

Intro:

Illust: The story of 2 men attacked by a polar bear (humorous)...

We all struggle with the sin of selfishness. But as followers of Christ, we're not to be selfish. We've been called to be servants. This morning we come to our third week in our series by that title, "Called to be Servants." Our text is John 13.

Q: What's expected of servants?

Proposition: In John 13:12-17, our Lord Jesus revealed 2 obligations which belong to every person who is serious about living as a servant.

- I. True servants live in submission to the Master (12-13).
- II. True servants live in submission to One Another (14-17).
 - A. We have a Model (14-15).
 - B. We have a Motive (16).
 - C. We have a Mission (17).
 1. We must KNOW the truth.
 2. We must DO the truth.

V 12 "So after He had washed their feet"

Obviously, we've dropped right into the middle of the story. Two weeks ago, we saw the Sovereign become a servant (1-5).

Jesus and His 12 disciples were in an upper room in an unidentified Jerusalem home. They had gathered to eat the Passover meal. In less than 24 hours, Jesus would be betrayed, crucified, and laid in a tomb.

When the group arrived at the room that night, there was no host to wash off the dirt their feet had collected from the dusty Palestinian roads. The disciples got into an argument about which of them was the greatest. Jesus got up off His pallet, quietly took off His cloak and tunic, girded Himself with a towel, and grabbed a wash basin. And to the utter amazement of the 12, the Master washed the feet of His subjects.

Last week, we investigated the Misunderstanding of the Servant (6-11). Peter resisted and rebuked the Lord. From Christ's response, we learned that the foot-washing illustrated our need for cleansing. It also illustrated our need to be servants.

Q: What's expected of us as servants?

I. True servants live in submission to the Master (12-13).

V 12 "So after He had washed their feet"

Notice the "action" verbs, describing what Jesus had done. He had washed. Then He retrieved His garments. After He redressed, He took His seat again at the table. No doubt the silence was deafening for the disciples! What was going on?

Their Master had stooped to become their servant. They were embarrassed, both for themselves, and for their Teacher. They were grateful that the episode was over.

But it wasn't. Jesus broke the silence with a question...

V 12 "Know ye what I have done to you?"

That's quite a question. Their feet were still damp, and yet He asked them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" But then they realized that Jesus expected a deeper answer. He was asking them if they understood the significance of His act.

Q: What had Jesus done?

A: He revealed what He expected of His followers. He expected them to serve as He had served. True greatness is seen in lowly service (Morris).

READ vv 13-17

Footnote: Did you notice what Jesus did NOT do? Jesus didn't "scold" His disciples. He doesn't jump on them and say, "Shame on you guys! You've got a problem with self-centeredness. You should have washed each other's feet."

No doubt the rebuke is implied in Jesus' words. But instead of using negative criticism, Jesus gave the 12 a positive model and positive instruction.

Application: Parents, most of us could improve if we would do less scolding, and more modeling. We yell at our kids for selfish behavior, but what do they see in us? Instead of raking our children over the coals when they fail, we could help them to change more readily by giving them an example. We need to show them how to serve God, and serve others. That means instead of dropping them off for S.S. or Wed PM church, we need to go with them.

Q: What did Jesus say He expects of us as servants?

A: As servants, here's our first obligation. We are to live in submission to the Master.

V 13 "Ye call Me Master and Lord...so I am."

You call Me Master. The actual term means "Teacher" or "Instructor." In the common spoken language of the day, the title "Rabbi" was used. The ordinary, respectful way to address a religious leader was to call him "Rabbi."

You call me Lord. That term was not so common. It indicates great reverence and honor. By definition, the title actually means "Master."

That's what Jesus' disciples called Him--Master and Lord. And that's what He deserved to be called!

Q: What do you call Jesus?

Do you call Him Master? Do you call Him Lord? Listen. What you call Jesus has eternal implications.

Do you remember what Jesus told the crowds that followed Him in Lk 14?

A: Lk 14:25-27 "...whoever does not bear his cross, and COME AFTER ME, cannot be My disciple."

Key: A true servant lives in submission to the Master. In fact, we'll never get a handle on servant-living until we come to grips with the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Q: Are you living in submission to the Master? In every area of your life?

Illust:

Tran: What's expected of servants? Obligation #1--True servants live in submission to the Master.

II. True servants live in submission to One Another (14-17).

Jesus threw his disciples a curve ball next. Remember, their feet are clean, but His feet are still unwashed. Here's what He said...

V 14 "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to."

Stop there. After reminding them of His authority, after reinforcing that He's the Master and Lord, what would you expect Him to say next? We expect Him to say, "I've washed your feet. Now who's going to wash Mine?"

That's the way the world looks at things. I scratched your back, now you scratch mine. And no doubt, if Jesus had said that, it would have been a privilege. What devoted follower of our Loving Master wouldn't want to wash His deserving feet?! We'd line up for that privilege. But that's not what He said.

V 14 "you ought to wash one another's feet"

True servants live in submission to one another.

Don't read into Jesus' words what's not there. In His day, there was nothing glamorous about being a servant. A servant is someone who belongs to another, and has no legal rights. 2/3 of the Roman world were slaves. The Jews longed for the day when the yoke of Roman control would be broken. For the Greeks, the highest ideal was self-determination. The Greeks looked on a slave as an inferior kind of person.

Yet Jesus claimed the image of a servant as the badge of His people. He became a servant. And He called us to live as servants. Frequently, the NT identifies Christians as "servants of Christ" (I Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6).

The Bible teaches that every person in the world is a servant to something. We are born into the world as servants to sin. But Christ set us free from sin (Gal 4:4-7). He set us free so we could serve! How can that be?

Rom 6:17 "But God be thanked, that whereas ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being, then, made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness."

We have been set free to become servants! We're called to serve our Master. And we've been called to serve one another.

Q: What's involved in living in submission to one another?

A. We have a Model (14-15).

Vv 14-15 "...For I have given you an example..."

The first word in the greek text of v 15 is "example." Literally, "An example I have given to you." The word refers to a figure, copy, model, or pattern.

Many groups throughout church history have taken Jesus' words as a literal admonition, and practive footwashing as a church ordinance. I respect them. But I don't see that as necessary for 3 reasons. One, actual footwashing had cultural limitations. We don't need footwashings as they did in Jesus' day. We don't wear sandals, and we don't have 1/2" thick dusty roads, and we don't have water basins at our front doors. Secondly, there is no indication that the early church practiced footwashing as an ordinance. Though some practiced it as an act of hospitality in their own home (eg--widows in I Tim 5:10), there's no mention of it in church gatherings. And thirdly, Jesus' emphasis is not on an outer, physical rite, but on inner humility.

Notice the contrast.

--v 13 YOU call --v 14 I wash

By His actions, Jesus shattered the way we usually think about image and reputation and status. For He the Master became a servant. He is our Model. As the hymn writer put it, "Be like Jesus this my song, in the home and in the throng; Be like Jesus all day long; I would be like Jesus."

Listen. It sounds fine and dandy to talk about being like Jesus, especially on Sunday morning. But what does it mean to be like Jesus?

He told the 12 in v 15, "You should do as I have done to you." Friends, what had Jesus just done? He had stripped Himself of all dignity. He laid aside His reputation and rights, and became a servant.

Quote: As Chuck Swindoll observed in, Improving Your Serve, (12) Jesus came "to serve and to give. Not to be served. Not to grab the spotlight in the center ring. Not to make a name or attract attention or become successful or famous or powerful or idolized. No, quite frankly, that stuff turned Him off.

Jesus is our Model. And Jesus calls us to die to ourselves, and serve others.

That's just the opposite of the world's advice. The world counsels us to look inward, to focus on yourself.

Quote: Swindoll, 38 (Greece said...Rome said...)

Jesus said, "Wash one another's feet."

B. We have a Motive (16).

V 16 "Verily, verily"

When Jesus says something once, we'd better listen. When He repeats it, we'd better sit up and pay full, undivided attention! Here's what He says.

1. The servant is not greater than his Lord.
2. The one sent (lit. "apostle") is not greater than the Sender.

There's lots of talk these days about poor self-esteem. Do you know what is the most helpful way to get a proper view of yourself? Get a proper view of God. Then look at yourself in light of who He is.

That's our motive for being servants. It's an argument from the greater to the lesser. If Jesus was willing to serve, ought not we be willing to serve?

Illust: Leonard Bernstein, the famous orchestra conductor was once interviewed on TV, and asked the question, "Mr. Bernstein, what is the most difficult instrument to play?" He responded with quick wit: "Second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays 'second' violin with as much enthusiasm or 'second' French horn or 'second' flute, now that's a problem. And yet if no one plays second, we have no harmony." (Swindoll, 34)

C. We have a Mission (17).

V 17 "If ye then..."

Here's a great statement. Successful Christian living involves 2 steps:

1. We must KNOW the truth.

Jn 8:32 "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

In the disciples' case, they knew the truth. "If you know these things--and you do." They saw what Jesus did. They heard what He said.

But there's a second step.

2. We must DO the truth.

V 17 "happy are ye if ye do them."

God doesn't bless us for what we know, but for what we do with what we know. James 1:22 "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

Here's where the rubber meets the road. We can talk all we want about being servants. We can define the term. We can dissect the text. We can debate whether foot washing is for today. But it all boils down to this.

The happy person in life is the one who serves. The world thinks that happiness is the result of others serving us, but real joy comes when we serve others in the name of Christ (Wiersbe).

Is your life fulfilling? If not, where's your focus?

Being a servant is what our mission is all about. Let's be practical...

Q: What are some ways we can follow Jesus' example, strip ourselves of personal dignity, and become servants?

A: We've got to be doers! I reveal whether I'm a servant by the "little things" I do. I need to look for ways to put my neighbor first. Like the seat I choose when I enter a crowded room. The parking place I pick. Dads, we let our families know whether we're servants when we have a "free evening"--do we spend it serving my wife and kids or serving myself doing what I want to do.

I need to offer a word of caution. It's possible to just go through the motions, and think that we've met the obligations of being a servant.

Quote: Chuck Swindoll offers these words in his book, Improving Your Serve, "Let's understand...that the right attitude must accompany the right actions. Be

careful with the temperature of the water you use! It's easy to use boiling water when you wash feet...or ice cold water. I know some who have come pretty close to dry cleaning a few feet. Ah, that's bad. The goal is to remove dirt, not skin, from feet."
(171)

Conclusion:

Q: What's expected of us as servants?

A: 2 Obligations. We need to live in right relationship with Christ Jesus. He's the Master. And we need to live in right relationship with one another. We are fellow servants.

I want you to see this connection in II Cor 4:5.

--Obligation #1 "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord"

--Obligation #2 "and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake"

There's a desperate need today for servants. In the world. In the church.

Illust: Study done with mice... (Swindoll, 16)

May God help us to be genuine servants.