

A Servant of Servants

Jed N. Snyder John 13:1-20

To teach the humility of Jesus Christ as He served His disciples so that my people may serve with similar humility and thereby reflect the love of Jesus to both saints and sinners

Introduction:

Someone said something like this. Humility is so fleeting that as soon as you know you've got it, you don't have it anymore. Nevertheless humility is an important ingredient to a healthy Christian life and is vital to the functioning of the church body. Our passage today deals with humility as seen in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will see four themes in these few verses in John 13.

- I. Humility is Needed
- II. Humility is Demonstrated
- III. Humility is Explained
- IV. Humility is Expected

- I. Humility Is Needed
 - A. Seen in the argument over rank

Luke 22:20-24 "In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. {21} But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. {22} The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him.' {23} They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this. {24} Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

- B. Seen in Peter and the rest's proud vow of allegiance
- Matthew 26:33-35 "Peter replied, 'Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.' {34} 'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.' {35} But Peter declared, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the other disciples said the same."

- c. Seen in the unwillingness of any to wash the feet of others
- This is an argument from silence, but it seems to be the case since we know their state of mind in discussing who would be the greatest among them. I can almost hear them saying later, "I'd have done the foot washing if only Jesus had asked me." But either no one thought of it or no one wanted to stoop that low or no one wanted to be the first to deviate from the usual pattern.

- II. Humility Is Demonstrated John 13:4-11
 - A. Appearance of a common slave/servant
 - Took off his clothing, wrapped himself in a towel.

- B. Actions of a common slave/servant

Washed all of their feet including Judas Iscariot and Peter.

By demonstrating this humility Christ elevated menial labor, but that was not the primary purpose of this demonstration. It is true, however, that any job is honorable if it is not tainted with sin.

III. Humility Is Explained

Christ was not upset by ignorance; rather He dispelled it. Christ was not upset by misguided enthusiasm; rather He redirected it. Confused thinking gave Jesus a chance to help bring insight. Often we misunderstand the most that in which we are most personally involved. Our lack of understanding does not limit Christ's actions. But it does demonstrate our need for His explanations. Here Christ gave a theological explanation and a relational explanation.

A. The theological explanation

1. The security behind humility - who Jesus was made Him not threatened by humble service.

John 13:1 "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

2. The salvation demonstrated in the humility – what Jesus did in His death made humility make sense.

John 13:10 "Jesus answered, 'A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.'"

B. The relational explanation

1. A servant heart - like His.

He was Teacher and Master, but he simultaneously was servant. "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (v. 15)

How can you know if you have a servant heart?

a. Do you look for opportunities to help others?

b. When asked for help do you cringe inside?

If you really cannot help, do you look for others who can help in your place?

c. Do you hurt when you personally see or hear news reports of the needy? Do you pray and seek ways to help the needy?

d. Is your heart and is your home open to people in trouble?

2. Servant actions - like His.

He washed dirty feet. This was not to establish an ordinance, but to set an example of the kinds of service that can be rendered. They needed their feet washed. It is uncomfortable to recline on a clean couch and not be able to rest your feet for fear of getting the furniture dirty.

What kinds of service can you render? There are multitudinous things to be done. Let me name just a few.

- a. Mow a widow or divorcee's lawn.
- b. Carry an elderly person to a doctor's office or to do grocery shopping or other errands.
- c. Sit with a child so a young couple can have some quiet time for each other.
- d. Offer your typing skills to a struggling student.
- e. Wash, paint, rake, repair numerous things around the church property.
- f. Volunteer your services short term to a camp, mission, or other caring institution.

3. Servant blessings - from Him.

These blessings or kinds of happiness are not given in detail probably because they are more of the nature of inner joy and peace that comes from doing humble service to those around who are in need. But obedience to Jesus Christ never goes unnoticed or unrewarded by Him.

John 17:13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them."

John 17:25-26 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. {26} I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

IV. Humility Is Expected

Let's read several passages that relate to humility.

John 13:17 "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

Matthew 23:12 "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

James 4:6 "But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"

1 Peter 5:5 "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"

Often times we do not see the humble service rendered by others for the very reason that it is humble service and those serving do not want to be noticed. They want God to have the glory.

Conclusion:

If Christ, the Almighty, Sovereign Son of God, was so humbled we should be also.

If we are to be humbled we need to know God's presence, power and purpose.

If others are to benefit from our service in spiritual ways, they need to feel our love, see our acts and hear our teaching and know of our expectations.

If we teach others (by speaking and by modeling), we need not to be surprised or repulsed by ignorance, confusion, enthusiasm without knowledge, etc. In time God will reveal what is needed.