



## Sermon Series Notes

### “The Kingdom of God, Part 3: The Greatest in the Kingdom” (Acts 28, John 13:1-17)

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Intro: Acts 28, vv.23b & 31; Acts 1:3

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as ***as it is in heaven.***

What is the kingdom of God?

- A place where God reigns supreme, and Christ is King

Where is the kingdom of God?

- John 18:36 My kingdom is not of this world...my kingdom is from another place.
- Acts 1:9-11
- Rev.4:1-3; 5:6a
- Luke 23:42-43 “...Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
- II Cor.12:2-4 Paul caught up to the third heaven/paradise

Christians/the church are representatives of the kingdom of God here on earth.

\* Christ’s ambassadors

\* Parables of the kingdom of heaven on earth

- The purpose of the parables is to aid everyone in understand the truths of the kingdom in order to make wise decisions in light of those truths.
- Only God ultimately knows who are his & who are not (Judas)
- There is yeast/leaven mixed in with the kingdom on earth
- We are God’s treasure/pearls that he purchased to become part of His kingdom.
- At the end of the age God will separate those who are a part of his kingdom and those who are not.

Today our focus on the kingdom takes us to John’s gospel, chapter 13. Read vv.1-17.

How many have ever had their feet washed by someone else? I have twice, once by a former leader in CCSP years ago, and the second time by some of our pastors’ wives while at the CC pastor's conference in

Merritt Island Florida. Both times were really weird for me. Anyone ever hosted or been to a foot washing service? If you knew you were going to a foot washing service, did you wash your feet first?

I'm convinced that Jesus' foot washing of the disciples' feet needs to be translated into the culture in which we live. With that said, I still cannot get away from two things regarding actual foot washing. One, it is very personal, and two, it requires tremendous humility. In the time Jesus washed his disciples' feet, the act was done by those who were the lowest ranking servants. There was not a lower task than to wash someone's feet. It was a stinky dirty job. It would have turned many a squeamish stomach to wash dirty feet, especially at supper time.

There are more sweat glands in the feet than any other part of the body. Bacteria and feet. Some people's feet smell worse than others; Ask some in audience who in their family has the worst smelling feet. In Jesus' day there were no sidewalks, & they of course did not travel in cars. They walked pretty much everywhere they went. And there were cattle, sheep, goats, and other animals walking on the same roads they walked on. They wore open sandals, or no shoes at all. So the job of washing feet in this day was much different than in our modern world. And we have things like "Odor Eaters Foot Powder" (Show). Among these disciples, who's feet do you think had the worst odor, were the dirtiest, + took the most humility to wash? Who's feet were the biggest? I think Peter's feet were about a size 13 EEE. Sometimes the only time Peter opened his mouth was to change feet!

And let's not forget there was more than the physical stench of these disciples' feet. There is the spiritual stench as well. These are people who Jesus knew everything about - their past failures, their future failures, the evil that had been in their hearts since being conceived in their mother's womb, yet he loved them to the point of washing their feet, and He did this in His greatest hour of need.

What would be some modern day equivalents to foot washing in Jesus' day?.

I was going to show some of the dirtiest jobs from Discovery Channel's show "Dirty Jobs," hosted by Mike Rowe, but quite honestly, they grossed me out too much, and I thought they were inappropriate for a church service. So let me mention some that are not as gross, but still make the point.

\* Years ago our youth group sponsored a car wash and washed people's cars for free, not looking to raise money, just to perform the task of servants. Our youth pastor at the time thought about this passage. John 13. You see, the reason for washing feet in those days was because in your daily travels, your feet would get dirty (and tired), because feet were one of the main means of transportation. Today, cars are our primary means of transportation.

\* Pastor Peter Lord and his roto rooter

\* Lang Holland's wife clipping his toe nails. For years I have asked my wife to do this for me, but up to this point she has not matured to this degree of humility.

\* Changing the kid's diaper for your wife; washing the dishes, mopping the floor, taking out the trash, etc.

\* A large group of European pastors came to one of D.L. Moody's Bible Conference in the late 1800's. Following the European custom at that time, each guest put his shoes outside his room to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. But in America there were no hall servants like in Europe. Moody knew the European custom, so he mentioned the situation to some ministerial students. But none of the students took the opportunity to minister to these guests by cleaning their shoes. So Moody gathered up the shoes, and alone in his room cleaned and polished each one. Only the unexpected arrival of a friend in the midst of the work revealed the secret.

The Spiritual Significance; When Jesus told Peter that without allowing him to wash his feet, he would have no part with Him, Peter swung too far the other direction, as the Lord explained in vv.10-11. Peter, you are clean as a result of your faith in me, but there is (and will continue to be) dirt from your relationship and contact with the world, and though you do not deserve it, I am willing to wash this as well, if you will only humble yourself and allow me to.

I John 1:9

What was it that still needed to be cleansed from these disciples? Judas of course needed a bath, but the others just needed some continuing sanctification, and one their greatest areas of need had to do with very act Jesus was performing. These guys had an argument at this very meal as to which of them was considered to be the greatest! And according to Luke 22:24-27, it was *after* he washed their feet. So even after giving them a supreme example of humility and servanthood, they still did not get it. And this is not the first time they had argued over who was the greatest. See Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-35; 10:32-45; Matt.18:1-4; 19:13-14; John 20:2-8; 21:18-24.

#### THE FOOT WASHER

This no ordinary supper for Jesus. It's his last meal with his disciples before he is arrested and crucified on a Roman cross, one of the most brutal and agonizing ways to die.

I have often been perplexed at the statement "he now showed them the full extent of his love" (v.1, 1984 NIV). Was not the full extent of His love the cross? So, what does this mean? Perhaps the 2011 NIV is actually more correct. The full extent of His love was the cross, but he loved them even up until the night before he died for them on that cross!

We might have expected this incident to be in the gospel of Mark, the gospel that depicts our Lord as the perfect servant. But the fact that it is in the gospel of John, and only this gospel, reveals for us more of its remarkable meaning. John presents Jesus as the Son of God.

The Midrash (Hebrew exposition of the Pentateuch, or the 1<sup>st</sup> five books of the Bible) specified that foot washing could not be required of a *Hebrew* slave (only Gentiles washed the feet of Jews). So Peter's objection to Jesus washing his feet is similar to his objection to Jesus when he spoke of His death and resurrection (Mark 8:32). Peter was in essence telling Jesus that He was *above* washing feet. And what Peter said was true. Even Jesus affirmed that they called Him "Lord" and "Teacher," for He is Lord and Teacher. But despite His superiority, he humbled Himself and willingly took on the task of the lowest servant; See Phil.2:5-8a.

\* Jesus is the one with all the authority (v.3)

- Matthew 28:19 "... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

\* Jesus is the one who gets all the glory (and He deserves it)

- John 17:5 "And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

\* Jesus has a pretty impressive ministry

- John 3: 26 They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan--the one you testified about--well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."
- See John 12:12-19
- These guys have been impressed with Jesus even more than others who had heard him teach and witnessed the miracles He performed. They got to hear things nobody else heard, and see things nobody else saw (Nathanael and Jesus having seen him under the fig tree; The calming of the Sea; Peter catching the fish to pay taxes; The Mount of Transfiguration; Healing Malchus' ear in the Garden, etc.

What Jesus does at this meal was not his job, nor his regular responsibility. I think we can safely say that Jesus had never washed their feet prior to this. He certainly could have commanded any one of the apostles to wash everyone's feet, but He didn't. Instead, he gave them an example that they would never forget, and one that he wanted them to follow motivated by love, not simple obedience. He had taught them repeatedly on this issue, but they didn't get it. Hopefully, his amazing example here would make the difference in their lives.

Why did He do it? Yes, we know he washed their feet as an example. But there's more to it than that. His motive for washing their feet went beyond obedience to his heavenly Father. What does the text say? See 13:1b.

I John 4:7-8 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

It is **the nature of Christ** to humble himself & love in this manner (See Luke 12:35-37). He "loved them to the end," he "showed them the full extent of his love," because He is love. I am so glad that God does not change life shifting shadows, that he is the same yesterday today and forever. My call to be like Him will always mean a call to humble myself in this same manner. And there's the rub.

It is not my nature. It was not their nature. My nature causes me to want to be the greatest, just as these disciples' nature caused them to want to be the greatest. And that nature creates competition, personal animosities, and placing ourselves above one another.

What all disciples of Jesus have to come to terms with is the truth that in order to be great in His kingdom, I must become a servant. And not just a servant to those I naturally love, but a servant to those I do not naturally love. And to learn to be that kind of servant in all situations, even in my personal hour of greatest pain and need.

See II Peter 1:3-4

Who is the greatest among us, the kingdom of God represented by Calvary Chapel St. Petersburg?

Our greatness in the kingdom of God is not based on our position in the church, nor the size of our ministries, nor even how nice or popular we are. Our greatness, according to Jesus, is based on our willingness to wash one another's feet.

After the fourth Christmas service this past Thursday evening, I loaded two Christmas presents that I had hidden in one of our church storage closets. After loading the presents, my hands were dirty, so I went to the family room restroom to wash them. But someone was in the restroom, but not using it. The door was

open, there was a young man with a one of our church cleaning carts just outside the restroom door, and a woman I had just met after the final service was leaning over the toilet, cleaning it. She had told me how when she first came to our church she was homeless and in trouble, and how the Lord has completely transformed her life. She especially emphasized how the Word of God had made a difference in the time she has been here. I'll say the Word has made a difference. She has not simply been hearing the Word, she is doing it!

Can you imagine the love that could potentially be manifest in the church if we had leaders, people who have authority, earthly glory, impressive ministries, yet were willing to stoop to such a low task of washing feet, the feet of disciples who have yet to learn the lesson that the greatest among us would be the servant of all, the feet of disciples that are in competition and even contention with one another, the feet of disciples that would perhaps one day betray them? This kind of love would be without favoritism, & not dependent on whether or not that person loved them back, a love that surpassed human understanding, in essence, God's love.

See John 13:34-35; Luke 6:32-36

Jesus, despite who He is, and the lofty position He holds, was willing to wash feet. He is the ultimate servant, and His example is left for us to follow.

We will not wash the feet of others, especially the kind of feet that Jesus washed, unless we first let Him wash our feet.

I John 4: 19 We love because he first loved us.

I will not be blessed if I know these things, but only if I DO them.

I John 3: 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

I must never allow myself to get too big for my britches.

I Cor.4: 7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Rom.12: 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought...

No matter how impressive or important I become in life and/or ministry, I should never think that any task is beneath me.

This is Jesus' main leadership team; What example have I set and what example am I currently setting with my leadership team? Does my staff/leadership team view me as their superior, or, despite my position, as someone who will stoop to the lowest task, the task of a servant?

My wife and I visited a church in the Tampa Bay area a few years ago; an associate carried the senior pastor's Bible to the podium for him; My daughter Audra said, "He thinks he's 'all that'." Ever been around ministers/church leaders that have that kind of air about them?

This is not only Jesus' staff/leadership team, it is His family.

Matt.12: 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.

When is the last time you washed your wife's feet (Husband, child, parent)?

#### CONCLUSION

In 1878 William Booth's Salvation Army had just been so named. Men from all over the world began to enlist. One man, who had once dreamed of himself as a bishop crossed the Atlantic from America to England to enlist. He was a Methodist minister named Samuel Logan Brengle, and he was leaving a fine pastorate to join Booth's Salvation Army. Brengle would later become the Army's first American born commissioner. But at first Brengle accepted his services reluctantly and grudgingly. Booth said to Brengle, "You've been your own boss too long." And in an attempt to instill humility into Brengle, Booth set him to work cleaning the boots of the other trainees. Brengle thought to himself, "Have I followed my own fancy across the Atlantic to blacken boots?" Then as if in a vision he saw Jesus bending over the feet of rough, unlettered fisherman. "Lord," he whispered, "You washed their feet, I will black their boots." (Hughes, p.316)

Pride, personal animosities, offenses against one another, even personal success in ministry threatened to destroy the love between these disciples of Jesus. If not dealt with according to the example Jesus left them, they would in time be divided, fail to serve one another as Christ had served them, be robbed of the blessings Christ promised, and lose their witness in the world.

Gal.5:13...serve one another in love.