

**YOU WILL BE BLESSED**  
**John 13:12-17**

If you knew you were about to die, what would you say to your friends and family? If you had an important message for them, you would want to make sure they would understand it. Few of us would have the privileged information of knowing when we would die, but Jesus did

Jesus and His disciples were about to celebrate the Passover and Jesus knew, "that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father." The meal was being served and Jesus gets up right in the middle of supper. He takes off his outer garment, wraps a towel around His waist, pours water in a basin and proceeds to wash the disciple's feet, drying them with the towel around His waist.

Now this was the job of a slave, the lowest form of labor – the feet were considered the filthiest part of the body and all that they touched was worthless. It was a common courtesy in most households for the household slave to wash the feet of the guests as they came in. It refreshed the guest and made them feel clean. It's obvious that this has been overlooked as the disciples gathered for the last supper. If anyone thought about it, they were wondering where the slave was or who else was going to do this lowly job – but not me, Mr. Important Disciple!

Imagine that our bishop of the La. Annual conference, Bill Hutchinson, comes to your house for lunch and you forgot to clean the toilet bowls. Then right in the middle of lunch, he got up, took off his coat and tie, rolled up his sleeves got the cleaner and brush and cleaned every bathroom bowl in the house. It would be embarrassing if we thought we were too good to do it ourselves, and it would be a lesson to us in being a servant.

After Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he said:

<sup>12</sup>When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup>"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup>I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. (John 13:12-17)

We are not greater than Jesus. We are called to serve others. Service is the only way to greatness in the kingdom of God. Our problem is we often are too proud to serve. We put ourselves first. We say we don't have time or we say someone else who has more time or who is retired can do it.

Jesus is not calling someone else, He calls you to serve others. What will you do with your life for Christ's sake? The size of the task is unimportant. You might have the abilities to plan, organize, and carry out a citywide crusade for Christ –

the question is: are you doing it? You might be able to serve food in a soup kitchen, the question is: are you doing it? You might be able to call people on the telephone who have been sick, checking up on them, the question is: are you doing it? What are you doing for Christ's sake?

If you are serving others, you are serving Jesus Christ Himself. What we don't seem to realize or at least seem to forget is that there is blessing in serving others. After Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He told them in v.17, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." He was talking about serving one another in the same way He served them.

Now it is important for us to serve God, but I do have a little surprise about service: It is not just what Jesus commands you to do, it is what Jesus commands you to be. He does not just want you to serve, He wants you to be a servant! There is a big difference.

Often when we just serve, we pick and choose what we want to do and when we want to do it. We serve to make us feel good, as well as just do good. Sometimes we feel that we lowered ourselves long enough to do our duty and not feel guilty. We endure it. Sometimes we grumble and gripe all the way through it. Is that serving Christ?

We go through the same struggle the disciples did. We don't mind serving, as long as we get our just reward, as long as we can be in charge and tell others how to serve, as long as we get something out of it.

<sup>25</sup>Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—<sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28).

We are not greater than our master. None of us is greater than Jesus. Greatness in the kingdom of God means being everyone's servant in a spirit of humility.

Our attitude reflects what is going on inside. We don't mind washing someone's feet, but we forget about the temperature of the water. "Some come with boiling hot water. They are so angry, so upset, so distracted by something that has happened in the past – and so mad about it – that they come to the other person and say, 'here, stick your feet in this!' No one wants to have his feet washed with boiling water.// Some go to the other extreme and come with ice water. They are so righteous, so holier-than-thou, so above it all. They come with this frigid, freezing water and want to wash your feet. No one wants his feet washed with ice water. // Some find a third extreme and come without any water. They try to dry-clean your feet with a 'piece of their mind,' just scrubbing away harshly. What they say may be true, but there is no water of love, nothing to wash the dirt gently away, but only a rigid insistence on scraping away every imperfection and the skin

along with it! // There is another way – that is to come and wash one another’s feet in love, in the spirit of servanthood.”

It’s different when you are a servant. Servant and slave are the same word in the Greek – “doulos.” A servant is humble; a servant does what needs to be done, when it needs to be done. There may be no choosing, no choice, because choice isn’t available. Your time is not yours; your money is not yours – it belongs to the Master. A servant serves because that is what a servant does. It is part of their nature to the point they don’t even think about it anymore.

A parable of Jesus that really brings it home is Luke 17:7-10:

’Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ʼWould he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ʼWould he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ʼSo you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

A servant serves, because that is what a servant does.

I know I have a long way to go in becoming a servant. I have a lot to learn from the servants of this world. But I want to change and become what the Lord wants me to be. There is something inside of me that needs to serve others. There’s a story about the great sculptor, Michelangelo. On one occasion he was seen struggling to move a huge piece of stone down the street. A bystander asked him why he was going to all that trouble to move that old piece of rock. The great artist answered, “Because there is an angel in there that wants to come out.” It’s said that he would chip away everything that didn’t look like an angel.

When we sincerely follow Jesus Christ, which means picking up our cross, the instrument of our death, there is a servant inside of us, which is struggling to get out. The master sculptor must chip away everything that doesn’t look like a servant – at times it is humiliating, at times it is painful – but it is ultimately fulfilling.

There is no attraction in being a servant. But it is what you are called to be. Start where you are: serve out of love for Jesus; serve the Lord with gladness in whatever is available – now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.