**The Servant - Jesus**

John 13:1-17

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| slide | Sermon |
| 1 | Title slide |
| 2 | Intro: I’ve been preaching from John since December. We’ve learned that a recurring theme is Jesus offers the kingdom of God to any who will believe. We’ve also looked at several of Jesus’ “I Am” sayings noting “I Am” was the name God gave to Moses to identify that God was sending him to save the Israelites. Plus we have learned that Jesus told the people he is water for the soul, he is the Light of the World, and he is the Good Shepherd. There are other “I Am” sayings that we will get to later. But one of the strongest themes in John has been that Jesus did miraculous things as signs showing that he came from God; that he is God’s physical presence on earth, that he is the true Messiah from the OT prophecies. |
| 3 | When we compare the Jesus from John’s gospel to the ones from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) we see a divine side that is on full display. Jesus seems “cocked” and ready" for anything. He avoids the traps set by the religious leaders. He heals all types of diseases and does many of these on the Sabbath. It is clear that John’s Jesus is from God and that through Him people can enter the kingdom of God and receive eternal life. He has a confidence especially when he encounters those who would dismiss him. Even though his followers can’t quite understand this, Jesus knows that he will have to endure the cross and death to redeem God’s creation.  Ex. We all know someone like this in a human sense. Maybe it was high school or college or in the business world. We know someone who is self-assured, who knows he/she is smart, makes all A’s, is a gifted athlete and knows it. You might say they are cocky and they seem to have the pretty girl or handsome guy, are the Homecoming King or Queen and get all the breaks.  This is how Jesus comes across in most of John’s gospel. And folks are drawn to him. His popularity is so great that he literally scares the religious leaders and establishment to death. By Chapter 13 in John’s gospel, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and the religious leaders are so afraid, that they decide to kill Lazarus and also Jesus before a revolt occurs that will bring the might of Rome, crushing the whole nation of Israel.  Why does it seem that John wants to “keep Jesus up in the clouds?” Wasn’t he human like me and you? |
| 4 | But as soon as these feelings and thoughts formulated in my mind, I read the scripture for today. And these thoughts stood out to me:   1. Jesus shows His love to the ultimate limits (death on a cross) 2. Betrayed by his own – Judas 3. Jesus washes the disciples’ feet 4. Instructs the disciples to do likewise   Now I ask myself – Is this the same Jesus I’ve been reading in Chapter 1-12? Has he slipped a gear? What is all this talk of Jesus, the superhuman at least and the Son of God at best, now being the slave; washing feet, being betrayed, going to the cross and telling the disciples – “this is how you follow me”!  What a contrast! But this contrast is intentional. Because in Chapter 13 John does change gears. It is time for Jesus to reveal his true purpose – the way God will use him to provide salvation to the entire world. From Chapters 13-17 the context is Jesus teaching his disciples in the hours before his arrest and crucifixion. Jesus tries to make plain to the disciples how and what is about to happen. |
| 5 | His first act is to wash the disciples’ feet. And that certainly got the disciples’ attention! It was the evening meal before Passover. They gathered to share a meal and over the course of the night Jesus would teach them what they needed to know before “his being lifted up.”  John went from one extreme to the other. From skirting the treetops in the clouds; being a mighty savior of God; doing miraculous things to now, surprisingly, showing the disciples the extreme example of serving others, Jesus reveals the nature of his saving work!  Normally, it is the slave or least ranking servant that has the duty to wash the feet of the guests of a household. But suddenly, the disciples see their master and the world’s savior preparing to wash their feet. The disciples at first refuse to allow Jesus to wash their feet as noted by Peter’s response to forbid Jesus to do such a menial thing for them. But Jesus says if the disciples refuse them they will have no part of Jesus! So, Peter flip flops and says for Jesus to wash all of him! But Jesus says the disciples are already clean since they have followed him for these 3 years. Can you imagine how awkward they felt to have the Son of God washing their feet? |
| 6 | I don’t know about you but I don’t like the looks of feet. They are ugly, especially the older one is. Oh, baby’s toes and feet are okay. They are soft and tender. I like to play “This Little Piggy” with Finnan’s toes! But it doesn’t take long before the feet become worn, misshapen due to the shoes that are often forced into. My toes have seen their share of wear. One of my big toes was injured years ago and the toenail just grows from the base and is not attached any other place. It is a thick nail that I have to cut off all way back every now and then. My other big toe also was injured so that it is hard to look at. And then there are the calluses, bunions, scars and blisters that have to be dealt with. When you take all of this and add the dust and dirt that were on the disciples’ feet; well, it was not a pleasant experience washing those ugly feet! Imagine: crusty dirt between the toes, the dirt under the nails. And Jesus willingly submitted himself to wash each and every one of these 24 feet.  Now that is bad enough, but as Jesus washed each disciple’s feet, how could he do that knowing what was about to happen?  What was it like for him to wash the feet of Judas – the one who would betray him in a few hours? How do you think Judas felt? What about Jesus washing Peter’s feet knowing that soon Peter would deny him 3 times? And what about John’s feet knowing that his “beloved disciple” would reject him? And what about all the rest of the disciples? Jesus knew that they all would slink away into darkness denying they knew Jesus at all!  Yet Jesus continues until he washes all of their feet before sharing the meal together. And Jesus finishes by saying that any who follow him should do the same!  I’m sure this experience was awkward for the disciples. And I think it is awkward for us today. Whenever I’ve talked to churches about having a feet washing service, the immediate response has to do with: it is not practical, it would take too long, would be awkward for women who wear hose, it would be pretty smelly when some took off their shoes and socks! Most folks don’t want to wash another’s feet – because it is too personal! |
| 7 | Yet Jesus tells his followers that we are to wash each other’s feet! Is this meant literally or figuratively? I think both – why?   1. If a community of faith can literally wash each other’s feet, then that will show the depth of love and caring they have for each other. It is hard to wash a person’s feet and stay angry at them. It is hard to wash a person’s feet and belittle them and cast them out of the fellowship. It is hard to wash someone’s feet and not feel your own humanity and need for God’s grace. 2. But we are also to understand this act of Jesus in a symbolic way as well. First, it says that to follow Christ, we must be willing to take the lowliest spot; to be willing to serve those that are least in society. Second, it means that if we are true followers of Christ then we must be willing to love – even those we see as unlovable. For years whites have looked down at blacks because of skin color since blacks came to America as slaves. And it has taken over 200 years to recognize blacks and whites, Asians and Spanish speaking people as all loved by God, and that Christ died for all. But even today many in our nations continue to put one group over another! Yet, if we become willing “to wash each other’s feet,” how might it change our world? 3. Taking this act of Jesus figuratively also means caring for and reaching out to the poor, abused and neglected in our society. We wash each other’s feet by providing for the needs of others.   In our verse today, Jesus says to follow him we have to put away our pride and the “feeling we deserve what we have and where we are in life” and put on a servant’s towel and wash the feet of each other and those pressed down by society. |
|  | **Conclusion**  It was a small church from the Asheville area. The Missions Committee decided one way to serve was to drive a group of retired adults down to the MRC to sort and pack clothing for Project AGAPE or do anything else that needed to be done. Now, I’ve done this myself at times. It is tedious work, sorting clothing into men, women, boys, girls and infant categories. Then you separate summer and winter clothes. Then, you fold and box like clothing looking for items that have holes or are soiled to discard them. You fill box after box, tape them shut and put on the appropriate label. This church from Ashville started years ago. Every month like clockwork they’ve journeyed the 2-1/2 hours, worked on clothing, enjoyed the fellowship, ate their packed lunches together and returned in the late afternoon. Recently, they celebrated 10 consecutive years of serving in this way until Covid.  Jesus tells us to serve one another, wash each other’s feet, be a servant. Whether it is literally washing feet or packing clothing for the folks in Armenia, we are to follow Jesus in these assorted and various ways! |
| 8 | Jesus is Calling! Do you Hear Him Calling Your Name? Will you answer- “Here I am, Lord” and go serve others? |