

Series: Portraits of Jesus	Reference: <i>John 13</i>	Title: The Servant	Date: 05.03.2020
Website Writeup: Israel wanted a conquering leader, but Jesus is a Servant King. How does He show this, and what does it mean for us as His followers?			

Turn with me to John 13:1-5...*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God & was going back to God, ⁴rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin & began to wash the disciples' feet & to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

Today we see Jesus as Servant at the end of His ministry, alone with His disciples, soon to be crucified & knows it. The Father's given all things into His hands. Ultimate power. What would I do my last day with all that power? *Assuming* I'd want to do good, I'd frantically call powerful people to continue my plans. Establish peace on earth. Take out evil structures across the globe. Crush enemies. Leave a legacy. Set my people in high places. It'd be a waste if I didn't use that last day well, IF I had ultimate power.

Walking around Jerusalem made your feet dirty on dusty roads, with animal feces & who knows what, everyone wore sandals. People bathed, but throughout the day their feet got dirty. Home owners provided a slave to wash the feet of guests. Lowly job. The disciples arrive sitting with Jesus. No one's washed their feet. Sitting around the table, feeling neglected. Somebody dropped the ball. "I need my feet washed. Where's the slave?" But Jesus has an object lesson planned. He'd play slave/servant. One by one He washed their feet, everyone of them, which was significant. It took time, we can imagine the quietness. Each one feeling uncomfortable. Their Rabbi undresses down to his underwear. Wraps a towel around himself. Kneels & washes - more than just Rabbi, God incarnate. Intimacy. Uncomfortable. God on His knees in a towel. Washing. Wiping. Loving.

These were last moments for Jesus, honing His focus, continuing what He started. It says He chose to love His own who were in the world - those right in front of Him. Those He can see, talk to, has loved, spent time with & built up, doing this until the end. He could've taken out Rome, established a theocracy, set up a system of government, wiped out evil, put His people in place - He's God. But God the Son chose to sit in a room with His closest disciples washing their feet. The full extent of love. Love so opposite of expectation. It's exactly because of this sacrificial love the crowds who just yelled 'Hosanna', will turn on him & yell 'Crucify'. He's not what they expected or wanted.

Does Jesus' character even allow Him the capability of using power in controlling ways? I don't think Jesus' power is power as we view it. His power is love, nothing more, nothing less. I don't mean sentimentality, mere affinity, or affection. But powerful active sacrificial love. Love with standards which bring life & moves, acts, sacrifices, focuses on those in front of you, never gives up, denying notions of worldly militaristic power, or financial manipulation. Love in action benefitting others. Love which lays aside personal dignity, like Jesus did with his clothing, the opposite of what the world sees as power. He defined it in Mark 10:42-45...*"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* His is a power lifting from underneath, not controlling from above.

We want leaders who conquer, not sacrifice. Not leaders who get naked & vulnerable, or kneel & serve, we want them to take over. We want to be on the winning team with a leader who crushes evil. We especially don't want a model of sacrificial love which demands emulation. And that's why in vv6-10 when....*He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands & my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean..."*

Peter's is our reaction, "You can't do that. You're king, I serve you!" False humility. Faith is paradoxical. Greatness through humility. Life through death. To get, you give. Paradox. Jesus serves in love, we die to pride. Some serve out of ulterior motives to find favor, look spiritual, get attention, or control & manipulate. False humility, diametrically opposed to Kingdom Love. Jesus serves out of love & was given the name above all names as a result (Phil. 2:5-11). You don't understand this now Peter, but in my kingdom, love is power & power is love. When we understand our need for & receive Him, then through Him, we're empowered to love others in humility as He did.

Then in vv12-15...*When he had washed their feet & put on his outer garments & resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher & Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord & Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."*

Peter couldn't just be told, He had to experience this love. For God to be naked, kneeling in front of him, like a slave, doing the work, the lowest of jobs, to grasp who God is & what God expects of him. As a matter of fact, there are so many lessons here.

Firstly, in accepting the true Jesus we're bathed & clean already - **Justified**. We can only have intimacy with God through Jesus' cleansing. As Peter said, we must also say,

“I need cleansing, Wash me completely.” Allowing Jesus to wash us with His sacrificial blood, as this situation foreshadows His shedding blood on the cross, it’s by that blood we have eternal life with Him. As long as I hold onto control, not admitting my helplessness, I’ll never experience intimacy with Him. I may’ve spent time around Him. Gone to church my whole life. Taken the bath of a thousand sermons, but until I submit myself in faith to His cleansing blood, I don’t have true intimacy & life with Him.

Secondly, in Jesus, we are continually washed - **Sanctified**. Jesus washes us, resulting in us being reconciled to God for good. In theological terminology it means He imputed His righteousness to us. In layman’s terms it means His perfect record was attributed to us. He paid the price for our sin once & for all. When God looks at us now, He sees Jesus’ perfect record, that’s justification. However, as we walk through life we get dirty. Which is why He says, “The one who has bathed doesn’t need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean.” Jesus told Peter, he’s washed, justified in Christ. But he’ll also continually be washed from the dirt of life. Justification’s a one time washing of restoration & reconciliation with God. Sanctification’s a continual washing of learning to live in Christ & becoming like Him in character.

1 John 1:7-2:2 speaks of this, *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves & the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful & just & will forgive us our sins & purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar & his word is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.* Jesus washes us clean via the cross: Justification. Jesus continually washes us by His Word as we’re made into His likeness: Sanctification/Word. Walking with Him, allowing Him to wash, restoring intimacy with Him & others.

Thirdly, we’re called to live out His love with others; family, neighbor, friend & even enemy. These guys have argued who’d be the greatest, or first in the Kingdom of God. Vying for attention & position. They’ve sought this worldly power, misunderstanding His power of love.

In his book, *A Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster writes, "In some ways, we’d prefer to hear Jesus’ call to deny father & mother, houses & land for the sake of the gospel, (rather) than His word to wash feet. Radical self-denial gives us the feel of adventure. If we forsake all, we even have the chance of glorious martyrdom. But in service, we’re banished to the mundane, the ordinary, the trivial." Some dream great dreams of loving the poor in far off countries. Yet if we examine their life here, often we find they’ve neglected to love those in front of them. If you don’t do it here, you won’t do it there. Jesus’ love is everyday, simple & seen in small ways. Mundane, not sexy. He loves us, to model how we’re to love others. We may admit we need His washing, but when we hear this call to sacrificial everyday love, we pause. It’s not towards religious theory, or wrote imitation. It’s making His life ours. Loving those in front of us until the

end. Laying aside personal desires. Assimilating the kingdom power of love. Bernard of Clairveaux once said, "Learn the lesson, that if you're to do the work of a prophet, what you need isn't a scepter, but a (garden) hoe."

The same thing He said to Peter, we have no real intimacy in relationship with Him, without the freedom to love as He did & be loved as He does. Worldly notions of power & desire disintegrate individuals & communities. Jesus power of love integrates the person, making us whole.

But we make ignorant spiritual vows, saying, "We're Americans. We don't need anyone else." Lies we've swallowed like baby birds do a worm. If I can't wash your feet, I can't have intimacy with you. Like the **indifferent** person, who can't see past their own life. Lacking compassion, or any thought of others. No time to love & serve others in practical ways, it doesn't even come to mind. Or, the **dependent** person, always taking, never giving. Not recognizing God calls them to also serve someone else. They may not think themselves capable...more lies. Instead of living in the paradox of getting from giving, they take, fearing what it means to give.

Also, we have the **independent** person: if I don't allow you to wash my feet, I can't have intimacy with you. Some are super-spiritual, washing feet in front of everyone, but will never humble themselves before others. Serving out of false humility. And some live independently, thinking they can go it alone. They don't need anyone, got all the answers. They may be polite, but will never fully gain intimacy with anyone.

Pride & lies, lay them aside. Come in humility. Ready to serve & be served, to love & be loved. To know & be known. Mature Christians are neither indifferent, dependent, independent, but are **interdependent**. They realize their need to give & take in community. Mature Christians aren't super-spiritual, or indifferent. They get behind Jesus, walking to the cross. In process our pride is killed off which keeps us from loving & being loved. In *The Four Loves*, C. S. Lewis talked about the wonderful risk of loving & being loved. "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything & your heart will certainly be wrung & possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies & little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket - safe, dark, motionless, airless - it'll change. It'll not be broken; it'll become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable... The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love is Hell." When we refuse to love like Jesus, we become hardened & dead.

Jesus goes even farther with His love, He said... "Not all of you are clean." He refers to Judas who's plotted against him. Judas desired power & acted on it, wounding Jesus already. He's bathed in Christ's love, but rejects it. Jesus had all the power, knew what Judas was doing, but chose to get naked & wash his feet along with the others.

We would've advised Jesus on Judas differently saying, "Oh, Jesus, you have to deal with him, he's challenging your authority. Make a spectacle of him. If you don't,

everyone will think you're weak & will try the same." We would've advised Jesus to strip Judas naked. But Jesus doesn't fret about this worldly challenge of power. It doesn't matter what Judas does, or says, it'll not change the plan. Actually, Judas serves the plan. That's the power of love - the ability to look beyond sin, to trust God's in control of the situation, despite the chaos.

Democrats & Republicans seem to be outright enemies, using their power against one another. Thankfully there are exceptions. In 1973 news of the shooting of Senator Stennis, the chairman of the Armed Forces Committee, shocked Washington & nation. For nearly seven hours, Senator Stennis was on the operating table at Walter Reed Hospital. Less than two hours later, another politician was driving home when he heard about the shooting. He turned his car around & drove directly to the hospital. In the hospital, he noticed the staff was swamped & couldn't keep up with the incoming calls about the Senator's condition. He spotted an unattended switchboard, sat down & voluntarily went to work, taking calls until daylight.

Sometime that next day, he stood up, stretched, put on his overcoat & just before leaving introduced himself quietly to the other operator, "I'm Senator Mark Hatfield. Happy to help." Then walked out. The press could hardly handle it. There seemed to be no way for a conservative Republican to give a liberal Democrat a tip of the hat, let alone spend hours doing a menial task in his favor & be happy to help.

Jesus didn't serve only those He preferred. It might've been easy to wash John's feet, the 'Beloved Disciple'. Yet, John & James were always trying to get ahead. Or, Simon Peter? He who'd deny Jesus three times before dawn. Or, Thomas? He'd doubt the resurrection. Judas would sell Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver. Yet, in His last moments, Jesus doesn't allow any of this to cloud His love. His love worked despite the chaos & brokenness of these men. He loved them equally. It's easy to love those we like. True servants love everyone equally, no favorites, enemies - the unlovable included.

Then in v20 Jesus says...*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*" Love's a Trinity thing. We receive the Holy Spirit, we receive Jesus. We receive Jesus, we receive the Father. And the completeness of God's love works in & through us, developing true intimacy & community with others. Can we say we love like Jesus? Do we hold grudges, expect others to measure up, dwell on past hurts, or think ourselves better than others? Do we confront every little wrong, or do we trust God's at work & His plans won't be thwarted. That He'll be glorified no matter what everyone in the room does?

Position. Wealth. Looks. Personality. Being in the In-Crowd. Intelligence. Education. We're tempted to wield these over others. Yet, what does community look like governed by the power of Christ's love? Where people wash each others feet? Where members spend time with the neglected, or don't hold out on commitments in case something better comes along. They don't break commitments, but show up, since they know it means something to somebody. Where they send out an important email & it actually gets response. Where members show up on time since they know others have worked

hard at a party or event. Where members offer time & resources to do menial tasks. Where kids aren't shoved off to the side & babysat, but are included in community life. Where people say thank you, I appreciate you & love you - sensitive to build others up, not tear down. Where people forgo a worship service to teach someone else's kids. Where people forgive without expecting retribution & where wrongs are overlooked.

Showing interest & care to others. Where people hug & pray for each other on the spot. Or, pray for neighbors around their home. People to be relied on, where the outside community points & says, "They care!" Filled with joy & unity. A nice place where you wanna be! A place where everyone knows your name. Does that sound like Six:Eight?

One woman at Linwood Park once said, "I'm not a Christian, but if I were, I'd go to your church. You guys are great, really nice, fun, helpful & emanate joy!" Great compliment!

You guys have been great foot washers! I've seen you guys pray over people at Community Events. Visited neighbors & prayed over them. Helped others financially. Gone to graduations, plays, or someone else's life-event to show support. Many of you have taught our children. Played bingo with old folks. Emptied trash & planted in town. Recently our Community Groups have given gifts to first responders & hurting businesses! We've set up movies in the park. Community leaders praise us! Some of you have cared for my kids while we were at the hospital. You've prayed over & for our missionaries. Given money to our Benevolence Fund, supported kids & work in the Middle East through our Kinship Network. You've cooked & served others. Donna Christie has written cards to everyone in this church & many of you've called others during this pandemic. Mary Nicoletti woke up in the middle of the night to pray for met father with cancer this past week. Dick Best prayed with a coworker at Trader Joes & makes it a point to call numerous people throughout his day to make sure they are doing okay during this pandemic. Good job, that's feet washing. Keep up the good work!

Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-48...*"You've heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor & hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies & pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil & the good, and sends rain on the righteous & the unrighteous. ⁴⁶if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

What's perfection? Is it being good looking? Wealthy? Smart? Intelligent? Powerful? Or never making a mistake? No! Perfection is loving well out of the grace of Jesus, in the power of His Spirit, emulating the heart of the Father despite your own faults or shortcomings. Loving those right in front of us, to the end, in practical ways. What can you do in that vein during this time?

Questions for Study

1. Read John 13:1-5...
 1. Do you know someone who seems indifferent to the needs of others?
 2. Do you know someone who only likes to be served?
 3. Do you know someone always serving & never receiving service themselves?
 4. Do you know someone who's good with giving & taking when appropriate?
2. Each one of those people represents a category...the indifferent, the dependent, the independent, and the interdependent. We may experience different stages of these in life, but eventually want to move towards interdependence...why?
 1. What is so damaging about living longterm in the others?
 2. Do you see a pattern or even a need to go through stages of of these in spiritual development?
3. How did Jesus show Himself to be interdependent with us? Think of instances when He both served well, but also received service well from others?
4. Read Mark 10:42-45...discuss the differences with the Kingdom of God & the Kingdoms of the world.
 1. How does Jesus allow Judas to do what he did, but still command authority with us?
 2. What does this mean in our interactions with others?
 3. Read Matthew 5:43-48...how do Jesus' words here fit in with this discussion, and what does 'be perfect' in v48 actually mean?
5. What is one thing you can do to serve another this week?
6. What is one thing you can do to allow someone to serve you this week?