

## **Picking Up the Towel**

### **John 13:1-17**

#### **Introduction:**

1. This story records one of the greatest acts of humility ever recorded in (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 (Part 1)**

**Second, Christ served the "unworthy." vs. 2 (Part 1)**

**Third, Christ was not too "big" to serve. vs. 3 (Part 2)**

**Fourth, Christ's attitude was, "Why not me?" vs. 4-5**

1. Love and a heart of service require **action**. Jesus got up from supper, grabbed a towel, and put it on to serve. He filled the basin with water

- and got to work. Many people can talk a good talk, but there isn't a lot of action.
2. Jesus talked the talk. Matthew 20:25-27
  3. But guess what? He wasn't all talk. He picked up the towel. His attitude was **not**, "Why me?" This is what you hear so many times from people. Christ's attitude was, "Why **not** me?" "I'll serve."
  4. There were 13 guys in that upper room. But Jesus' attitude was, "Why not me? I got it."
    - Help is needed in the nursery, and your first thought is, "No way! Let somebody else do it." Then it hits you, "You know what? I love babies, I know how to wipe a bottom. Why not me? I can do that. I got it."
    - A widow needs her yard mowed. You say, "I know how to do that. Why not me? I got it."
    - Someone is moving and you say, "I got a strong back. I can do that. Why not me? I got it."
    - The flower bed at our entrance.
  5. Jesus did it all by Himself. His attitude was, "Why not **me**?" It wasn't even, "Why not **us**?"
    - He **could** have had the disciples help Him. He could have said, "You go get the towel, you go get the basin, you fill it up with water and bring it to me. I'll wash your feet, you wash his feet, etc..."
    - It is a great joy when others come alongside us and help us in our service, but we have to have the attitude, "If nobody helps me, I'm still serving."
  6. Sometimes we serve in a certain area of ministry and we wonder why more people won't get involved and help. It's very easy to get a martyr's complex. But remember, the issue is **your** heart and **your** service.
    - Even if nobody helps and nobody sees you, and your service goes unrecognized, keep on serving God!
    - You don't need somebody to get an Instagram shot of you serving. Just serve with no strings attached.
  7. Because one day we will all stand **personally** accountable for the service **we** have rendered for Christ. That day of accountability is called the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is for the saved – those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Romans 14:10, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10

8. Serving God is serving others. There comes a point when we have to quit talking about it and thinking about it. We have to be like Jesus – get up, grab the towel and basin, and start serving.
  - We have to be like Jesus and say, “Why not me?” and get at it. Oftentimes, we are like, “Put me down on the list. I’ll serve.”
9. Notice that Jesus got up from supper and picked up the towel – He served (vs. 4). He’s like, “It’s been great, but enough eating and enough feeding myself; it is time to get up, serve, and expend some energy on others.” There is some great application we can make right here.
10. Many believers sit in the same seat at church, week after week, and year after year, and they fill up on all the good spiritual food being offered up. But God’s plan is for a believer to not only take in, but to give back out.
  - We can’t just continue to sit at the table eating. We have to get up out of our seat (like Jesus) and say, “Okay, I’ve enjoyed the great food, but it’s time to serve now.”
  - If you aren’t serving anywhere, I encourage you to come to church to worship (fill up), but then serve (give back). Be like Christ and pick up the towel.
  - Worship God, enjoy the music, feed on the spiritual food in the message, but then push away from the table and say, “Okay, that was good food, but it’s time to serve now (greeting, tent, nursery, building maintenance between services, Children’s Ministry, etc.).”
  - Be like Jesus – push away from the table and pick up the towel. Have the Christ-like attitude, “Why not me? I got it.”

### **In Conclusion:**

1. Let’s read verses 4-5 one more time. As I said before, this is one of the greatest acts of humility and service ever recorded in history. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, washing dirty feet.
2. **Illustration:** A minister was approached one Sunday by a man who expressed a desire to be a member of the church. In his conversation with the pastor he said: “I want you to understand that I am a very busy man and don’t want to be called on for any service such as committees, visitations, teaching in the Bible school or singing in the choir. I would like to be spared from anything that would require time. And don’t expect me to be present for the worship services too often.”

The pastor thought for a moment and he said: “You’re at the wrong church. The church you’re looking for is down the street a few blocks.” The man followed the pastor’s directions and soon came face-to-face with an abandoned, boarded-up, closed church.

3. A church where the people have no heart to serve is a dead church.
4. But there is no limit to what a church can accomplish if the people have a servant’s heart like Christ and their attitude is, “Why not me? I got it.”