

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/19/93

John 13:6-11 "It's Easy to be Misunderstood When You're a Servant"

**Intro:**

Our text this morning is John 13, the Upper Room Discourse. The setting is indeed sober. In but a few hours, Jesus will be betrayed by Judas, mocked by the Jewish leaders, jeered by the crowd, and nailed to a splintery cross by Roman soldiers.

On that night Jesus gathered with His 12 disciples in a secluded upper room of a Jerusalem home. They were there to eat the Passover meal together. The atmosphere was tense and uncertain.

As you'll recall, things didn't go too smoothly for the 12. When they first arrived, they looked around for the traditional servant to wash their feet. Seeing none, they said nothing to Jesus, but headed for the table. They got into an argument about which of them was the greatest. They reclined around the low table and ate the prepared meal.

Then they noticed something shocking. They watched Jesus get up off His pallet. He quietly took off His outer cloak, and then His tunic. To their utter consternation, He walked over to the wash stand, and wrapped Himself with a servant's towel. He poured water into the basin, picked it up and headed for His followers.

Which disciple did He reach first? We don't know. But imagine how that man felt when Jesus gently removed his sandals, and began to wash his feet. Teachers don't do things like that! That's a job for servants!

That's exactly what Jesus became. Jesus became a servant.

Mk 10:45 "For the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve..."

Last week, we began a new series entitled, "Called to be Servants." We watched with amazement as the Master became a Servant. In vv 1-5, we pondered 2 portraits of Jesus. First, we saw Jesus as the Sovereign (1-3). Jesus was in absolute control of the events surrounding His betrayal and death. He knew the Father's Plan (1-2), and the Father's Purpose (3).

Then we saw the Sovereign become a Servant (4-5).

The church today is in desperate need of servants. The model Jesus left us that night in the upper room has been greatly neglected. The brand of Christianity being packaged and promoted today in many churches is self-centered and flesh-oriented.

But Jesus calls us to be servants.

Illust:

Warning: It's easy to be misunderstood when you're a servant.

If we get serious about this matter of being servants, of following in the steps of our loving Lord, we can count on it. We'll be misrepresented. We'll be misunderstood.

That's exactly what happened to Jesus that night.

This morning, we want to take a look at how Jesus was misunderstood as a servant. We'll see it in a conversation He had with Peter in John 13:6-11.

**Proposition: As a servant, Jesus was misrepresented 3 times by Peter, first by a question, then by an exclamation, and finally by a request.**

I. The Servant Resisted (6-7)

II. The Servant Rebuked (8)

III. The Servant Received (9-11)

A. We have a need for cleansing.

1. We need to be cleansed from the penalty of sin.

2. We need to be cleansed from the practice of sin.

B. It's possible to act like you are clean, and not be clean.

### **I. The Servant Resisted (6-7)**

V 6 "Then cometh he to Simon Peter."

Stop right there. Apparently there was dead silence among the disciples. Until Jesus came to Peter. And typically, Peter broke the silence. Can't you see Peter? He pulled his feet away from Jesus hands. He resisted the servant. Listen to his question.

V 6 "Peter saith to Him, Lord dost Thou wash my feet?"

Peter thought he was being tactful. To him, the nonsense had gone far enough. If none of the others were going to say something, Peter would. How absurd that the Master would wash the feet of His subjects! That didn't make sense! Somebody had to put a stop to this!

Our English Bibles miss the emphasis which is revealed in the original greek text of v 6. The word "Thou" is in the emphatic position. The next word in the order is "my." There's a sharp contrast. Lit. "Lord, dost Thou my feet wash?" The LB offers this paraphrase, "Master, you shouldn't be washing our feet like this!"

Peter obviously misunderstood Jesus' action as a servant. So he resisted Him. Watch how Jesus responded.

V 7 "Jesus answered, What I do thou knowest not..."

Jesus reversed Peter's emphasis on the pronouns-"What I do thou knowest not."

Before we get too hard on Peter, let Jesus' words sink in. No wonder Peter struggled with Jesus' actions. The Lord told him, "I know what I just did is a mystery to you. I know you don't understand. But it will be clear to you...later."

Later. When would that be? Jesus doesn't say here.

Q: What was it that Peter didn't understand, yet later would grasp?

A: This. What Jesus did that night in the upper room merely foreshadowed what He would do the next day on the cross. God Almighty had come to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19:10). As commentator Merrill Tenney put it, "Divine love leaped over the boundaries of class distinctions and made the Lord of glory the servant of men." (198)

Illust:

Listen. Jesus Christ was fully aware of His actions around the table that night. He was indeed the very Son of God. Yet He had come to serve. He condescended to minister to the very people He had created. The Master subjected Himself to His inferiors. He came to do for us what we were powerless to do for ourselves. What's that? We'll see in a moment.

Tran: Scene 1--Because Peter misunderstood, he resisted the Servant.

## **II. The Servant Rebuked (8)**

Peter raised his voice in v 8. The nonsense had gone too far.

V 8 "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

Peter used what we would call bad grammar in v 8, a double negative. In fact, translated literally, here's what he told Jesus, "My feet, You will no never wash, unto eternity."

Peter was vehement. But so was Jesus in return.

V 8 "Jesus answered, If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me."

Q: Why did Peter rebuke Jesus?

What was Peter's problem? Was he too proud to let Jesus wash his feet? Was he motivated by a protective love? Could he not bear the thought of seeing his Master stoop so low as to wash his feet?

I tend to think it was love, not pride, that prompted Peter to object. To him it was unthinkable that Jesus should engage in a menial task like foot-washing. He was too good for that.

Peter misunderstood Jesus. So he rebuked Him.

Jesus' response cut him to the core. "Peter, if I don't wash you, you have no part with me." The word "part" means "share" or "portion." Peter, if I don't wash you, you can't be my partner!

That hit Peter like a ton of bricks. To Peter, the thought of having no part with Jesus was intolerable. Peter loved his Lord. He couldn't stand the thought of being separated from Christ. Remember, it was Peter who pleaded for the privilege of coming to Jesus on the water. It was Peter who followed Jesus when the soldiers arrested Him. It was Peter who rushed into the empty tomb trying to find Jesus.

When Peter heard this sober warning, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," his tune changed quickly!

Illust:

Tran: First, Peter resisted the Servant. Then he rebuked the Servant. Now scene 3.

## **III. The Servant Received (9-11)**

V 9 "Simon Peter...Lord not my hands only..."

Peter was a man of extremes. One minute he opposed a footwashing. Now he welcomes a shower!

Here's Jesus' response.

V 10 "He that is washed..."

In the greek NT, there are actually 2 different words for "wash" used in v 10. Unfortunately, the KJV translated both with the same english word "wash." Jesus said, "He that is WASHED." That word actually means "bathe." It refers to a thorough washing of the entire body. Then, "He that is washed...needs to WASH his feet." That's a different word. It describes a washing a part of the body, such as the hands or feet.

NKJV, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet."

NIV, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet."

Note: From time to time people will criticize modern translations because they change words in the KJV. Listen, often the changes are made to clarify what the original text actually said. Don't be skeptical of modern translations. Just because a translation is modern doesn't mean it's bad. I preach from the KJV. It's a wonderful translation. But it's not the only good English translation. The NKJV and NIV and NASB are all solid, dependable translations.

The picture behind the scene in v 10 is a person going to a feast. Before leaving he would bathe at home. Often he would bathe at the bath house, and then walk to the dressing place. On the way, he inevitably picked up dirt on his wet feet. So the last thing he did in the dressing room, before putting on his clean clothes, was to wash their feet.

Illust: Like swimming in a lake--before you get to your shoes, what you do have all over your feet? Sand, dirt, sticks. Need to rewash your feet.

Then he would head to a feast. When he arrived at the house of his host, his feet would be soiled by the dusty Palestinian roads. He didn't need another bath. All he needed was to have his feet washed.

Plug that scenario into what Jesus told Peter in v 10, "He that is washed (bathed) needs to wash his feet."

Then Jesus said something very personal to all the disciples.

"And YE are clean"--You. That's plural. You 12 have already had a bath. You've already been cleansed. Cleansed from what? From sin.

Q: What point is Jesus trying to make with this illustration about cleansing?

A: I see 2 important truths.

A. We have a need for cleansing.

All of us have a need for cleansing. All of us are born into this world marred by sin. There are 2 types of cleansing which we need.

*1. We need to be cleansed from the penalty of sin.*

V 8 "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

Q: How is a person made clean?

A: We need to look to Jesus. When we admit our sin, and look to Him, He washes and cleanses us. He removes the penalty of sin.

See: Tit 3:4-7

All of us need to be cleansed from the penalty of sin. We need to be justified by God. We need to be regenerated, that is, born again into God's family.

Please listen. A child is born one time. A person is born into the family of God one time. Being cleansed from the penalty of sin is a one time act.

*2. We need to be cleansed from the practice of sin.*

V 10 "...except to wash his feet"

Listen. We need continual feet washings. Do you know why? Because even after we're saved, none of us are perfect. We sin. And we can't have fellowship with our holy Lord when our lives are soiled by sin. So we need daily cleansing.

Q: How do I experience this cleansing from sin?

A: I Jn 1:7-9 "...the blood cleanses us from all sin..."

Illust:

B. It's possible to act like you are clean, and not be clean.

V 10 "You are clean, BUT not all of you."

V 11 "For He knew who should betray Him..."

Did you realize that Jesus washed Judas' feet? But you know something? That foot washing did Judas no good because he had not been bathed all over.

Some people think that Judas was a saved man who sinned away his salvation. But that's not what Jesus said.

Jn 6:64 "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him." (also v 70)

It's tragic, yet true. It's possible to act like you are clean, and not be clean. You can put on a good front on the outside, and be filthy with sin on the inside.

Illust: Recently I read the following statement by Stanley Hauerwas, a professor of theological ethics at the Divinity School of Duke Univ (in Discipleship Journal, Spt/Oct 93, p 16)... "Everyone is enslaved to something..."

**Conclusion:**

Servants are often misunderstood. Jesus was resisted, rebuked, and then finally received. What are you doing with Jesus and the cleansing He offers?

Illust: This week a hitchhiker named Grant Russell stopped by the church...I asked him if he had a relationship with God. He said he didn't think so. As I shared the gospel with him, he knew all the verses. I hurt for him. Before me was a man who was struggling. I wanted him to know that Jesus offered him cleansing.

I want you to know that too.

Servants are often misunderstood.

Listen. Some of you here today have totally misunderstood Jesus. You've misrepresented Him. You've never come to grips with Who He really is, and what He did for you.

Some here today need a bath. You need Christ to cleanse you from sin. You may be a good person. You may even be a religious person. But your heart is black with sin. And your sins have separated you from God. You need to be cleansed.

You can be cleansed this morning. How? By admitting your need, your sinfulness. By repenting of your sin, and looking by faith to the cross. It was on the cross that Christ washed away our sins.

Some here today have dirty feet. You've had the bath. Christ has saved you. But as you've been walking through this sinful world, your feet have gotten dirty. You've sinned.

You don't need a bath. But you need to allow Christ to wash your feet.

Oh friend, isn't it amazing that the Almighty God would condescend to wash our feet?! Don't resist His offer today.