

John Ch 13:1-17

“A Practical Lesson In Servanthood”

Often times I find that as people we can struggle in how exactly a principal makes the transition to the practical. So that we hear the principal of how that as believers we need to get from the milk, to the meat of the Word. Sure the milk is sufficient for a season, but even as newborn babies eventually make the transition from milk to meat as they mature and grow and develop, even so, spiritually we need to do the same thing when it comes to our intake, or diet of the Word of God.

But how do I do that practically? We could reference any # of biblical principals, and as we fall into the flow of John Ch 13, the last few years Jesus has been teaching these guys all kinds principals regarding servanthood, and what the ministry is really all about. He’s said things like, *“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”* Mark 9:35 Or, *“You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* Mark 10:42-45 and Again, *“...he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Matt 23:11-12

This is the *principal*; exaltation through humiliation, becoming 1st by choosing to be last, but how does that work itself out in my life *practically*? What does “exaltation through humiliation” mean to me when it comes to my daily routine, and walk of life? and That’s what Jesus takes the time to demonstrate for us in this passage that lies before us.

That’s one of the everything I love about Jesus, He never asks anything of us, but that He hasn’t first done it already, He’s not a “Do as I say, not as I do” kind of a Lord, He’s a “Do as I Do” kind of Lord. Be it to lay down your life literally, He’s done it, to walk in love even towards your enemies, been there done that, turn the other cheek when the circumstance calls for it, let your integrity speak for itself and let God be your defense instead of seeking to defend yourself, He’s done it. Or to *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”* Phil 2:3-4

Philippians goes on to tell us that that’s the very *mind* of Christ, that’s what He was all about when He was here on this earth, doing nothing through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness, or humbleness of mind He esteemed others better than Himself. Now they weren’t better than Him, but He gave them that position, He esteemed them in that way.

That's really what we have here before us today, when it comes to serving others, be it in the ministry of the Word, or by good works, Jesus set the standard by showing us how the principal becomes practical.

Ch 13 brings us roughly with in 24 hrs of the cross. and So over these next 4 ch's or so understand that it all takes place on the eve of Jesus' betrayal. and This should cause us to realize the importance of this brief window in the life of Christ, because of the attention that John gives to it. Of his overall gospel John dedicates about 25% of it to the eve of Jesus' betrayal, and nearly ½ of his record revolves around the entire 24-36hr scope (including the crucifixion and burial.) and So we do well to pay attention to the things that are recorded for us here as the heart of Jesus is exposed to us in these moments before His death. As you well know when people are aware that their time is limited and they're about to die, they so often begin to open their heart in a way that perhaps they never have before, and they let you in on their heart and begin to make clear some things that they want you to know and be assured of.

As one may expect, the common thread that weaves these ch's together is love. John's gospel can be divided into 3 main sections, and with out taking the time to really support what I'm telling you (I'll just let you do the research if you so choose). But the defining subject of the 1st 12 Ch's is *light*, from Ch's 13-17 (sometimes called the upper room discourse) the subject is *love*, how Jesus loves His own, and gives the command that we would love one another the way that He has loved us, and then finally from Ch 18-21, regarding he cross, and the resurrection, the subject is *life*, and how by believing in Him we have life in His name.

So as we enter the scene here, Jesus is acutely aware of the fact that this is His last night on this earth before His crucifixion, and so picking it up in vs 1 we read.

Vs1

So right off the bat we observe the fact that what? Jesus *knew* that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father. Jesus has led His whole earthly life in anticipation of this hour, and we've noted as we've gone through this gospel that He knew when the hour wasn't upon Him, and He'd say things like, "*My hour has not yet come.*" John 2:4

We've seen when if it were up to the Pharisees and chief priests they'd have murdered Jesus long ago, but He would safely maneuver through the situation because (the bible would say) His hour had not yet come. But we noted in Ch 12 where He came to that realization, "*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*" John 12:23 The hour has come that He should depart from this world to the Father. and Of course the manner through which He would depart from this world would be through the cross, and so though the cross isn't specifically mentioned in this vs, it's casts it's shadow over nearly every word.

But it's important that we realize that none of this was taking Jesus by surprise, He was very aware that this would be the last supper He would ever eat with His disciples this side of eternity, and of course this foreknowledge of His testifies of His deity, it doesn't say, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus *thought* that His hour had come," there was no *thinking* about it, He *knew*, and of course foreknowledge is a quality unique to God.

But we also glean in this that death for the believer isn't end of life, when Jesus knew that He should depart *from* this world, He knew He was going *to* the Father. So physical death isn't the end, every individual who's ever lived is still existing, they're either *in* the presence of the Father, or they've been cast *from* the presence of the Father, but it doesn't just fade to black upon death and that's it. You either depart from this world, *to* the Father, or out of the presence *of* the Father where there is wailing and weeping and gnashing of teeth, where the fire is never quenched, and the worm never dies, that's is what the bible says. and What makes or breaks ones destination is their determination, what they determine concerning the person of Jesus Christ whether they choose to accept Him or reject Him.

But something else that blows my mind about this whole scene is the general demeanor of the Lord during these His last few hours before the cross. He *knew* that His hour had come, He was about to die, and it wasn't going to be a fall asleep and never wake up kind of a death, He was about to be brutalized, and abused, beaten, and scourged, disfigured and nailed to a cross.

He was stressed out over the issue, we saw that even in ch 12, now place yourself in that position, if you knew that tomorrow morning you were going to die the most agonizing, torturistic, form of capital punishment ever developed by man, what would be on your agenda the night before? Laying aside your garments, taking a towel and girding yourself so that you might humble yourself and begin to wash the dirty feet of a dozen men? I don't think so!

I'm going to be expecting a little pampering myself, I'm going to want to be catered to, explain the situation, ask for a little sympathy, and be served myself. But not the Lord, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

The more I read over that, the more time I spend contemplating that, the more it takes my breath away. He loved them to the end, to the uttermost, to completion, the point being that He followed through until the work of redemption was complete. He didn't have to, He could've backed out at any moment, but having loved His own, (that is those who had come to know Him, and place their trust in Him as their Savior, those who were His, the sheep of His hand) He loved them to the end. This is the heart of Jesus, to love you through and through, with every fiber of His being He loves you, and it's not because you're so lovable, or I'm so lovable, think this through.

Everyone of these guys would deny Him when push came to shove and it was crunch time, when the pressure was truly on, and in that moment when (humanly speaking) Jesus would need them the most they would all turn their backs on Him. We always think of Judas, and it's true what he did, but don't be deceived *none of them* stood by Him.

So they would all *deny* Him, Judas would *betray* Him, in His hour of need, they would flee *from* Him and in essence *turn* from Him. Yet having loved His own who are in the world, He would love *them* to the end. It blows me away, and I think of the times that perhaps I've denied the Lord when push came to shove, or it was crunch time and the pressure was really on, and yet in my silence, or perhaps through not standing firm in my position I've turned my back on Him. But yet He loves me through and through, with every fiber of His being He loves me, and followed through for me, and it's not because I'm so lovable. and He'll love me till the end, He'll love you and stay by you to the completion, Paul said it like this, "...*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*" Phil 1:6 and Again, "*He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* Heb 13:5 He'll continue to love you, and be there for you, regardless of how you may've denied Him, or turned your back on Him. If you're ready to repent, He's ready to restore.

Now, here's another angle through which to view this, how many people here desire to have a heart like Jesus? and You know in your own heart and mind those times that you've prayed, "Lord, give me a heart like Yours, I want to know Your heart, to have Your heart, to see as You see, and do as You'd do." Then learn *this* lesson, because if it hasn't happened yet, odds are that eventually it will.

There'll come a time in your life when perhaps those whom you feel are closest to you, and are in your inner circle of confidentiality, when you feel as though you need them the most, they'll *turn on* you, they'll *deny* you when it's crunch time, they won't be their *for* you, but rather they'll turn their backs *on* you, they'll *betray* you, and flee *from* you. Now what do you do? Do you rant and rave, and seek to shoot them down and do unto them as they've done unto you; I suppose you could do that. But do you want a heart like Jesus'? Then love them to the end, when they turn *on* you, when they flee *from* you, when they *deny* and *betray* you when the pressure is on and you need them the most, then you *love* them in return, be gracious *to* them, have compassion *on* them, and love them to the end, that's what Jesus did.

Paul said it like this, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*" Rom 12:21 and Again, "*See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.*" 1 Thess 5:15 and Finally Peter said, "...*all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this,*" 1 Peter 3:8-9 Love one another, love one another, love one another, this is the life that the Lord has called us to. *He* loved them to the *end*, and that's what *I'm* to do, and that's what *you're* to do as well.

Vs2-5

Now back in vs 2 where it's translated supper had ended, it would be more accurate to say that supper had commenced, or supper being in progress, vs 26 makes it clear that the full spectrum of the supper hadn't yet ended. But we see here that at this point Judas' plan of betrayal was in full effect, Satan had already put betrayal in his heart, now this says something to us, and that is that Satan is able to somehow cast evil thoughts, or ungodly notions into our hearts. How he does this I couldn't tell you, but it reminds us of fiery darts of the wicked one that Paul speaks about there in Eph which are to be quenched by the shield of faith.

Just because Satan tempted Judas this way, that in no way alleviates Judas from the personal responsibility of making the choice to submit to the temptation, he chose to succumb to the wiles of the wicked one, that was his choice, he could've resisted, but he chose to go with it. The bible says, "...submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." James 4:7 But if choose not to submit to God, and not to resist the devil, then he won't flee from you, but rather he'll force himself upon you, and that's exactly what he did with Judas.

But John here is careful to underscore for us the fact that Jesus knew who He was, where He'd come from and where He was preparing to go, He knew that all things were given into His hands, He knew that He'd come *from* God, and He knew that He was going *to* God. What's happening here is that John is setting us up for a contrast for the sake of impact, Jesus was God, and He knew it, He'd been given a high position, yet He chose to walk in humility. The Sovereign taking the position of the servant, all things being given into His hands, yet He picked up a towel to wash the dirty feet of a dozen men.

He's the Lord, and the Master serving His followers, though He could've been lofty, he chose to walk lowly, though in His position He's magnified, He chose meekness and modesty. I'm sure that you're aware that the duty of washing feet was reserved for the servant in the house of the lowest order, and Jesus is giving these guys a practical lesson in servanthood that believe me they would never forget. In a minute He'll say, "I've given you an example that you should do as I have done to you."

If you piece together the story from the other gospel accounts you realize that these guys were all arguing over who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom at about this point. Jesus just stands up, lays aside His garments, takes a towel, girds Himself, and begins to wash their feet, I there's no way I can know it, but I would imagine you could've heard a pin drop when they began to realize what He was about to do. These instruments have been there the whole time, any of them could've done this for the others, but they were too worried about being great, to proud to consider the task of showing themselves somehow subservient to the others. I mean this would've somehow been an acknowledgment of inferiority among their colleagues who were all gunning for the top position of their hierarchy. and So Jesus breaks up their little conversation with an object lesson. and He shows them the way up, is down, the way to be 1st is to be last, the way to lead is to serve.

Vs6

Perhaps Peter couldn't believe that each of the others would allow the Lord to abnegate, or humiliate Himself like this, and so Peter says, "Lord are *You* washing *my* feet." It's like when J.B. said to Jesus, "I need to be baptized by *You*, and are *You* coming to *me*?" and He tried to prevent Him, and Peter's like, there's no way that *You* Lord are going to wash *my* feet.

Vs 7

By the way you might want to underline that vs, and tuck it away the next time something's going on in your life that you don't understand. Because I find that this is often true for us as well, what the Lord is doing in our lives we don't understand at the moment.

But the Lord isn't asking for Peter's understanding, He's asking for his trust, and He's asking for his obedience, and He's telling Peter that understanding follows obedience. That we're not always going to have the privilege of understanding everything before it happens, but that as we obey, He'll teach us to understand, "You don't get it right now Peter, but you will later," and Peter did get it later. He wrote in his 1st epistle to the other leaders of the body, "*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;*" 1 Peter 5:2-3

You see he learned from the Lord's example here that it was his duty to be an example, in servanthood, that in love we're to serve one another, and that no task is too menial. Jesus took the lowest one, and then said, you call Me Teacher and Lord and you say well because I am, now no servant is above his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. So that the moment that we come to a place where practical service of any order unto our brothers and sisters in Christ is beneath us, we've become greater than our Lord, you see it's not about washing feet literally, that was an example. and It was an example of the most debased sort, and the point is clear, there's nothing that we're to good for, or above in the name of Christ, and Peter's going to get that, but not yet, notice.

Vs8

You might underline that as well, if Christ doesn't wash you, you can have no part with Him. 1st of all for salvation, if the blood of Christ doesn't wash you, you have no part with Jesus, but then also for sanctification. If we're not being washed through confession to Him (1 John 1:9) and the cleansing power of the water of His word, then our sin will break our communion with Him. and That's the specific context here, not salvation, but sanctification, notice again.

Vs9-11

Again we notice that the betrayal of Jesus wasn't a surprise to Jesus, "He knew" who would betray Him. But He makes the distinction here between the initial cleansing that takes place as demonstrated by the waters of baptism for *salvation*, and the water that keeps our feet clean speaking of *sanctification*. The feet speak of what? Our walk, and if we're to have a holy walk, then our feet need to be clean, you see in that day perhaps they would bathe in the public bath houses, or the wealthy might have their own, but once they trekked from the bath house back home on those dirty and dusty streets, or even across the floor of their own homes, their feet would reacquire some dust and dirt. It's inevitable in that atmosphere, much like Africa, there's dirt roads, trash everywhere, and so when you got home, you'd need to clean your feet to be completely clean.

What Jesus is saying is that you're already clean having given your heart to Him and been "bathed" as it were in His blood, and robed in His righteousness. But as you make your way through the world, it's inevitable that you're going to get some of the dust and dirt, and pollutants of the world on your feet, and that sin can separate you from Him, it's not necessarily going to break your *union* with Christ (necessarily) but it may well break your *communion* with Christ. and So we need to have our feet washed regularly, again by confessing our sin to Him, receiving the cleansing flow of His Word like we are today and so on. Just because you blow life, that doesn't mean you need to be saved again, Jesus is saying, once your bathed, you're clean, but it's essential for all of us to have our feet washed, if we're to maintain a holy walk.

Vs12-15

See, this is an example, He's not inaugurating the biblical rite of foot washing, today He may've grabbed some trashcans and washed them out, or hopped on a Murray and mowed their lawns. But how do we wash one another's feet? How do we do as He has done? The book of Romans says it like this, "*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;*" Rom 12:10

More specifically in regards to washing feet and helping a brother or a sister out of a polluted situation the bible says, "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*" Gal 6:1 Minister to them through prayer, and the word of God, wash their feet that they walk might be restored, that's what the ministry is all about, serving people, ministering practically, and personally.

Vs16-17

Now you guys we've considered a lot today, but don't fade out on me here, because this is what it all comes down to, because many of us *know* these things, but what good is understanding that's not applied? Understanding unapplied does nothing for you, here's the key folks, if you know these things, do these things. James said it like this, "... *be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*" James 1:22

Remember when Jesus' mother and brothers were having difficulty getting to Jesus for the crowds that were around Him, and someone said, "Jesus, your mother and your brothers, they're seeking You." But Jesus said, "*Who is My mother and who are My brothers? And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.*" Matt 12:48-50 and Again He said, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*" Matt 7:21
Turn to Matt 7 and we'll close here, (Vs24-27).

It's not the *hearers* of the Word who are justified the bible says, it's not those who *hear* it, *consent* to it, *agree* with it and *idealize* it, it's not the hearers who are justified, but the doers, it's not works, it's wisdom, it's obedience to the Word of God. The bible says, "*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.*" Rev 22:14 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

If you're here today, and for you it's not about sanctification, it's about salvation, you've never given your heart to Christ, and God is dealing with regarding the need to receive the full cleansing, the washing of your heart and your mind and your soul, then understand that Jesus said that the one who comes to Me, I'll by no means cast out, He'll clean you up, but He won't cast you out, it doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done, God loves you, and Jesus shed His blood for you. If you'll just give Him your heart in repentance today, He'll forgive you of your sin, and give you everlasting life, the bible says that if anyone be in Christ he's a new creation, old things pass away and all things become new, you can become brand new today, just surrender your heart to Christ, and He'll give to you a clean slate and forgive you of all your sin.