CORE VALUE 7 OF 10 · WEEK 7

ANABAPTISH

Serving Compassionately

We value serving others at their point of need, following the example of our Lord Jesus.

Beth Claassen Thrush | Sunday, October 25, 2026 | Crest Community Church

For the Nightstand

THE TEACHING

We could have spent a whole morning on beautiful stories of service. This week goes somewhere harder first. Sadness. Not sob stories. Not self-pity. A godly sadness, the kind Jesus carried. Isaiah called him "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Compassion comes from two Latin roots, *com* and *pati*. To suffer with. As Mike Mason puts it, "Sadness is the beginning of mercy."

In John 13, Jesus knows his hour has come. He knows the Father has given all things into his hands. And what does he do with all that? He gets up from supper, ties a towel around his waist, and kneels in front of a room full of dirty feet. One by one. Not efficient. Peter says, "You shall never wash my feet." And the man about to betray him? Jesus washes his feet too.

Then Jesus says, "You also should do just as I have done to you." So receive from him first. Get low. Be willing to get dirty. See one person at a time. Leave no one out. And remember who we are. We're the servants, not the saviors. Our job is to serve.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 53:3
A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.

Matthew 9:36
He saw the crowds and had compassion.

John 13:8
Peter says no. Jesus won't leave him out.

John 13:14–15
Do just as I have done to you.

A PRAYER

Jesus, man of sorrows, thank you for kneeling at our feet. We would rather do it ourselves. Wash us anyway. Give us a godly sadness that moves us toward people, one by one, friend and enemy alike. Keep us low. We are your servants. In Jesus' name, amen.

PART TWO

For Your Home Church

Gather together. About 60 minutes, after your meal or around it.

FOR LEADERS

This is shared language, not a script. Everyone in the room can see these notes, so feel free to read them out loud. The times add up to an hour. Hold them loosely. If a conversation is alive, stay with it and trim somewhere else.

Check In

5 min

Start by hearing how last week actually went.

LEADER NOTE

Go around the room. **How did last week's practice go?** Three were offered: read Luke 15 and ask, "What if God is looking for me like that?", pray for your three names every day and try one simple practice (minister at the place of pain, offer to pray, or practice hospitality), or take one next step with one of your three names.

Some people will not have done it. That is fine, and it is worth saying out loud so nobody performs. Ask them instead what the week was like. No fixing and no follow-up questions. Just receive it.

Take Communion

5 min

Before we wash anyone's feet, we let him wash ours.

LEADER NOTE

Share the bread and the cup, before, during, or after your meal. If your group doesn't have its own words yet, have someone read this psalm out loud first.

PSALM 103:10–14 · ESV

10 He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

13 As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.
14 For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.

Read This Overview

5 min

LEADER NOTE

Ask someone to read this out loud.

Some words need a whole paragraph to translate. Compassion is one of them.

When the gospel writers say Jesus "had compassion," they use the Greek word *splagchnizomai* (splahng-NEE-zoh-my). It comes from the word for your insides. Heart, lungs, gut. It isn't polite pity. It's a deep sadness, felt in the gut, that gets up and does something.

Watch where it shows up. Jesus sees the crowds, "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd," and he has compassion. He heals their sick. He touches a man with leprosy. He feeds five thousand, then four thousand. He stops for two blind men on the side of the road. He meets a widow walking behind her only son, and gives him back to her.

The English word comes from Latin. *Com*, with. *Pati*, to suffer. To suffer with.

For the Brethren in Christ, the family of churches Crest belongs to, this has always had a picture. In the 1970s our church chose an emblem with three things on it: a cross, a dove, and a basin and towel. For more than two hundred years our people have gotten out pitchers and basins and towels and circled up to wash each other's feet, just like Jesus did in John 13. Then they carried that towel out the door. City missions in Chicago and Philadelphia in the 1890s. Later, clinics and schools in Zimbabwe, Zambia, India, and Nicaragua.

Serving Compassionately

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Suffer with. Then pick up the towel.

Go Deeper in the Scripture

20 min

Watch the one who holds all things in his hands pick up a towel.

LEADER NOTE

This is a long passage. Have two people read it out loud, switching at verse 12. Read it slowly. You won't get to every question. If time is short, start with the three marked START HERE.

JOHN 13:1–20 · 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.

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. 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.

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. 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. 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."

BACKGROUND NOTES

Feet. Roads were dirt and dust, and people walked them in sandals. By the time you reached a meal, your feet were the dirtiest part of you. Washing them was a job for the lowest servant in the house, if the house had one. Here, the teacher does it.

Knowing, then kneeling. Look at verse 3. Jesus knows the Father has given all things into his hands. He knows where he came from and where he's going. That's what frees him to get up, set aside his outer clothes, and take the place of a servant.

Two kinds of clean. The whole conversation has a double meaning. Peter thinks it's about getting washed, so he asks for a full bath. Jesus is pointing to something deeper: a cleansing only he can give, and that we have to let him give. "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Then, in verses 12–17, he turns it into an example for us.

Judas at the basin. John brings up the betrayer at the start (verse 2), in the middle (verses 10–11), and at the end (verse 18). He wants us to see it. Jesus washed his feet too. "He who ate my bread" quotes Psalm 41:9, about a close friend who turns on you.

Back to the garden. The devil is at this table (verse 2), like the serpent in Eden. In the garden, the temptation was to know good and evil on our own terms, to be our own judge. Beth sees Judas going his own way, sure he knows best. Jesus, the new Adam, takes the low road.

Servant and messenger. In verse 16, "servant" can also be translated "slave." "Messenger" is *apostolos*, one who is sent. It's where we get the word apostle. We're both. Never greater than the one who sent us.

"JUST AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU"

Beth named five marks of the way Jesus served:

1. **Embodied.** Practice serving each other, regularly, with your hands.
2. **Connected.** Receive from Jesus first.
3. **Humble.** Be willing to get dirty.
4. **One by one.** Not efficient. See each person.
5. **Radically inclusive.** Friends and enemies. Zealots, tax collectors, even a betrayer.

And three ways *not* to be like Jesus. We can't do it alone, without receiving his service first. We can't save anyone. And we can't know anyone's heart, so we don't get to choose who we serve.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Read verses 3–5 again, slowly. What does Jesus know? What does he do with it? START HERE
2. Peter goes from "You shall never wash my feet" to "not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" What do you think is going on inside him?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. How would you define compassion? Describe one way you've experienced it, and one way you've shown it. START HERE
4. John keeps reminding us that Judas was in the room. Why do you think that matters so much to him? What does it say about who Jesus serves?
5. Look at the five marks in the box above. Which one comes easiest for you? Which one is hardest?

WHAT DOES IT ASK OF US?

6. Indulging ourselves, saving too much, feeling superior, growing callous, discomfort with people who are different, feeling overwhelmed. Which of these gets in your way most? What's one way to move it out of the way? START HERE
7. If our home church disappeared from this neighborhood, would our neighbors notice? Would we be missed? Why or why not?

FOR ANOTHER NIGHT

Why does it matter that we serve the way Jesus did, and not just that we serve? Beth put it this way: “Our job is to serve and not save.”

Name one person who has left a legacy of compassion in your life. What did you learn from them? What legacy would you like to leave?

Practice for the Night: Let Him Kneel

20 min

Before we serve like Jesus, we let Jesus serve us.

LEADER NOTE

Have paper and pens on hand. The silence will feel long. Don’t fill it. When it’s time to pray, go first, and keep it simple.

For a lot of us, being served is harder than serving. That’s exactly what Peter felt. Some people may not follow Jesus yet themselves. That’s welcome here. Invite them to simply picture the scene and notice what they feel.

1. **Get quiet** · 3 min
   Phones face down. Have someone read John 13:6–9 out loud, slowly. Then the leader prays: **“Jesus, we’re here. Kneel with us tonight.”**
2. **Picture it** · 5 min
   In silence, picture Jesus kneeling in front of you with a basin and a towel. He looks up at you. Notice what you feel. Do you want to pull your feet back? Then ask: **“Where am I resisting being served, by you, Jesus, or by the people around me?”** Write one honest sentence.
3. **Pray in pairs** · 9 min
   Share your sentence with one other person, and only as much as you want to. Then pray for each other, one at a time. Keep it simple: **“Jesus, wash my friend. Help them receive from you first.”**
4. **Read it together** · 3 min
   Come back together. Read John 13:14–15 out loud, all at once, from the Go Deeper reading. Then go around the room. Anyone who wants to can name one person they want to serve this week, first name only, in a sentence.

KEEP THIS

"Jesus, I'll let you kneel. Then send me to kneel."

Our job is to serve and not save.

Cut this card out and keep it close this week.

Practice for the Week Ahead

3 min

Choose one small, honest step. Start where you are, not where you think you should be.

IF THIS STILL FEELS NEW

Surround yourself with stories of compassion. Each day, read one story of Jesus moved with compassion: Matthew 9:36, Matthew 14:14, Matthew 20:34, Mark 6:34, Mark 8:2, or Luke 7:13. Ask, what moved him? Social media hands us whatever will amuse us. Make room for something else.

IF YOU'VE FOLLOWED JESUS A WHILE

Surround yourself with people at their point of need. It's easy to protect ourselves from sadness by staying around people just like us. Take one step closer to someone whose life looks different from yours. Then just listen.

IF YOU'RE READY FOR MORE

Surround yourself with chances to practice. Serve one person this week the slow way, one on one, someone who can't pay you back. Or get out a basin and a towel and wash feet with your family or a friend.

Next week, we'll start by checking in on how it went.

Close in Prayer

2 min

LEADER NOTE

Gather everyone and close your time in prayer, however the Spirit leads.

COMING UP · SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Core Value 8: Pursuing Peace

We value all human life and promote forgiveness, understanding, reconciliation, and non-violent resolution of conflict.

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Compelling Convictions, the companion book to this series, is free to borrow from the church library. Chapter 7, by Lynda Gephart and Hank Johnson, is on this week's value. Don't miss Thobekile Ncube's essay from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, at the end of the chapter. Just ask John.