

SPY WEDNESDAY | THE SERVANT KING: The Obedient Servant

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE CROSS

Family,

I want you to step into this moment with me. Not as a reader of the text—but as someone in the room. Imagine you know—without a doubt—that within twenty-four hours, your life will be torn apart.

Not by accident. Not by surprise. But by betrayal.

And not from a distance. From someone close.

Someone you walked with.

Someone you trusted.

Someone you poured your life into.

You know their face.

You know their voice.

You know what they're about to do.

You can already feel the weight of it—the ache, the sting, the grief. Now ask yourself honestly: What would you do with your final night?

- Would you protect yourself? Would you confront them?

- Would you withdraw before they could wound you?
- Would you surround yourself with people who would never leave?

That's what most of us would do.

But Jesus... does something entirely different. John tells us that Jesus knew everything.

He knew where He came from.

He knew where He was going.

He knew what was about to happen.

And He knew exactly who would betray Him.

And with all of that knowledge... He stands up from the table. He removes His outer garment. He wraps a towel around His waist. And He kneels. Not just before His friends... but before His betrayer. Family, this is not just humility. This is not just a leadership lesson.

This is **the heart of God revealed in action.**

And tonight, on Spy Wednesday—the day betrayal moves from thought to decision—we are not just invited to observe what Jesus did. We are invited to step into how Jesus lives.

BIG IDEA: True obedience is a life that takes up the towel and kneels in love.

ISAIAH 50:4-11

The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.

He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

5 The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears;
I have not been rebellious,
I have not turned away.

6 I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;

I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting.

7 Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.

Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.

8 He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me?
Let us face each other!

Who is my accuser?
Let him confront me!

9 It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me.
Who will condemn me?

They will all wear out like a garment;
the moths will eat them up.

10 Who among you fears the Lord
and obeys the word of his servant?

Let the one who walks in the dark,
who has no light,
trust in the name of the Lord
and rely on their God.

11 But now, all you who light fires
and provide yourselves with flaming torches,
go, walk in the light of your fires
and of the torches you have set ablaze.

This is what you shall receive from my hand:
You will lie down in torment.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF OBEDIENCE (ISAIAH 50)

Before Jesus ever touches the basin in John 13, He has already lived a life of surrender in Isaiah 50.

The prophet gives us a glimpse into something we rarely see—the inner life of the Servant.

“Morning by morning,” he writes, “He wakens me... He wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.”

This is the rhythm of Jesus.

Not rushed. Not reactive. Not driven by pressure or expectation. But rooted. Anchored. Formed. Every day begins the same way— with listening.

Before Jesus speaks, He listens. Before He moves, He yields. Before He acts, He aligns Himself with the will of the Father.

This is why Jesus can say in John 5:19, “The Son can do nothing by Himself... only what He sees the Father doing.”

His obedience is not occasional. It is continuous. It is not circumstantial. It is cultivated. And that’s what we have to understand tonight:

Obedience is not something you step into in a moment. It is something that is formed in you over time. Morning by morning. Moment by moment.

Isaiah continues: “I have not been rebellious.” And that word matters. Because from the beginning of Scripture, rebellion has been the defining mark of humanity.

In Genesis 3, Adam reaches for what is not his. Israel turns away again and again. And if we’re honest, we feel that same resistance in ourselves.

That subtle pull to delay. To negotiate. To hold something back.

But Jesus... never resists the Father.

Where Adam grasped, Jesus yielded. Where humanity said, “my will,” Jesus said, “Your will.”

And because of that, Romans 5:19 declares, “Through the obedience of one man, many will be made righteous.”

This is where we begin to see something deeper. Holiness is not simply avoiding sin. Holiness is a heart so aligned with God in love that it no longer resists Him. It is not striving harder. It is surrendering deeper. And if we miss this, we will misunderstand everything that follows. Because you don't pick up the towel in a moment.

You are formed for it in secret.

JOHN 13:1-17

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” 7 Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

8 “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” 9 “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” 10 Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. 12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

THE REVELATION OF THE TOWEL (JOHN 13)

So when we arrive in John 13, this is not a spontaneous act of humility.

This is a life of surrender now made visible. John slows the moment down for us. He tells us that Jesus knew.

He knew that the Father had placed all things under His authority. He knew that He had come from God. He knew that He was returning to God.

There is no insecurity here. No confusion. No hesitation. Jesus is completely settled in who He is. And it is from that place of complete security... that He kneels. In the world Jesus lived in, this moment would have been shocking. Foot washing was not honorable work. It was not symbolic or ceremonial. It was the task reserved for the lowest servant in the house.

The roads were dusty.

The feet were filthy.

The work was degrading.

And yet Jesus chooses it.

He does not assign it.

He does not avoid it.

He does not rise above it.

He steps into it. Because in the Kingdom of God, greatness is not revealed by how high you rise... but by how low you are willing to go.

And this is the paradox of Jesus: The One who holds all authority... holds a towel. The One who reigns over all... kneels before all. He is not becoming a servant in this moment. He is revealing that He has always been one. And this speaks directly to us. Because many of us struggle to live this way—not because we don't know what to do... but because we are still trying to prove who we are.

We grasp for recognition.

We protect our position.

We measure our worth by how others see us.

But Jesus shows us a different way. When your identity is secure in the Father, you are free to take the lowest place.

THE COST OF THE TOWEL (JUDAS)

And then the moment becomes even more intense. Because John tells us something we cannot ignore: Jesus knew who would betray Him. He knew. And He still washed his feet.

Can you imagine that? Jesus kneels in front of Judas. He takes his feet in His hands. He washes them. He dries them.

Knowing full well that those same feet will walk out the door and lead soldiers back to arrest Him.

This is not theoretical love. This is not convenient kindness. This is costly, intentional, holy love. This is what Scripture calls grace.

Not just grace that forgives after repentance— but grace that moves toward us before we ever respond.

Romans 5:8 says, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

And here is where this message presses into our lives. Because it is easy to carry the towel when it costs you nothing. It is easy to serve people who appreciate you. It is easy to love people who love you back. But you don't truly know if you're carrying the towel until it costs you something. Until it requires you to move toward someone you would rather avoid. Until it asks you to love someone who has wounded you. Until it calls you to serve without recognition, without return, without reward.

This is the test of obedience. And this is the shape of holiness. Not withdrawal from people— but a heart so filled with the love of God that it moves toward people rightly.

So the question becomes unavoidable: Who have you decided is beneath your love? Because Jesus washed Judas' feet.

THE GOSPEL: YOU MUST BE WASHED

And then we come to Peter. And Peter responds the way many of us would. "You shall never wash my feet." There is resistance in his voice. Discomfort. Pride. And Jesus answers him with words that bring everything into focus: "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me."

This is the Gospel. Not a suggestion. Not a principle. A necessity. You cannot clean yourself.

Not through effort.

Not through discipline.

Not through good intentions.

Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us... through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

Ezekiel 36 declares, "I will sprinkle clean water on you... I will give you a new heart."

This is the work of God. And this is where everything changes. Because the towel is not where you begin. The towel is where grace sends you. You don't earn the right to serve. You receive the grace that transforms you into someone who can.

God does not simply forgive your sin. He breaks its power. He does not just clean your past. He reshapes your heart. And so before you ever pick up the towel... you must allow Jesus to wash you.

Some of you tonight have been trying to fix your life on your own.

Trying to do better. Trying to clean yourself up.

But Jesus is standing before you, saying: "Let Me wash you."
Come as you are. Receive His grace. Be made new.

THE CALL: PICK UP THE TOWEL

And now we come to the moment of response. Because tonight is not about admiration. It is about participation.

Jesus says in John 13:15, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

In other words: Don't just watch Me. Follow Me.

So tonight... we pick up the towel. Not as a symbol of emotion. Not as a one-time act. But as a declaration of how we will live. Because the towel is not something you hold in church. It is something you live with outside of it.

When you take this towel, you are saying:

"I will go low."

"I will serve when it is inconvenient."

"I will love when it costs me."

"I will move toward people, not away from them."

You are not taking this towel for tonight. You are taking it for tomorrow.

For your home.

For your workplace.

For your relationships.

For the moments when love is hardest.

TAKE THE TOWEL

So I want to invite you now. Come forward. Take a towel. Hold it before the Lord.

And ask Him: “Jesus... whose feet are You calling me to wash?”

And when He shows you— say yes.

ALTER PRAYER

Jesus, You are the Obedient Servant. You listened. You yielded. You knelt. And tonight, we ask You to do that same work in us. Wash us. Cleanse us. Transform us. Fill us with holy love. And send us out carrying towels into a world desperate for Your grace. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

CHARGE

Family... Don’t leave the towel here. Carry it with you.

Because the world will not be changed by those who rise above others— but by those who kneel beneath them in love.

So tonight... we pick it up.

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

before we go— If you have a towel... would you lift it before the Lord?

Not as a symbol of what you felt tonight... but as a declaration of how you will live.

And as you lift it... receive this blessing: May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Obedient Servant, who knelt with a towel and went to the cross in perfect love, give you the strength to go low.

May He form in you a heart that does not resist the Father, but delights to say, "Not my will—but Yours be done."

May the same Spirit who empowered Jesus to kneel now empower you to serve— not when it is easy, but when it is costly. And may you carry this towel not just in your hands... but in your life.

When pride rises—may you kneel.

When love is tested—may you move closer.

When obedience is costly—may you say yes.

May the Father awaken you morning by morning to listen like the Servant. May the Son remind you that you have been fully washed by grace.

And may the Holy Spirit fill you with holy love— a love that does not withdraw, a love that does not give up, a love that looks like Jesus.

And as you go from this place... May your life preach the gospel not only with your words— but with your posture. May you be a people who carry the towel into homes, into workplaces, into relationships— into the places where love is hardest and grace is most needed. And may the world see in

you the beauty of the Servant King— low in posture, strong in love, faithful in obedience.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.