

Picking Up the Towel – Part 1

John 13:1-17

Introduction:

1. This story records one of the greatest acts of humility ever recorded in history (vs. 1-6). God in the flesh washing the filthy, nasty feet of sinful men.
2. The God-Man, The King of kings, Jesus Christ was serving others instead of demanding to be served. It is mind boggling really.
3. Sometimes we read through Philippians 2:6-8 really fast and fail to realize how real that passage is. This story paints a picture on your mind.
4. It gives us a vivid picture of Christ making Himself of no reputation, taking upon Himself the form of a servant (only slaves and servants washed other people's feet), and humbling Himself totally.
5. This passage brings me to tears because I want what Jesus had. I want that servant's heart, that humility, that unselfishness that leads me to think of others above myself. Paul said in Philippians 2:5, "*Let this mind be **in you** which was also in Christ Jesus.*" Think like Christ – pick up the towel and serve others.
6. Learning to serve others is the key to a joyful life (vs. 17). It is the key to living a life of impact that has true meaning.
7. The apostle Paul talks about being filled with the fullness of Christ, having Jesus Christ overflow out of our lives. But there is simply **no way** to be like Christ and to show forth Christ if we aren't serving. vs. 14-15
8. Christ was the greatest servant that ever lived. Let's learn from Him this morning. How can that same spirit of service that filled His mind dwell in and through us? How can we be like Christ and pick up the towel to sincerely serve others?

First, Christ's love led Him to serve. vs. 1

1. This incredible act of humility came out of a heart of love. It says in John 13:1, "*...he loved them unto the end.*" Christ served others out of love.
2. Love is the only motivation that will bring true, lasting change in our lives. To have a heart of humility and service over the long-haul, it has to come from love within.

3. If not, we will grow weary of serving, we will get disgusted with those we are serving. We will get discouraged, become tired, and quit.
4. However, love is the greatest motivator in the universe. When Christ fills your heart with divine love, you can't do anything **but** serve others. If we aren't serving, it is a love problem because true, divine love leads you to serve.
5. You can serve and not love, but you can't love and not serve.
 - I can serve because it is expected, because I feel guilty, because I want to be noticed, because I want something in return, because of a promised reward, and never really serve out of love.
 - But if I already have a true, deep love in my heart, it just naturally leads me to serve. If you love, you're going to serve.
6. Our service should be a natural by-product of our love. Love bears the fruit of service. If I put an apple seed in the ground what fruit does it bear? Apples! If I plant a seed of love, what fruit does it bear? Service.
 - If I love my wife, I will serve her gladly.
 - If I love my kids, I will serve them and do things that are for their benefit.
 - If I love lost souls, I will serve them gladly.
 - If I love my fellow members of the body of Christ, I will have a heart to serve them.
7. Love doesn't think about itself all the time. It thinks of others and serves others. Philippians 2:4
8. Jesus picked up the towel. Why? He loved. Will you ask God to give you a deeper and growing love for people? It will lead you to serve every time. Maybe you are already serving. Ask yourself, "Why do I serve? Am I doing it out of love?"

Second, Christ served the "unworthy." vs. 2

1. I put "unworthy" in quotation marks because that is how **we** feel about certain people, but it's not how God feels. We sure learn that in our text.
2. Christ washed the feet of Judas Iscariot. That is remarkable. Judas Iscariot was one of the most "unworthy" villains of the entire Bible, and Christ washes his nasty, filthy feet.
3. Judas already knew what he was planning and what he would do. He had evil intentions in mind for Jesus Christ as Christ knelt down to wash his feet. He would sell out Christ for his own profit.

4. Here is what is amazing, Christ knew exactly what Judas had in mind and what he would ultimately do to Him. vs. 21, 26-27
 - Have you ever done something really nice for somebody and been really good to them only to have them do you dirty later? Not a good feeling.
 - But imagine knowing **before** you do the good to them exactly how they would do you dirty in the future (you know every detail), and yet still, you choose to do good things for them (knowing they will stab you in the back).
5. What does this teach us? Christian service has nothing to do with serving only people who are “worthy” of our service. Think about the disciples.
6. It wasn’t just Judas who had issues. The 12 disciples were some group. At that point, the disciples weren’t exactly a spiritual dream team.
 - They argued over who was the greatest, and they bickered over what position they would have in the kingdom.
 - They were prideful, faithless, and sometimes just plain clueless.
 - They would fall asleep and snooze away while Christ cried out in agony in the Garden. He needed them to pray with Him.
 - All of them would forsake Christ within the next day. In His greatest time of need, they would cower behind locked doors.
 - Peter would curse and deny Christ. Thomas would doubt Christ.
7. Jesus looked around the room at these guys He loved, but it wasn’t a beautiful looking group. He saw dirty, stinky feet everywhere. Yet He picked up the towel.
8. Christ served as unto the Father, and He served out of love. We are to follow His example and serve as unto Christ, not unto men.
9. When you begin serving on the basis of who is “worthy,” you won’t be serving long. You will end up living a secluded, selfish, and miserable life.
10. People are going to hurt you and disappoint you. Sometimes, it will be the very ones you have served and helped the most. But remember, we serve unto Christ. Ephesians 6:7

In Conclusion:

1. Is your love for people growing?
2. When was the last time you served somebody who you felt didn’t **deserve** your service?

3. Will you read this text several times this week? Will you pray that Christ will truly live His life through you by serving others?
4. Will you keep your eyes open for opportunities to serve this coming week? When you are tempted to think, "I'm not doing that. Let somebody else do it." Remind yourself, "Pick up the towel."
5. Will you serve and pick up the towel like Christ did?