

The Model Servant John 13:12-20

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?"¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.¹⁸ I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'¹⁹ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

Thanks to Marcus for sharing last Wednesday night. Preaching/teaching is a joyful burden.

There are 21 chapters in John and chapters 13-19, 1/3 of the book encompasses the last full day of Jesus early life and ministry.

John's book is founded on the 7 'I am' statements and 7 signs. He writes in John 21:25 –
"Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

In other words, these 7 statements and 7 signs set up the last 1/3 of the book.

- *"This is who I am."*
- *"This is what I do."*

First: The Context

John details 3 Passover feasts and this is the last one. The Passover is an annual feast that celebrates the Exodus of Israel from Egypt.

Jerusalem normally had a population of 20-30,000 people. During Passover, as described in Lev 23 and Deut 16, the city's population swelled to about 150,000 because God commanded all Hebrew men to pilgrimage to Jerusalem for

- Passover (March 28, '22) - Leaving Egypt
- Feast of Weeks/Shavuot (June 4-6, '22) – Giving of Torah
- Festival of Booths/Sukkot (October 9-10, '22) – the wilderness wanderings

These holy days swelled the population of Jerusalem from 5 to 7 times its normal size. Every hotel room, every campsite, was inhabited and every restaurant was visited by Jewish people from all over the world.

Preparation for Passover was a year-long event. Bridges and roads had to be prepared. The city had to be ceremonially cleaned for the feast. The offerings were prepared so that the Passover Lamb could be sacrificed on the evening of the 14th of Nisan (April).

Of course, John proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29) to introduce Jesus to Israel. His atoning sacrifice on Calvary shields us from God’s wrath in the same way and more that the Passover lamb protected Israel from the Death Angel in Egypt.

Second: Jesus’s Actions in vs 1-11

This Sunday we address why the cross is a stumbling block to Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were looking for a Messiah to rescue them from Roman bondage. They anticipated a king/savior who would defeat the Romans and establish his earthly kingdom in Jerusalem. Jesus was the opposite. Instead of killing Romans, he died. Instead of climbing a throne, he was crucified on a cross. The cross is a stumbling block because no one imagines that dying is a way to save anyone. And it is so contrary to the real values of our world.

3-11 – He humbled himself (3-4) and served the disciples (5) as a model for the church. The Corinthians needed to read this passage.

Much like performing a miracle and then teaching to explain the truth about the miracle, Jesus served the disciples and now he returns to his place at the table to ensure the disciples understand what he has done (12)

Third: The Servant Teacher. 13-15

a) Jesus affirms that he is their Teacher and Lord. 13

Matthew 11:28-29 - *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

Book: *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*

What does Christ want us to learn from him? That he is ‘*gentle and lowly in heart, so that we will find rest for our souls.*”

The indicative “*I am,*” sets up the imperative “*You will.*”

Does this picture describe you? In a power-hungry world, we all need to see Jesus as he truly is and invites us to be. Our John 13 passage does just that. Here, Jesus becomes the servant of all.

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 42 in **Matthew 18:18-21** - *Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim*

justice to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; ²⁰ a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; ²¹ and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

How is Christ God’s ‘pleasing’ servant?

- a) Spirit-enabled and dependent*
- b) His message is ‘justice’ for the bruised and faint*
- c) He does not quarrel or raise his voice to be heard*
- d) He welcomes sinners as they are*
- e) This gives hope to Gentiles who are outsiders*

b) He models true teaching and lordship. 14

- If Jesus had performed miracles and not taught, people would have been temporarily healed but eternally lost.
- If Jesus had taught without miracles, he would have had no audience to teach.

There is a balance between teaching and modeling but neither has effect without the other.

We must model the disciplines we want others to practice. What disciplines are important to Jesus? to you?

Galatians 5:22-23 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Ephesians 4:24-32 - *...put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

These are indeed disciples because they are not natural to us. But as Christ, we must display these before we desire them of others.

c) He encourages the disciples to replicate his model. 15

Matthew 20:20-28 - Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹ And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." ²² Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." ²³ He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." ²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,^[g] ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

One great goal in life is to have Christ's agenda and no other.

Fourth: The Serving Challenge. 15-17

- a) Jesus's life is an example for us. 15

"that you also should do just as I have done to you."

The 7 'I am's and the 7 signs proved that Jesus is God. Now to serve the disciples powerfully demonstrates the true meaning and use of authority and power. This turns power and authority on its head.

Can a model be so attractive that it is compelling?

The Christian life is like the limbo, answering the question, *"How low can you go?"*

- b) Christ is greater, not us. 16

To live contrarily, to abuse our authority and power, is to consider ourselves the Master and not the servant.

- c) We are blessed to live as Christ. 17

To 'know' is experiential knowledge. You don't really 'know' it if you aren't practicing it.

According to Wisdom personified, this is the 'blessed' life.

Fifth: A Serious Warning. 18-20

- a) Not everyone at the table is a Christian. 18

We know this, and yet are hurt every time it happens.

1 Peter 1:13 - *Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

- This is how life is
- This is what we have to look forward to

b) We have been warned by Jesus (to focus on Jesus). 19

John 21:20-22 - *Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?"* ²¹ *When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"* ²² *Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"*

Conclusion:

Jesus is indeed the 'model' Servant. In this passage he says, "*Do as I do. Do as I say.*" He modeled the life to live it and to challenge us to it.

It is not the easiest life, but it is the best life. And we can live it because He lives it through us.