

# Servant of All

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[ 0 : 00 ] John chapter 13, beginning in verse 1, if you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the world, the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 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, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and, taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 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.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.

[ 1 : 19 ] 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.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 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. For he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, Not all of you are clean. 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?

You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you. 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.

[ 2 : 27 ] If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I'm not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but the Scripture will be fulfilled.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? Now, in Luke's Gospel, prior to this dinner with the disciples, he records a dispute amongst them, which may have prompted Jesus' actions here, which we've just read in John chapter 13.

He records that dispute, Luke does in chapter 22, verse 24 through 26 of his Gospel. There it says, Now, it's astounding that, he regarded as the greatest.

Disciples here. And Jesus said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors, but not so with you.

Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.

Now, it's astounding that as Jesus is troubled by the thought of His soon being forsaken on the cross by His Father, that His disciples are troubled by the thought of which one of them was the greatest.

[ 3 : 59 ] But again, Jesus patiently illustrates what true greatness looks like.

True greatness, He says, comes in the form of service. Service that is not motivated by selfish gain or ask the question, What's in it for me?

We know from last week where we were that Jesus had given His final invitation to the crowds. One more time, He patiently pled with them to believe in Him.

And now in chapter 13 and going through chapter 17, we see that He turns His attention to His disciples. The cross is only one day away, and so He devotes Himself to them, preparing them for

His death, and promising them that through it, much will be achieved.

He has a plan for them, a purpose for them, that is greater than their present understanding was of what it meant to be great.

[ 5 : 33 ] And so Jesus begins His instruction with a demonstration of service to reorient His disciples' understanding of what greatness looks like.

And so Jesus, the eternal Son of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, assumes the position of the lowliest of servants by washing His disciples' feet, an act which pictured His entire life and His entire ministry.

He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. Never once asking of His Father, what is in this for me?

You know, that kind of attitude does not communicate Christ. It doesn't communicate the gospel. Jesus commands and expects those whom He's rescued from the eternal consequences of their sins to follow His example.

And so His church should be a place unlike any other place in this world, a place where people understand what it truly means to be great, a place where people understand the grace that they have received from Christ and are eager to follow in His example of selfless, sacrificial service to one another.

[ 7 : 05 ] To be great in God's economy means descending, not ascending. It means lowering yourself to assume the place of a servant, not asking what's in it for me, but what's in it for thee.

And so our main idea from this morning's sermon that we get straight out of this passage is that Christ commands His followers to model His example of service. Christ commands His followers to model His example of service.

And so Jesus gives a command, and He gives a promise in this text. He commands His disciples to follow His example, and He promises that if they follow in His example, there will be blessing.

Now, not blessing of the material kind, but blessing of the spiritual kind, which is much greater blessing. Case in point, the kind of blessing that we have received as a church over this summer. Again, talking about what we've seen God do in the lives of our young people and sending them to Falls Creek and our kids to kids' camp and praying beforehand and giving. And those of our congregation who went and took time off of their schedule, took vacation to go and serve, and we've been blessed, haven't we?

[ 8 : 35 ] To see how the Lord has saved and the Lord has changed and the Lord has been at work in the lives of our young people to transform them. It's been awesome to see them coming here and being baptized and declaring that they are Christ and that they are going to follow Him.

It's been good. And so, again, in this passage of Scripture, we see from our Lord a visual demonstration of what Christian service should look like.

And the first thing that we see about our Christian service and what it should look like is that Christ-like service is motivated by love. Christ-like service is motivated by love.

Look again at verse 1. Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of the world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

End, in the Greek, telos, means completeness or perfection. And so, what John is saying here is that Jesus' love for His disciples was an endless kind of love, a love that endured, a love that was patient with them as they repeatedly failed to understand the things that He taught to them.

[ 10 : 05 ] Jesus exemplified a love for them that we are commanded by Him to model to one another. 1 Corinthians chapter 13 is known as the love passage and is often read at weddings.

But that passage primarily, specifically, is addressing members of the church. And there, the thought is being pressed upon them of the importance of the shape that love must take within the body of Christ.

And so, I want to read 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 4 through 8, and I am asking you, as we read it, to ask yourself the question, does your love for other people, people in this church, look like this?

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.

It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

[ 11 : 22 ] Love never ends. And so, while 1 Corinthians chapter 13 provides the supreme description of love, we know that Jesus is the supreme example of love.

The most significant way that our Lord showed His love for us, for you, was by dying on the cross as a sacrifice for your sins.

1 John 4, 9 through 13. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us. How? That God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

And this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. If you are a Christian, if you know that Christ has saved you and what He's saved you from, then how can you refuse to follow His pattern of sacrificial and selfless love?

[ 12 : 43 ] Jesus doesn't keep records of your wrongs. Thank God that He doesn't. He's ensured that that record has been eternally erased.

And so, we shouldn't keep records of wrongs done to us. Because when we do, it becomes hard for us to serve one another in a way that demonstrates the great love that we've received from Jesus Christ.

too often in the church, we don't see this model of Christ-like love in our congregations. I was a much younger pastor.

In fact, I think it was my first year being a pastor, and I was given a mentor who had been at his church for 48 years as a senior pastor.

And he was a great resource for me, especially in that first year. And I can't remember what happened that made me ask him the question. There was something going on, you know, some kind of conflict, and so I just asked him for some input, for some advice.

[ 14 : 02 ] And he proceeded to tell me a story of something that had happened in his church years ago. There was a business meeting, and it was contentious, and it was heated. And the argument really was between two senior adult ladies in the congregation, one sitting in the pew in front of the other.

And so, over the course of this business meeting, they were bickering back and forth with one another, sitting one in the pew behind the other. And it got so heated, and it got so contentious that the lady in the pew behind the one sitting in front of her spit into her hair.

And immediately I thought, well, you know, what have you gotten me into, Lord? I don't... People spitting at one another? And so I asked him, what happened that they would do that, that that would happen?

And he said, you know what? I don't remember. I don't remember, but what he remembered. Because the issue wasn't that big of a deal. But what they did and how they handled it is something that he didn't forget.

Certainly, none of the rest in that church forgot. Most certainly, the lady who got her hair spit into. You know, but how sad that those things happen in our churches.

[ 15 : 25 ] And, you know, we could... We all have got stories of things that we've seen in God's house, of how people have been so hateful and bitter and resentful.

We should be loving and gracious towards one another, as Christ has been loving and gracious to us. You know, Jesus patiently endured with his disciples because he truly loved them.

He loved them to the end. And he's patiently endured with you because he loves you too. And he's commanded us to love one another.

And when we consider the great depths to which our Lord descended to portray that love to us, that same kind of love should be manifest by the way we in his church willingly, gladly, and selflessly serve one another in the body of Jesus Christ.

We've got to love one another. And if we love one another, we'll model Christlikeness to each other and to our community. Secondly, we see here that Christlike service is conducted with humility.

[ 16 : 38 ] It's motivated by love and it's carried out. It's conducted with humility. In verses 3 through 5, 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, rose from supper, he laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.

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. Now, foot washing was the task of a household slave.

If that household had more than one servant, the task was given to the least of them. And in fact, some Jews insisted that this task was beneath a Jewish man even if he was a slave.

And so to them, they insisted that only a Gentile, a woman, or a child slave should be lowered to such a humiliating position to wash other people's feet.

But Jesus, whom John says, the Father had given all things into his hands, used them to wash his disciples' feet.

[ 17 : 58 ] And so imagine them, they've ate, and they are reclining around a low table. They didn't sit at the high tables like we do in chairs. They'd be reclining on their stomachs or on their sides, on thin mats, the table in the middle of them, leaning most often on their left elbow.

So imagine they're all around and Jesus pushes himself up off of his own mat and he begins to take off his outer garments.

And he takes a towel and he ties it and wraps it around his waist. And in so doing, he assumes the dress of a slave.

And one by one, he goes around that table with his hands and he scrubs his disciples' feet clean.

In our context, it would be like a man taking off his suit, coat, his tie, and even his trousers. And you know how embarrassing it is whenever someone shows up to your house unexpectedly and maybe you're still in your pajamas, you haven't combed your hair, ladies, you haven't put your makeup on, and maybe one of your kids answers the door and it's someone you know well and they invite them in and there you are, not looking your best.

[ 19 : 35 ] That's embarrassing, isn't it? we don't like like like feeling and being humiliated in those kinds of situations.

We don't like people to see us like that. But Jesus does it intentionally. He assumes the attire of a slave.

In fact, he was always embracing symbols of humiliation from his birth to his death. From the very beginning, he was born in a barn, not a palace.

He spent his first night in the world he created in a feeding trough, not even a bed. He was raised in obscurity, the stepson of a low-class carpenter in the impoverished podunk know-nothing town of Nazareth.

With his hands, he touched and he healed the defiled and the dead, which in the eyes of the Pharisees made him unclean.

[ 20 : 42 ] He ate with people of ill repute and conversed with the outcasts of society. He greeted children as a welcome interruption to his important teachings and would sit them on his lap.

He wrote into Jerusalem not on a powerful war horse, but a donkey. He washed his disciples' feet. He let his accusers spit on him, slap him, mock him, and nail him naked to a cross to die a criminal's death and was then laid to rest in a tomb that was borrowed.

God. The Apostle Paul paints a picture for us of the humble life and the humble conduct of our eternal King in Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 through 11.

There Paul telling the church, exhorting him, be like Christ. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[ 22 : 13 ] Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

See, when Jesus came, he did not lay aside his deity but his dignity and he was willing to become a servant in order to save us.

In my previous church, we had a lady who was born in Korea and her husband was an officer in the military and they were retired and they had done pretty well.

Also, their children were grown up and she used to come to church like many of us do, dressed, you know, very nice. But when she served in the nursery, she would come in t-shirt, a t-shirt and in jeans.

And I remember when she came in for the first time and I saw her in jeans and a t-shirt, I just asked her, you know, I just said something or maybe she saw the look on my face.

[ 23 : 33 ] I don't know what it was but she felt the need to explain and so she explained that when she had young children, she knew how hard it was to sit in the service and be fed from the Word of God.

And so she said, you know, what I want to do in a very small way is to serve those parents because I know that they need to worship, I know that they need to be fed, I know that they need to be encouraged and so the least I can do is watch their kids and care for them for an hour while they're in the sanctuary.

And so she came dressed to get messy. She came expecting and planning to get spit up on by babies, have toddlers use her shirt and maybe her pant leg as a tissue and to have all other kinds of things done to her.

She was ready to get messy in order to serve other people. that communicates Christ. She was dressed for the mess in order to serve other people.

And you know, those are the kinds of small actions that make a big difference in the church. And again, when you consider the humiliating depths to which Christ descended to serve you, you should gladly respond and humbly serve yourself in serving Him by being willing to serve others.

[ 25 : 20 ] Third, we see here that Christ-like service is radical. We'll read verse 2 and verse 11. Christ-like service is radical.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him. And then in verse 11, for Jesus knew who was to betray Him, that was why He said, not all of you are clean.

And so, what we know and what Jesus knew is that in a short while, Judas will lead guards to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus and to betray Him with a kiss.

And Jesus knew it. All along, Jesus knew it. Yet here, though He knows Judas' intentions and the personal injury and insult that such a betrayal would bring to Him, Jesus responds in a way that we wouldn't expect.

You know, if you uncovered a plot orchestrated by a close confidant or friend to bring about your death, how would you respond?

[ 26 : 30 ] Shock? Horror? Outrage? Revenge? I'll get you first? But consistent with His command to love your enemies, Jesus does a radical thing.

He washes the feet of His betrayer. Judas' greed and His selfish ambition had long since opened the door for the devil's influence.

Though Satan inspired the betrayal, Judas was fully responsible for his actions. In the end, He desired the same thing that Satan did, which was Jesus' death.

And so, two things are important for us to stop here and reflect upon. First, when Jesus commands you to love your enemies, He means it.

And He demonstrated it by washing Judas' feet. And then, on the cross, when He prayed and He pled for God the Father to forgive those who had conspired against Him.

[ 27 : 45 ] Repaying evil with evil does not communicate who Christ is. And it isn't Christ-like. You know, as powerful as His hands were. And we know that Jesus could have snapped His fingers and Judas would have evaporated into nothingness.

He didn't do that. In fact, you know, if it was us, sometimes we think, well, He had His feet. At least He could have maybe twisted an ankle or broke it or, you know, scrubbed it just a little bit harder, you know, until, you know, He broke the skin and He bled.

I think that's what I would have wanted to do. But He didn't. He didn't. Like Christ, as a Christian, you are commanded to love in radical ways, including humbling yourself by serving those who hate you.

That's hard. Romans 12, 19 through 21 tells us, Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head, and that speaks to a purification, an act of purification.

[ 29 : 19 ] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. When Jesus says, love your enemies, He means it. Second, we can't miss how John contrasts the humble actions of Jesus with the prideful actions of Judas.

Jesus gave of Himself by lowering Himself to advance others Judas sought to advance himself at the expense of others. And so, while Jesus portrays for us the ways of God, Judas portrays the ways of Satan, ways that Isaiah 14, 12 through 15 describe vividly.

There it says, how you have fallen from heaven, O day star, son of dawn, how you are cut down to the earth, you who laid the nations low, you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God.

I will set my throne on high. I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high, but you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.

Christlike service is radical because it seeks to show love to those who hate you. It seeks to give with no thought of gaining. It seeks to advance the gospel, not ourselves.

[ 30 : 44 ] It communicates Christ. Considering what we know about this culture and how they viewed foot washing, it's likely that as Jesus washed the disciples' feet, they weren't only shocked by what they saw, but they were embarrassed by what they witnessed their Lord doing.

For most of them, it appears that their embarrassment bred silence. They weren't going to say anything. They couldn't understand why Jesus would do this.

He's the head of the table. He's the master. He's the Lord. He's the Son of God. This role was too far beneath Him. And so I think they're probably asking themselves, what is He doing?

What is He doing? Does He know what He's doing? But while the other disciples are silent, Peter pipes up. This isn't right. Someone has to say something about this.

And so in verse 6, it says, He came to Simon Peter and Peter said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? But you know, before we beat up Peter, imagine yourself at the table and imagine that it's your feet.

[ 32 : 03 ] that Jesus is washing. You know, and as I was in church this week walking up here to do something, that thought came to me and it horrified me.

Horrified me. Jesus washing my feet? He's the Son of God. He's my Savior. I'm the one who should be washing His feet.

Yet Jesus washes their feet and Peter was appalled by it. Someone so superior should not serve someone who is so inferior.

But Jesus is not like the superiors we know. And He answers them in verse 7. What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterwards you will understand. But Peter still won't have any of it.

Peter says to Him, You shall never wash my feet. And again, Peter thinks he knows better than Jesus that this role was beneath Him.

[ 33 : 04 ] He won't be a part of this embarrassment. Jesus is too unworthy and He is too unworthy. But then Jesus answers him, If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.

And in Jesus' answer there, it gives us two things that we need to understand. First, it corrected the disciples' misunderstanding of what His first coming was for. Jesus' first coming was not to come as conquering king, but as suffering servant.

And then secondly, His answer makes it clear that only those who are cleansed by Him are able to have a relationship with Him. Washing in the Bible is used as a metaphor to communicate spiritual cleansing and only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and confess that and repent of their sins are truly cleansed by Him.

So now Peter flip-flops. He goes to the other extreme to don't ever do that to me. Jesus to now, okay, wash me completely. Not just my feet, but my hands and my head.

He still hadn't totally wrapped his mind completely around what Jesus was saying. Whatever Jesus was offering, Peter wanted all of it.

[ 34 : 21 ] And so Jesus said to him, the one who has bathed does not need to wash except his feet, but is completely clean. All of you are clean, but not every one of you, again, referring to Judas.

And so from that, what Jesus is saying is, you know, if you take a bath and you go outside and you get your feet dirty, another bath isn't necessary, just wash your feet.

And so here Jesus is talking about the complete cleansing that takes place when a person is saved. If you've been saved, if you've truly been saved by Him, you don't ever need to be re-saved.

It doesn't work that way. Christ has taken your sins upon Himself on the cross and He has given you His righteousness. Again, He loved you. He'll love you to the end.

Your sins are forever washed away. His atoning death provides complete and total forgiveness. No one can snatch you out of the hand of your good shepherd.

[ 35 : 23 ] As He said in John 10, 27 through 28, My sheep hear My voice. I know them. They follow Me. I give them eternal life. They will never perish and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

Now look, sheep still need daily cleansing for sanctification. We still, as followers of Christ, get our feet dirty, so to speak.

And when we do, we confess that sin to our Lord. And we are washed by His Word. And we're reminded of the promises that we have from Him that He'll never leave us.

He'll never forsake us. He's loved us and He'll love us to the end. All this to say that Jesus served in a radical way. A radical way. And so should you.

When enemies oppose you and even when other Christians seek to persuade you to stop acting so undignified, press on. Like Jesus, in love and with humility to portray the radical service of our Lord and Savior.

[ 36 : 34 ] And then finally, we see from our Lord that Christ-like service is not optional. It's not optional. Jesus brings the point home in verses 12 through 17.

He says that, and reminds them, you know, you call me teacher, you call me Lord, you're right, for so I am. And if I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

I have given you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 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.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Is Jesus your Lord? Do you call Him Lord? Is Jesus your master?

Do you call Him master? You know, you might say yes, but often that verbal confession is missing in action.

[ 37 : 39 ] What is proper for Jesus is also proper for you and I. His service was motivated by love, it was conducted in humility, and it was radically different than what was expected.

And He commands you to serve in the same way. Christians are sent to be servants.

This is your assignment. It's a command. But it comes with a promise that if you do these things, if you serve in this way, you will be blessed.

Not in the Joel Osteen kind of way, but in the real way. Seeing God use you to advance His gospel in ways that have an everlasting and eternal impact.

See, the blessing comes in the doing, not just in the knowing. Christ commands His followers to model His example of service.

[ 39 : 02 ] So will you do it? Will you follow in His example? Will you serve being motivated by love? Will you conduct yourself in humility no matter how degrading or undignified it may make you feel?

Will you love in a radical way, loving those who hate you and especially those in your church who give you a hard time and who you'd rather avoid? It's really not an option.

Christ expects you to be like Him and He's given you His Spirit and He's given you His Word in order to carry out and follow in His example.

Will you do it? Four questions for us to consider as we wrap up this sermon that we'll talk about tonight. Facility group leaders, if you get to all of them, you get a gold star.

If not, don't worry about it. Question one. If love is absent from your service to others, what are you truly communicating to them?

[ 40 : 06 ] If you're serving in the church but love isn't the motivation, what are you really communicating to those whom you're serving? Question number two.

Jesus laid aside His outer garments to visibly assume the role of a servant. What things do you need to lay aside to serve in humility like Him? What are the things that are holding you back?

Or that you are holding on to that are preventing you from serving humbly like Him? Question three. Jesus' service was radical in that it pushed the boundaries of societal norms.

How can Christians, how can the church follow that same example today? And then finally, how can you and our church better model the example of Christ-like service to our community?

How can we better exemplify Christ in this community that He has given us to be a part of and to serve in? We have, we're going to take communion together as a church.

[ 41 : 19 ] And so, before we do that, you know, I always give you an opportunity opportunity to pray and to allow the Spirit to search your heart and your mind to make sure that we all come together in

a manner worthy of our Lord.

And so, I invite you during this time of invitation to do that, to come to the Lord to pray that His Spirit would search your heart and your mind of any unconfessed sin, that we would come together in a manner worthy of our Lord and Savior.

Right now, let me pray for you. Heavenly Father, we thank you for Christ. We thank you, Lord, that He was humble, that He came as a servant, that He was willing to die for sins that He did not commit.

He was willing to be forsaken on the cross by you so that by faith in Him we can be saved and have a salvation that is sure, that is secure, and that will never end.

Lord, you have given us the example. We see it and we know it. We pray that your Spirit would convict us so that what we know would reside in our heart and be carried out in our action with our lives, that we would live our lives like you and for you, for your glory.

[ 42 : 38 ] Lord, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you.