



The Upper Room: Serve
John 13:1-38

The hour had come for Jesus to accomplish what he came to earth to do. That was to die for sin, conquer death at His resurrection and return to heaven. So, Jesus then focused on “his own” – the disciples. Jesus had loved them and would love them to the end. One way Jesus loved was to serve.

Jesus Served

People in Jesus’ day walked on dusty roads with open toed shoes. So, there was a need to wash feet after traveling. It was a mark of honor for a host to provide a servant to wash a guest’s feet. To perform acts of service for one’s teacher was considered a common duty of a disciple. However, washing feet was considered too demeaning for disciples or even a Jewish slave and thus non-Jewish slaves were assigned this task. Yet, it was Jesus who washed the disciples’ feet! This act of service was a shock to the disciples, and Peter even wanted to refuse it. But Jesus was teaching them a lesson for them and us to follow. Luke records how the disciples that night were arguing about who was the greatest among them. Jesus’ example shows that the greatest is the one who serves (Luke 22:24-30).

Judas Betrayed

Jesus chose Judas to be one of the twelve. We know little about Judas other than his betrayal. We know he was the treasurer of the group (13:29) and greedy (John 12:6). Judas conspired with the religious leaders who gave him 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus (Matt 26:15). We don’t know why Judas did it. He was influenced by Satan (v.2, 27), but since he made the choice on his own, he must have had a motive. People have offered jealousy, greed, fear of political persecution, or forcing Jesus to fight back and show his power as possible motives. Note these things about Judas’ betrayal. Jesus washed Judas’ feet. Jesus was troubled in spirit by the betrayal. The disciples had no idea who the betrayer was. In fact, Peter’s boast may have been an attempt to show the others that he wasn’t the betrayer. While we don’t betray Jesus in such a way, all of us are tempted by pride and selfishness to do what we want rather than what God wants.

Peter Boasted

Once Judas left, Jesus in earnest began to teach his disciples. He wanted them to be prepared for his departure. Jesus told them it was time for Him and the Father to be glorified. Jesus glorified the Father by completing the work He had come to do (John 17:4). Jesus told them he would leave, and they wouldn’t be able to follow him. In Jesus’ absence they were to love each other as Jesus loved them. The Old Testament said to love one another as you love yourself (Lev 19:18). Jesus’ command is new (literally, fresh) because it’s a higher standard and it’s part of a new covenant Jesus would ratify with his blood. In Peter’s devotion to Jesus, he wanted to follow Him wherever he went. Peter said he would even die for Jesus. It must have been a shock to Peter, to hear Jesus say that very night, Peter would deny Jesus three times. Peter still had a lot to learn about love and service.