

"Changes." That is what we are calling a new five-week sermon series based on some crucial lessons Jesus taught His disciples in an upper room on the eve of His departure. Change was in the air and there were a few things Jesus wanted to convey during a momentous transition. As most of you know, we are in a time of significant leadership transition here at Fellowship. Next month, Kurt Pressler will become the 5th SP in our 40-year history. It is imperative that we navigate this leadership change properly so that the mission and vision of our church continues unhindered. Transitions are disruptive no matter how well you prepare for them. The most difficult part of any major change is that we just don't know what we don't know. So, it is important, especially during times of transition, that we focus on what we DO know. And one thing we do know is that the Christian life is a life of service. We were saved to serve.

Jesus reminds His disciples of their call to service by washing their feet reinforcing the message that "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). We are born in bondage to the wrong kingdom, the kingdom of self. "We pull the borders of our concerns into the narrow confines of what we want, what we feel, what we dream, and what we think we need. A good day is a day that is pleasurable or easy for me. A good circumstance is one in which I get my way. A good marriage is one in which my spouse becomes a servant to my dream for my life. A good church has the worship, programs, and preaching that satisfy me. A good job is one that keeps me happy and engaged. It is a life shaped by a shrunken kingdom of one. But the first four words of the Bible confront us with the inescapable reality that it is not all about us." Paul David Tripp

In one unforgettable act, He provided the only antidote to the godless ambitions of this selfie kingdom by demonstrating the power of sacrificial service. Before Jesus' disciples would ever change the world, they had to change their posture. That's still true today. And in this passage, we discover that a change of posture is only possible when preceded by the knowledge of two rock-solid realities - **the security of God's sovereign plan and the sufficiency of God's sovereign grace**. Both are on display in Jn. 13:1-4...

Jesus' sacrificial service was based on the security of God's sovereign plan. Jesus knew 3 things:

1. **He knew where He came from.** More than anyone else on the planet, Jesus knew where He came from. We should too. You are not a cosmic accident. You were conceived in the mind of God long before you were conceived in your mother's womb. God created you on purpose for purpose. He knew when you would be born. He knew where you would be born and where you would live. You are here on a divine mission sent by a missionary God to demonstrate what God is like - He is a God who stoops.

2. **He knew where He was going...back to God.** The Greek verb used of Jesus' departure in v. 1 is sometimes translated "to pass over," as in John 5:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of (NIV: "crossed over from") death into life." Jesus knew that death was simply a crossing over from one form of life to another, more abundant life. In the next chapter Jesus tells His followers. John 14:3: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." If you put your trust in Jesus, one day you will simply cross over from this place to the place Jesus is preparing for us.

3. **He knew that He had been given all things.** Jesus had all the resources of the Father at His disposal. Now you may think, “I know where I came from and I know where I’m going but I don’t have all the resources Jesus had.” Well think again.

- 2 Pet 1:3 says, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”
- Rom 8:32 says, “He who did not spare his *own* Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will he not also, with him, graciously give us all things?”
- Eph 1:3 says, “blessed be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

When you know what Jesus knew you can rest secure. You can serve others because you have nothing to prove and nothing to lose. Consider the alternative - we are here by accident. Any joy we find or good we do is accidental - then you die! That worldview offers no incentive to serve and no hope to savor.

The first three verses of chapter 13 is commentary by John. He didn't even know these things in that upper room. Reflecting on that night, he saw clearly that sacrificial service is a by-product of our security in Christ. That's why he and all the rest of the disciples were willing to face death daily for what they believed. They knew where they came from. They knew where they were going. And they knew Jesus would provide them everything they needed to fulfill their mission.

But there is a second lesson Jesus taught in these verses, a second reality that every disciple needs to know. Our service is motivated not only by **the security of God's sovereign plan** but the disciples are about to learn **the sufficiency of God's sovereign grace**. And Peter is the perfect test subject. In an unforgettable visual demonstration Jesus drives home the point that ministry is not based on skills, knowledge, worldly power or popularity. Our suitability for ministry depends on our capacity for grace.

For Peter to see the world differently, he needed to respond properly to God’s grace. He was silent as Jesus washed his friends’ feet, but when it was his turn, it was more than he could take. Peter made three common mistakes with respect to grace:

1. **Peter questioned the grace of God...v.6.** He could not conceive of Jesus washing his feet. There are two possible reasons for Peter's surprise. He may not have thought he needed to have his feet washed. Everyone else did but not him. The second possibility is that he saw himself as unworthy of the loving attention of the Master. You can almost hear his bewildered soul - "You wash MY feet?" Either way, Peter desperately needs to experience God's grace.

Everyone needs grace but no one **DESERVES** the grace of God. We can't earn it and we don't deserve it. But if we do not learn how to appropriate and live by grace, we will be condemned to practice and preach a gospel of self-effort. We will resist God's grace to defend our own self-righteousness. How can I know that I don't have a good grip on grace? Three symptoms:

Perfectionism is the absence of grace turned inward. I need to try harder.

Judgmentalism is the absence of grace turned outward. Your speck is bigger than my log!

Legalism is the absence of grace turned upward. I choose rules over a relationship.

Jesus knew that Peter did not yet understand...v. 7. Peter then makes a second mistake.

2. Peter rejected the grace of God...v.8. When Jesus persists, Peter stubbornly refuses to accept His gracious gift. After all, those who serve Jesus should show their devotion by getting busy and DOING something. He even makes his self-sufficiency sound noble.

At this point Jesus stares into Peter's eyes and says, "If I do not wash you, you have no part WITH me." This was not a threat to reject Peter but a warning that if we do not receive God's grace we will have no meaningful participation in the mission of Jesus. Grace is God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves. Later this same night Jesus will tell His disciples, "Apart from me, you can do nothing." Unless we receive His grace to accomplish His purposes, we are more of a hindrance than a help to God's kingdom agenda. But Peter is not done yet.

3. Peter misunderstood the grace of God...v.9. Stung by Jesus' words, Peter changes his tune and says, "If that's the case then pour it on Lord. Give me a bath." Peter seems to have a knack for making mistakes in threes. Maybe Jesus insisted on washing Peter's feet because of the frequency with which Peter put them in his mouth! Jesus explains that Peter is already clean because of his faith in response to God's saving grace, but disciples need to regularly receive the cleansing power of that grace. The repeated washing of the feet represents our daily confession of sin and turning to Jesus for ongoing application of what he accomplished at the cross — our cleansing and forgiveness.

We have a high calling. We are servants of the most high God. But we are not qualified for it if we insist on clinging to the privileges and prerogatives of rank. We'll never succeed by our own human efforts. The only people suitable to represent Jesus are those who maintain a humble sense of their own need, those who are dependent upon the grace of God. No one gives grace better than the one who knows he needs it.

So what then shall we do?

First, let's come to the table. It is here at the Lord's Supper that we open our hearts to receive God's grace.

Then, as we leave here, we translate knowledge into action. Jesus said, "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." It is one thing to know the security of God's sovereign plan and the sufficiency of God's sovereign grace, it is another thing to translate these gracious blessings into action.

Want to make America great again? Then do what you can to make America a nation of servants rather than a nation of individuals motivated by self-interest, self-indulgence, and a false sense of self-sufficiency pursuing selfish ambition for the purpose of self-glorification. Jesus' actions in the upper room was a visual reminder of His definition of greatness, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of

Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mk. 10:42-45

Want to make the church in America great again? Then don't make heroes of our preachers but make heroes of our servants. Cherish the many examples of true greatness as defined by Jesus.

This is a great church b/c of people...

Like the successful couple who have devoted their lives to the children of this church and regularly ask, "What do you need in this area? Let us provide it."

Like the wealthy single man who lives a simple lifestyle so he can give generously to kingdom causes.

Like the couple who picks up neighborhood kids on Sunday and brings them to church, sometimes taking two cars just to fit them in.

Like the Ivy League grad who mentors and counsels inner-city students on how to qualify and get into an Ivy League school.

Like the Nurse Practitioner who spends considerable time practicing in a free clinic instead of more lucrative setting.

Like the young adult woman who uses her day off to teach local refugees how to use the DART system.

Like the businessman who gives up a week of vacation to help train church leaders in Nicaragua.

Like the men and women who have made pancakes at 9:30 for neighborhood kids over the years. Ronnie was one of the young men who came from a rough neighborhood but he came for pancakes. He was a school drop out, but with the help of Byron Bradshaw, Lonnie Holbrook, Ron Smith, Mark Hamilton, encouraged him to go back to school. Byron even met to tutor him weekly. This past May Ronnie graduated. Here is a picture of Ronnie with Mark, Lonnie, and Ron celebrating over lunch. A couple of weeks later Ronnie was shot and died a few days later.

The service all these people willingly offer is what makes this church great. My hope for this church is that we will be known not for the quality of our sermons but for the quantity of our servants.

Communion

These are symbols of grace. We are saved by grace and we will serve by grace. God does not save us and then withdraw His grace. He saves us and calls us to serve Him while providing the grace we need for the opportunities that come our way. It is only by grace that the love of Christ can defend our hearts against all other loves. Only as we worship and appropriate God's grace can we renounce the idols that sabotage true ministry. So as we eat and drink, eat and drink deeply of God's amazing grace.