family that no one else is meeting—especially if it feels "beneath you"—and serve that need without telling anyone.

****Option 2: Hidden Service****

Perform an act of service for someone in your church or group that they will never know came from you. Ask God to guard your heart from wanting recognition.

****Option 3: Motive Check****

Before each act of service this week, pause and ask yourself: "Am I doing this to be seen by others or to serve Christ?" Journal about what you discover.

****Option 4: Love Demonstration****

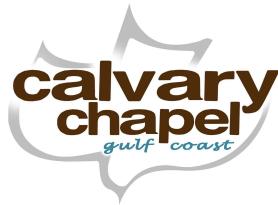
Reach out to someone in your church family who may be struggling or isolated and meet a practical need they have (meal, help with a project, time to listen, etc.).

Reflection Questions for the Week

- Where is pride showing up in my life that I haven't recognized?
- What acts of service am I avoiding because they feel undignified?
- How can I love others the way Jesus loved His disciples—"to the uttermost"?
- What would change in my life if I truly served to please Christ alone?

Scripture Memory

****John 13:34-35**** - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."



Closing Prayer Points

- Pray for humility to replace pride in our hearts
- Ask God to reveal areas where we serve for recognition rather than for Christ
- Pray for opportunities to demonstrate Christ's love through humble service
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guard our motives in all we do
- Pray for your group to be known by genuine love for one another

Leader Notes

- ****Be vulnerable**:** Share your own struggles with pride and false humility
- ****Encourage honesty**:** Create a safe space for people to admit where they struggle with serving
- ****Follow up**:** Next week, ask group members to share their experiences with the practical applications
- ****Model humility**:** Look for ways to serve your group members during and after the meeting

The authority that you desire is earned by humility, never by power.





Daily Devotional

5-Day Devotional: The Humility of Christ

Day 1: Love to the Uttermost

Reading: John 13:1-5

Devotional:

"He loved them to the end"—these words capture the essence of Christ's nature. Before the cross, Jesus demonstrated the full extent of His love by taking up a basin and towel, serving His disciples in the most undignified way. This wasn't merely an act of hospitality; it was a prophetic picture of the cross itself. God in flesh, humbling Himself to wash dirty feet, foreshadowed the ultimate humiliation of bearing our sin. Consider today: What does it mean that Jesus loved you "to the uttermost"? His love isn't based on your performance or cleanliness. He sees all your dirt, all your failure, and still kneels to serve you. How does this unconditional love challenge your understanding of what it means to follow Him?

Day 2: Authority Through Humility

Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

Devotional:

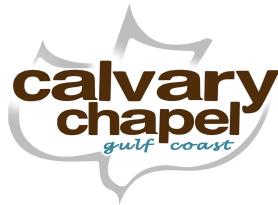
True authority isn't earned through power but demonstrated through humility. Jesus, being equal with God, didn't grasp at His divine privileges but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. This is revolutionary—the path upward is downward. In our world obsessed with position, platform, and recognition, Jesus shows us a different way. The basin and towel carry more authority than any crown. When you serve the unserved need, no matter how undignifying, you reflect the very nature of God. Consider the needs around you today that seem beneath your dignity. What if those are precisely the opportunities where Christ's authority flows through you? Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus—choosing humility over recognition.

Day 3: Cleansed Once, Walking Daily

Reading: 1 John 1:5-10

Devotional:

"He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet." Jesus' words reveal a profound truth about salvation and sanctification. The great bath of salvation—His finished work on the cross—needs no repetition. You are completely clean through faith in Christ. Yet as you walk through this world, your feet touch the dust and dirt of daily life. Temptation, failure, and sin still cling to you. This requires daily cleansing through confession and repentance. You don't need to be re-saved, but you do need ongoing fellowship with God through honest acknowledgment of your sin. The blood of Jesus



cleanses from all sin—past, present, and future. Walk in the light today, confessing quickly, knowing His faithfulness to forgive and restore you to fellowship.

Day 4: The Blessing of Doing

Reading: James 1:22-25

Devotional:

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." Knowledge alone doesn't transform; obedience does. The church's problem isn't ignorance but inaction—we know so much yet do so little. Jesus didn't say we'd be blessed by understanding humility or by discussing servant leadership. The blessing comes in taking up the basin and towel ourselves. It comes in the doing. Today, you'll encounter opportunities to serve in ways that feel beneath you, that won't be recognized or applauded. These are your basin-and-towel moments. Will you merely know about Christ's example, or will you follow it? The difference between hearers and doers is the difference between self-deception and transformation. Don't just read about humility—practice it today in concrete, costly ways.

Day 5: Love One Another

Reading: 1 John 4:7-21

Devotional:

"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." In His final hours before the cross, Jesus gave a new commandment—not new in content but in demonstration. He had just shown them what love looks like: God on His knees, washing dirty feet. This is how the church would be recognized—not by doctrinal precision, powerful preaching, or impressive programs, but by love. Sacrificial, humble, foot-washing love. The world watches how Christians treat one another. Do they see people serving the unserved needs? Do they witness humility that seeks no recognition? Or do they see pride, division, and self-promotion? You are called to love as Christ loved—to the uttermost, to the end. Today, who needs you to take up the basin and towel? Love them, not for what you'll receive, but because He first loved you.