

Well, it's been said: We learn by example. I think we all know that to be true. Think about it: Try to teach someone something by just talking to them, versus teaching them by showing them. The lesson taught by "showing them," is so much more effective in transferring knowledge. We see this in children. Children mimic, particularly their parents (and that can be good and bad), right? The point is: we learn by example.

Jesus knew this and was always teaching by example. Today, we're going to see that fact, and I'll tell you: outside of His death on the cross, what we'll see today is perhaps His greatest example of humility and love that He ever showed. Today, we're going to watch Jesus wash feet. Yes, the King of the universe is going to wash the feet of men who will soon abandon Him. This morning we begin a new series and we're going to see "Jesus' Example of Love"



as He washes His disciples' feet.

Now this passage is a narrative...a story...an account that's easy to follow and I'm not going to read all of it like I usually do (at the beginning), because I want it to build, and we'll see that as go through the passage in a few moments. But, for now, I want to set up the passage by talking about humility. Because that's what we're going to see today. It's been said:

"Only humble people love, and your capacity to love is directly related to your capacity to humble yourself." Anonymous

That maxim is universally true. Said another way: The humbler you are, the less interested you are in yourself, the greater your capacity is to invest yourself in someone else. We're told in Scripture...

Philippians 2:3-4

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Jesus lived His life on this earth as the epitome of selfless love and we'll see that yet again today. Now, let's be reminded of where we are. As we come to John 13, we're in Passion Week. The week leading up to Jesus' death on the cross. It's now Thursday and Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples. They're sharing, what is to be their last meal together, a meal that will be commemorated for all time's sake as "The Lord's Supper," or what we call "Communion." From there, He will go to the Garden of Gethsemane and be betrayed by Judas...betrayed into the hands of the Jewish leaders and ultimately falsely accused of blasphemy and finally nailed to a Roman cross on Friday.

For now, what happens in this upper room at that last meal is absolutely shocking. Let's begin to see it in detail...

John 13:1

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.

Truly Jesus loved His own to the end...that would be those who would receive Him by faith and surrender their lives to Him. His love is never-ending...that's what He said before He ascended back into heaven to His Father. He said: "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

But, oh were these guys hard to love... Why? Because they were so slow to learn, so slow to have faith and so slow to do what He had taught them. In fact, do you know what they were doing at the supper table during the meal? They were having an argument. Luke tells us in his account.

Luke 22:24

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

Can you believe that? After all of this time...all the years of teaching and training about humility and love, they're still arguing over who is the greatest? Well, that was the pin in the grenade that led to Jesus taking the role of a servant and washing their feet. See the image...



Now, let's talk about that. Foot washing. Because foot washing is something that's foreign to us...but, was a necessity in first century Israel. As we all know, they wore sandals and there was no asphalt or concrete roads...only dirty, dusty roads that would turn to mud when it rained. Therefore, in every house, there was a water pot or basin at the door that had water in it that a household servant would use to wash your feet, as a guest, upon entry into that home. Typically, this job fell to the lowest household servant, or to an aside child of that home.

Problem was...this house in Jerusalem, where the upper room was located, was being used on a spur of the moment deal. Like a Vrbo. Remember, Jesus had acquired the use of this home's upper room and there were no servants to do the job. So, they're eating the meal, and before Jesus would perform this act of humility and love, John tells us something about Judas...and I find this so poignant. What is that? The audacity of Judas versus the humility of Jesus.

John 13:2

² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.

There's Judas...now being led by his desire for money...his desire for power... He's being led by Satan now...and thus, Judas is the antithesis of Jesus. The contrast is as stark as night and day. Judas is now a hater, and the more Jesus has failed to fulfill Judas' desire for power in a future role in Jesus' earthly kingdom, (which was not going to happen), the more Judas has succumbed to the idea of betraying Jesus. Judas no longer cares about Jesus. He only cares about himself and money.

Church, it's so hard to understand all of this: how in the world could Judas have become the man he had become. After all he's seen and experienced. It's heartbreaking! John tells us that Satan "put it into his heart" to betray Jesus. The word "put" in Greek means: "to throw." That's what Satan does...He throws darts. I feel like they're javelins. Javelins of lies and deceit, temptation...wrong thoughts...motives that are suspect. Judas was defenseless against them. You say, "Why?" Because He wasn't saved...so, he didn't have the shield of faith to fend off those fiery darts of Satan.

I want to ask you something...did Jesus wash Judas' feet? Yes, He did. Can you imagine. Jesus knows what Judas is getting ready to do...but He washed his feet anyway. Jesus modeled the fact that we're to pray for our enemies...walk that extra mile, turn the other cheek. Jesus washed Judas' feet knowing that everything that was about to happen was in His Father's sovereign plan.

And that should encourage us, church. We don't have to be afraid of our circumstances...come what may...God stands outside of time and He's already in tomorrow. God's not scared of the future. So, we don't have to dread the future...we don't have to dread what may come...because God who holds the future in His hands will take care of us and provide what we need when we get there.

Well, the clock is ticking... Watch verse 3...Jesus knows it's His time...God has told Him...

John 13:3-5

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.

You know you would think after all Jesus has lived through and done for the disciples...those guys knowing and believing He is the Son of God...that He's come from God (heaven...where He left His majestic throne as King of Glory), and knowing that He's going back home to His throne in heaven...knowing who Jesus is...THE MESSIAH...you would think someone would have had the wherewithal to get up and wash His feet.

Surely, Peter, James or John after seeing Him transfigured before their eyes, would have jumped at the chance to show the King of Kings hospitality. But, no...when you're thinking about yourself and who's the greatest, you don't think about those mundane tasks of servants. When you want to be "Charles in charge," why would you think about something like that? So, Jesus has finally had enough and in essence, says: "I'll do it."

So, He gets up and takes off His outer garments, (which were likely dusty and dirty), and He's now left with just His undergarment, (which would have been clean and BTW, would be gambled for the next day by the Roman soldiers at the foot of the cross), and so He takes a towel and ties it around

His waist and He locates a basin and pours water into it and begins to clean the disciples' feet. It was such a humbling thing to see this.

And I'm telling you church...those disciples had to be shocked, in stunned silence. Think of the environment He's doing this in...they've just been arguing about who's the greatest...and they're sitting there...wiping the food from their mouths...which are now hanging wide open...as He goes around the room...stooping down to wash their feet. Oh, they knew this act of foot washing was the most menial task and the lowest thing one could do in the social order of their society. **AND THIS STUNG!** It highlighted His humility in contrast to their pride...their argument about who's the greatest.

Church, this act was LOVE ON DISPLAY...displayed to undeserving, weak, selfish, self-centered, self-absorbed disciples. But you know what? After His resurrection, these guys finally got it...and it was their love for Jesus that advanced the church from Israel throughout the Roman Empire. They would finally get it...but, for now they haven't gotten it.

And you know...Jesus could have hammered them like He had done the Pharisees two days earlier in the Temple, but He didn't. As weak as they were, the disciples, unlike the Pharisees, had shown trust in Him and followed Him. So instead of a rebuke, Jesus gave them an example...a model of how they're to love, AND...as He's going around the room, He comes to Peter...

John 13:6

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"

Peter is like: "What are you doing?" You see, I believe Peter's mortified at what he's seeing. He knows that he is the defacto leader and I believe now he's kicking himself thinking...I should be the one doing this. So, he gets it now...and to put it in our vernacular...He sees what Jesus is doing is like the owner of a restaurant emptying the trash...the owner of a company washing the delivery trucks... "Lord, do you wash my feet..." meaning...I can't let you do this. It's beneath you. And that's the point. Isn't a good restaurant owner one who is not too big to empty the trash if he/she needs to.

So, Jesus interrupts Peter (which has become a rather common occurrence):

John 13:7

⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."

Can you see now that Jesus is not just teaching about the hospitality of foot washing? He's teaching about humility. He's saying, "Peter, it will be my humiliation, not my exaltation (right now on this earth) that will buy salvation." In essence: "This is why I came. I came to humble myself to buy your pardon...oh, one day I'll be exalted...one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess as they bow down to me, but for now I must go down in humiliation. So, Peter, you don't grasp this now...but, soon you will." (And he would in about 4 days on Sunday). In the meantime...Peter pontificates...

John 13:8-9

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!"

Peter is so funny...he's like a yo-yo...he goes from one extreme to another. "You'll never wash me!" That's BTW a **double negative**. In other words: "You will not wash my feet...**no never!**" Amazing, isn't it? Peter is once again questioning the Lord's actions. Remember how Peter had said...you

won't go to the cross...remember how Peter tried to manage the whole Mount of Transfiguration scene by trying to set up tents...and here he is, yet again trying to tell Jesus what to do!

You know...as a side note...if I'm Jesus...I know this is my last night with these guys and they're still arguing about who is the greatest and here's Peter, the leader of the group, still trying to shut me down...I would have been feeling...like: my goodness...what a mess...after all the miracles, all the lessons, all the talks and meals, all the teaching and training...and they still keep acting like this!

But, isn't that so often how our lives are...so often, we're just like the disciples, aren't we? Making the same mistakes...tripping over the same hurdles...we're a mess... and maybe that's you today...you're here in the midst of something...some sin...some trial...some confusion, some pain, or struggle...but all of a sudden, Jesus steps in...because He never gives up on us...He loves us to the end...and by His grace some way, some how, He shows us something...often in a still small voice...and BANG...finally we get perspective...we come to our senses...and we see.

Listen now...listen: if you're here today and you're involved in something you know you shouldn't be...wake up...listen to what Jesus is saying to you right now. See Him at your feet, removing your shoes and He's looking up at you and saying, "Let me wash your feet. Let me show you what you can be, I will make you clean if you will trust me." And hear Him also say: "But, you can only be a part of me if you're willing to be humiliated like me...to serve like me."

And it's at that moment that it happened for Peter! BANG! Peter finally got it and he says: "Wash me all over." In our vernacular... "Run me through the carwash!" You see, Jesus was talking about a relationship with Him (you will have no part of me). Jesus wants a relationship with you. Remember, when Jesus asked in John chapter 6, when everyone was walking away from Him, Jesus said to the disciples, "Are you going to leave me to?" Peter said: "Lord, who are we to go to. You have the words of eternal life!"

Yes, Peter finally got it: "Give me a bath!!!" Watch Jesus' response:

John 13:10-11

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,^[a] but is completely clean. And you^[b] 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."

Again, "you" is plural...which means, Jesus was talking to all of them. He was saying: "You" (plural) are clean...saved...mine...BUT, **not all of you**...one of you isn't. And church, right there Jesus said it...for those who think Judas somehow might have been saved and somehow just got off track at the end...backslid, or even lost his salvation (which is impossible) NO...don't you dare think Judas was saved...he never was...he was a fake...a weed...a tare among the wheat...a goat in the midst of the sheep...Jesus said: "Not every one of you is mine/clean/saved." That was Judas.

You see church, a believer is a person who, yes...even after we've been bathed/cleansed/saved, will still sin from time to time...why because we're still in the flesh and we're still walking through this world and picking up the dirt and dust, the sin, of the world; and so, we sin...make mistakes; but we can confess that sin and like washing feet...that confession brings cleansing. We know this...it's:

1 John 1:9

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But, church, understand what confession is. Confession, true confession, is a surrender of our will to Jesus, instead of that thing...that sin that has had dominion over us. Are you willing to give that sin up today? What sin? The one the Holy Spirit is bringing to your mind. Oh, it's pleasurable...in your flesh you want to hold onto it...but, it's eating you up...it's devouring you...that thing, that sin is NOT better than Jesus! It's poison. Confess up...open up about it...kill it.

Well, Jesus puts his outer garment back on...and now, He's going to finish the lesson...

John 13:12-17

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^[c] 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.

"If you do them." Church that means we're more than "hearers," we're "doers" of the Word! Jesus said, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I tell you" (Luke 6:46). So, I want to ask you...are you willing to pick up the towel and the basin and serve...to humble yourself...even to those who don't get it, like Jesus did? Or, are you too good for that? Are you willing to stoop to do the menial, hard tasks or do you want easy street, comfort and pleasure?

Now, I want to say something that might sound somewhat self-serving...but, speaking of serving...you know I'm constantly begging for help in the church, right? For people to help us in the various ministries and outreaches that we seek to do here. But, most don't help. The majority only come to events or services...seldom help...seldom serve...**they're the ones who are served**. What are you doing to serve in your church? How are you serving? I know you're busy. We all are. We make time for what matters and for what's important.

You know, while I'm stepping on toes...☺ so often Christians are seen by the world as hypocrites. That's the #1 complaint about us. Why? Because we're seen as NOT being humble. Instead, we're often seen as critical and unwilling to serve. And so, we hold grudges...we often don't care to offend by our actions...we often are unwilling to give up anything for anyone...if it causes us the least bit of inconvenience. And what is worse: we often see people as a means to get what we want. What can they do for me. How can I get something out of them...and that's the total opposite of our Savior...who left heaven and all of its majesty to come here to this nasty world of sin.

Church, I close with this: if Jesus Christ, the most exalted, elevated person in the universe can stoop, can't we? Can't we, who are infinitely less than Jesus, follow His example and humble ourselves to serve? Whether that's serving in the church, or in your home or at work or on the ballfield or in the classroom. Can't we be willing to be the hands and feet of Jesus and look at people's "dirty lives," (like ours), and be willing to take the towel and basin and serve, like Jesus?

Andrew Murray said it this way:

"The lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure." Andrew Murray

So, this is what we've seen today...see the screens one last time...this is what humility does...watch the progression...

Humility → Holiness → Joy

And church, that's why we're washed, made clean...it's so we can be holy. And once we're holy, we'll have joy. Because you see: joy is a by-product of a life that's lived for Jesus. And hallmarks of lives lived for Jesus are humility and holiness. If you truly live for Jesus, you will be humble and you will pursue holiness, not sin. Oh, but I get it, the world says joy come from being served...no...it comes from serving. The world says, "How many people work for you?" Jesus says: "How many people do you serve?"

The disciples had been arguing about who's the greatest...but now we know it's not about the person who's on the elevated platform, it's about the person who's willing to stoop to clean the platform...it's that person who is the greatest...the one willing to stoop. May we be those kind of people...following Jesus, as our example.
