



## SERVE JOYFULLY -FILL A BASIN-

### CHECK-IN

**How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... today's scripture comes from what we call Jesus's "Last Supper" with his followers before his death and resurrection. So... if you could have just one meal with Jesus, what would it be? Would you take him to your favorite steakhouse for a juicy ribeye? Maybe you'd cook your famous blackberry pie? Perhaps Jesus would just like burgers and brats on the grill? (He's probably had enough fishes and loaves.)**

### OPENING PRAYER

**Humble God, give us the heart of Jesus to see others as he did, and the humility of Jesus to serve others as he did.**

# INTRODUCTION

The wait staff is beginning to think you're permanently moving in. So, you decide it's time to pack up and head back out into the world before they ask you to do dishes. You've made some serious progress answering the question, "what does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?" And the first of the three characteristics, "*to love boldly*," felt like a great place to start. The sacrifice, commitment, and call to love God and ourselves feels like a really difficult and heavy task, but this was the radical, revolutionary love Jesus displayed and calls each of us to pursue. As you exit the sandwich shop, the wide world is laid out before you and you see the faces of the people you just decided you were called to love. And then a touch of panic hits you... "wait, *how* do we do this? It's one thing to *say* we need to love others as Jesus did, but... how do we actually put this call to love boldly into *action*?" That's when it hits you. The second characteristic, to *serve joyfully*, is the answer. Bold love calls us to serve.

**Setup Question: Throw out some ideas. What are some ways you might put Jesus's call to "love boldly" into action? What does it mean to you? Once we have Jesus's heart of love, what are some things we actually *do* to live it out?**

## SETUP

Do you have our vision statement memorized yet? Let's hit it one more time. Here is the vision statement released to us by the Council of Bishops.

**The United Methodist Church forms disciples  
of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit,  
LOVE BOLDLY, SERVE JOYFULLY  
AND LEAD COURAGEOUSLY  
in local communities and worldwide connections.**

We've spent the last three weeks tackling the first characteristic, to *love boldly*. We began with this, and the Council of Bishops began with this, because Jesus began with this. But loving like Jesus did is not easy. It's more than just being nice and doing nice things. Anyone can do that. If mustering up the self-control not to loosen the leg on your coworker's desk chair after she's eaten your yogurt for the 27<sup>th</sup> time is *bold love*, then we haven't set the bar very high. The radical, revolutionary love that Jesus calls us to makes the world take notice. But the question remains, "what does loving boldly call us to do? How do we put it into practice?" Well, that's where the second characteristic comes in.

**Question 1: We capped off "loving boldly" last week talking about how we are to love God and love ourselves. How did you do with this week? Were you able to spend time focusing on your relationship with God, and did you do anything to work toward seeing yourself as God does?**

## SCRIPTURE

Jesus's command to love others came from John's version of Jesus life, during an event we call The Last Supper. The evening

before Jesus would be betrayed and crucified, Jesus gives his followers a recap of his entire repertoire of teaching... almost as if they're cramming for a final exam. (Cuz, they kinda were.) The primary message is love. However, that's not the only command Jesus gives that night. In fact, if we back up to the beginning of the night, Jesus models something powerful that will help us understand this second characteristic of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

**Read John, chapter 13, verses 1 through 5.**

Before you get all grossed out, remember, this was a custom of this time. People walked everywhere on dirty roads in sandals. So, when someone held a gathering, it was customary to wash the feet of your guests. It was considered good hospitality. But it was done by a servant, not by the master of the house. No self-respecting home-owner would stoop so low. But this night Jesus wanted to make a point: as their master, their teacher, their rabbi, *this* is where living out love begins. This is how you show love to one another. This is *how* you love boldly.

**Question 2: Yup, washing feet. Jesus went there. Today, we might find it weird. Back then, this was a powerful display of humble service. How would you have felt were you one of the disciples in this moment? Would you have felt appreciated? Would you have felt unworthy? (For bonus points, has anyone ever been part of a foot-washing ceremony?)**

# REFLECTION

Jesus knew that his disciples were a little thick-headed and might not fully understand what was happening. So, he spelled it out for them...

**Read John, chapter 13, verses 14 and 15.**

This is our second command, and it's a powerful one. He's saying, "this is how you live out the command I will give you to love one another." Loving boldly calls us to *serve joyfully*. The progression makes sense. We spent three weeks talking about having the heart of Jesus, seeing others as Jesus saw them, finding the worth in everyone. The natural expression of that inner transformation is to serve. It's a move from theory to action. It's a progression from the heart to the hands.

As with each of the characteristics, the Council of Bishops gave us a description of what they meant.

**"United Methodists, with a Christ-like heart, journey alongside the most vulnerable, offering care and compassion with joy."**

We'll break this description down as we go through the next three weeks. But on the face of it, there is no better example of service, than Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

**Question 3: Consider this description? At first glance, how's it hit you? What stands out about it that could prove difficult? What about do you find motivating?**

From the story of Jesus's act of washing the disciples' feet, we look at two aspects that will set up the next two week. First, before the Bishops even mentioned the action, they threw in an important prepositional phrase, "with a Christ-like heart." Now, we spent three weeks talking about what a Christ-like heart looked like, (go back and catch up on those if you missed any.) But there's one more aspect of Christ's heart highlighted in today's Scripture that sets us up for service. Verse 3 says, "Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything..." (NLT) John reminds us that Jesus knew his status. He was king over all. He was God on Earth. And as such, he could be glorified, worshipped, exalted by his followers. It would be appropriate if they groveled at his feet. But, in typical Jesus fashion, he flips it. Jesus gets up, fills a basin, and instead of having them bow down at his feet, he washes theirs. Jesus displays the ultimate humility, the Word of God Made Flesh, the Voice of Creation, kneels down, takes on the role of a servant, and washes the feet of his followers. And so, when Jesus says, "do as I have done for you," it begins with this... taking on the humble attitude of Christ.

It's human nature to have the attitude Jesus *could have* had from verse 3. We often can't help but think ourselves better than others, pointing out others' flaws, assessing what's wrong with the folks' around us. We like to have "verse 3 attitude",

authority over everything. But Jesus calls us to have “verse 5 attitude”: to swallow some pride, scrounge up some humility, fill a basin, and wash some feet. Serving joyfully begins with attitude... are you willing to get humble and fill a basin?

**Question 4: Two parter: 1) Consider this call to serve others with the same humble attitude he displayed. First, take a few moments to assess it in a general sense. How might you live this out this week? Where are you being called to serve?**

**2) When you read the description from the Bishops, and witness Jesus’s humble attitude in the story from John’s gospel, where in your life are living with a “verse 3 attitude”? Is there a specific person or situation where Jesus might be asking you to switch to a “verse 5 attitude” and fill a basin and (metaphorically) wash their feet?**

## CLOSING

There’s one more aspect of this foot-washing event that makes it even more incredible. Consider the folks to whom those feet belonged. Jesus washed even the feet of Simon, who would deny him, Thomas, who would doubt him, Judas, who would betray him. Those are the lengths to which we are to go when it comes to service. We spoke a few weeks ago about loving those we may see as an enemy or find difficult to love. But here’s the thing... sometimes, that doesn’t happen right away. But this example from Jesus, washing the feet of even those who would deny or hurt or betray him, tells us that love can begin with an

act of humility. Bold love leads to service. But sometimes, serving leads to love. When someone sees the humility you display, the humble attitude of service, they take notice. This can open the door to eventually loving them as Jesus does. So, this week, your challenge is to take on the humble attitude of Christ, fill a basin, and serve someone, maybe even someone you find it hard to love. You never know whose life you might transform.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations  
and close in prayer.**