

1 Samuel 16:13-23 =>
David sets aside pride and
humbly serves the king

John 13:1-17
Jesus sets aside pride and serves
calling us to do the same.

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Philippians 2:1-11
Your attitude should be
the same as Jesus' –
humble love and service.

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus who says, "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many."

A month ago, when I was traveling through Denver International Airport, you'll never believe what I didn't see happen. It took place at one of those shoe shine stations that is set at the beginning of the concourse. You know the kind, big black leather seats where powerful businessmen and women sit with a newspapers covering their faces while a lowly shoe shiner polishes shoes down on his hands and knees. Well, what I didn't see in the airport that day was a larger group of secret service men, all dressed in their dark suits with dark glasses on, watching as the man in the shoeshine chair switched places with the man on his knees and reversed roles. I couldn't believe what I wasn't watching: the President of the United States of America, shining the shoes of an ordinary everyday citizen like you and me.

I didn't see it happen because things like that don't happen. Public servants like presidents and politicians and powerful people don't shine the shoes of the lowly.

- That's the reason a freshman in high school takes a gun to school with him – because he isn't thinking of others, but of himself.
- That's why tribesmen in the Middle East kill those of other tribes in the name of religion – because serving others is the last thing on their mind.
- That's why politicians are pleading with you to let them become public servants. But you have to wonder about such serve after seeing the negative adds lately. Just how much of the servant part are they willing to do?

But the saying is, truth is stranger than fiction and what we do really see in our lesson for this morning is the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, the One who commands angels, the One we confess as "very God of very God," on his hands and knees washing feet.

I shouldn't assume we all know customs in Palestine in Jesus' day. So maybe you never thought about people back then walking barefoot through the streets, or at best, they could only afford sandals. That meant feet were tired and dusty and dirty when they entered into a house. Custom then, would be for the servant of the house to wash the guests' feet. On this night, the night he would be arrested, the night before he would suffer and die, the night he enjoyed a Last Supper with his close friends and disciples, the hour when Jesus would leave this earth and return to his Father, Jesus showed them the full extent of his love: He took the place of a servant.

And Peter couldn't see it happening either. "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" he asked. I suppose it could be humble love that spoke those words. He knew the One who had pulled up his robe and who had a towel wrapped around his waste, has the whole world in his hands. We might not be so comfortable having him wash our feet either. Perhaps Peter spoke them with false humility, "No, Lord, you shall never wash MY feet." We might mumble the same thing when we think ourselves better than we really are. Either way, Peter didn't understand what was happening. He thought it was about feet, when the whole time it was all about the heart – a clean heart, a pure heart.

Listen to Jesus again, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” He wasn’t talking about feet, he was talking about hearts that need to be forgiven, hearts that have no part of Jesus on their own. Peter would declare that in just a few short hours. Three times he would deny that he knew Jesus. Three times he would curse and swear that he never met him. Three times he would declare loud enough for everyone in ear shot to hear, including Jesus, “I want no part of him.” That was Peter’s denial and each time we sin, each of our sinful hearts say the same thing, “I want no part with him.” And a heart like that deserves the same thing Judas got for a heart handed over to the devil – a heart that turned away from God’s love and hope in Jesus by betraying him. For that is what hell really is, an eternity where we have no part, no relationship, no blessings, nothing in Christ.

Listen though to what he told Peter and hear them spoken to you as well: “And you are clean.” Clean, pure, washed, forgiven. Here in baptism God places his name on us and washes away our sin and sinfulness, and makes us child. Here in baptism he makes us a part of him, now and for eternity. This lesson today isn’t just about feet and hands and our bodies. It’s about the heart. So there is your Savior, on his hands and knees, with a towel wrapped around his waste, with a bowl of water nearby, but this is just a picture of the full extent of his love. This is just a symbol telling us that the time had come for Jesus to leave this earth and return to his Father in heaven. This is the start of love that would lead him to the cross where his blood would wash away the sin of the world. It’s all about the heart... his heart for you that your heart might belong to him.

And at the same time, it is all about our feet.

So let me tell you what I did see – for the first time - a couple of weeks ago. The setting was beautiful – high in the mountains with a canopy of trees overhead, a daughter of our congregation and her husband were declaring their faithfulness before friends and family on their wedding day. And to show the full extent of *their* love, they washed each other’s feet. So there, in a comfy chair, with an ornate water jar that had great sentimental value, with pedicured nails and polished shoes and matching socks, the most beautiful couple there washed each other’s feet to demonstrate the faithfulness and loving service they had promised each other. But what I hope Kayla and Tim realize, is that marriage isn’t always like that. Sometimes the feet are dusty and dirty and calloused. Sometimes love is hard. Sometimes service is unnoticed and underappreciated. Life is like that – you’ve experience it – and lives that are clean and a part of Jesus are like that – hard.

“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. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.”

So here, the one who washes our hearts, sets us apart to wash feet and serve...

- In a marriage when everything is pedicured and polished AND when it is difficult.
- AND at work when you are less than eager to go;
- OR in school when the last thing you want to do is sit behind a desk for a few more hours;
- OR in church when vacuuming or serving isn’t so glamorous and glorious.

We wash feet because Jesus is not just our Lord and Teacher but our Savior, and our hearts belong to HIM.

“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” AMEN.

VVV-PDS