

# Blessed Are Those Who Serve

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[0:00] Amen. You may be seated. Well, if you turn in your Bibles to John chapter 13, 1 through 20, it's on page 1069 of your pew Bible.

That's where I'll be preaching from this morning. A while back, we caught them in the act. Right. We had gotten home early from a trip. And we had pulled up to our house. And I recognized their cars. And when I looked into the house, because it was evening, the lights were on. I could see their heads. And they were doing something that, well, that's not what we had agreed what they would do. We had given them a key to the house because they were going to take care of our bunny, Rosie.

But they were doing something else. The two are brother and sister in Christ. They're members of the church. They will remain anonymous. We're in the same life group together.

[1:10] I knew exactly what they were up to because I know them. They were fixing a faucet in our first floor bathroom that hadn't worked since we had moved in.

And that's been 12 years at that point. So they were not planning on being there when we had arrived. They were serving in a clandestine fashion.

But they were caught in the act of conspicuous serving. And it was endearing. We felt loved. We felt cared for. We turned the water on and off in the faucet many a time. Like, this is so good. Have you ever been caught in a conspicuous act of service?

We've all been caught in sinning. What have you ever been caught serving someone else? As followers of Jesus, we are to be known for our serving, not for our sinning.

[2:16] And this morning, we're going to come across a beatitude, a blessed. And I have called it, blessed are those who serve.

We've reached a point in the Gospel of John that is called the farewell discourse. It starts in chapter 13. It goes through chapter 17. And we're talking literally just hours leading up to the death of Jesus.

And so, if you look at 13.1, you can see now before the feast of the Passover. The Passover has arrived. The hour for which Jesus had come to die has now come.

And it's just a matter of hours and minutes before Jesus breathes his last. And before Jesus dies, he's got some things he needs to say to his disciples.

In fact, he's got an object lesson to teach them. And that's what we're going to be looking at this morning. Notice in verse 1.

[3:22] The 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. So, the way that we're going to approach this object lesson is understanding this is Jesus loving his disciples then and loving us, his disciples, now.

He loved his own to the end. So, what follows in this passage is an example given. This is verses 2 through 11. And then the example is explained in 12 through 20.

It's an object lesson in servanthood. When was the last time you were caught in a conspicuous act of service?

Let me read John 13, 1 through 20. 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.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

[4:38] He laid aside his outer garments and, taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that

was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.

Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Jesus said to him, The one who's bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you. For he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, Not all of you are clean. 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?

[5:42] You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is no greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

I'm 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. I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. So let's look at this example given, and then the example explained.

So verses 2 through 11, the example given. In verses 2 through 3, we have a framing of this account. John informs us that what is about to take place took place during the Passover supper.

[6:56] John is the only gospel writer who includes Jesus washing his disciples' feet. All the other three other gospels don't include this. And what he's doing is he's focusing on something else about Jesus.

His example. In verse 2, we learn that Judas has already, that the devil has already put it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus.

So Judas is present at the supper. Jesus is going to wash his feet, even though his heart is somewhere else. He is not clean, but he's there, and he's fulfilling the purpose for which God ordained him.

Verse 3, we learn that everything is going according to plan. Let me just read this for you. We read this. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, even Simon's betrayal.

All things were going to plan. All things were going according to the plan God the Father had given his son to accomplish. And so that includes God's sovereignty over all things and this betrayer.

[8:11] It's what we talked about last week, this compatibilism, where we have both God's sovereign and people responsible for real decisions they're making. But it's in verse 4 through 5 that the story slows down.

And when you're reading something like this, and the story slows down, it's designed for your eyes to focus in. And so what we see next is designed to capture your imaginations.

And so let's look at 13.4. Jesus rose from supper. Back in the first century, ancient Near East, they didn't have chairs at tables.

They reclined at table. And so when he rose, he's getting up from eating. And when he stands up, all eyes follow Jesus. But you notice no words are said.

And then he lays aside his outer garments. He would have been essentially naked. He would have had his kind of like underwear on. But he would have been a lot of skin.

[9:16] No words. All eyes on Jesus. And then he takes a towel. And he wraps himself in that towel.

No words. But everybody at that supper is looking at him and they're wondering, what is he doing? In verse 5, these little action statements continue.

He poured water into a basin. Can you imagine in your mind the sound of water being poured into a large basin? That's what happened.

It goes on. After pouring the water in the basin, he began to wash the disciples' feet. He's working his fingers between their toes.

And then he wipes them with a towel that was wrapped around him. He wipes them dry. No words. Just actions. Your mind is to be imagining our Lord Jesus doing this act.

[10 : 29] And what we fail to fully comprehend is the cultural significance of Jesus and this conspicuous act of servanthood. Foot washing in the first century household was the most menial job reserved for the lowliest of servants.

And Jesus intentionally picked it. Even Jewish households, this job was given to non-Jews, Gentiles.

Why? Well, we're used to wearing shoes that cover our toes. First century engineers' footwear were sandals, open-toed.

And being a dry, dusty place, no underground sewer systems, it was agrarian animal refuse strewn about.

First century, ancient Near East feet were gross. Disgusting. You got all kinds of stuff working in between your toes.

[11 : 39] And the reason why Gentiles were given that job in Jewish houses, presumably, is that you could defile yourself with what you touch. So if you were a foot washer of a first century household, you were low man on the totem pole.

It would have been humiliating. Has anybody walked into a public restroom today while someone's cleaning it? And you try to make eye contact with the person cleaning it?

And they look for you for a second and then put their eyes down? That's the vibe here. There's nothing wrong with cleaning toilets. But it is humbling.

So Jesus has very intentionally chosen this act as an object lesson at the supper. He's doing what only the lowliest of servants would do.

It would have been humiliating in the eyes of many. And just think about the kind of posture of heart that fuels this kind of practice.

[12 : 55] Check it out. Here is the one who just raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus, come forth. This is the Christ.

This is the son of man. The Daniel 7 king. This is the son of God. Totally God. Totally man. The word incarnate. The king who has come.

And he's getting his fingers in between his disciples' toes to get the filth and squalor out. When you start to understand the significance of what Jesus is doing, this conspicuous act of service, it verges on scandalous.

And that's why we see Peter's strong reaction. Peter, when he came to be his turn, he said, Lord, do you wash my feet?

You're going to actually wash my feet? You see, you see, Simon Peter has some sense of who this is. He would have been there when he raised Lazarus from the dead.

[14 : 20] You're going to, you're going to wash my feet? And Jesus says, you don't get it now, but you're going to get it in due time.

It betrays the supernatural knowledge. Peter doubled down in verse 8, and in the original language, there is a pileup of strong no's.

it would go something like this. No, never. Absolutely not forever will you do that. It's, it's, it's a strong, like, no way are you going to touch the gook between my toes.

He has a sense of his own unworthiness and the worthiness of Jesus. And then in the verse part of 9, Jesus says, if you don't let me do this, Peter, you have no share with me.

So, so what's going on here is this. What Jesus is showing Peter and his disciples is how his kingdom rolls. This is kingdom ethic.

[15 : 28] This is a kingdom way. This is a kingdom way of being and interacting with different people. And so, essentially, Jesus is saying is, hey, if you're not going to let me, the king, serve you this way, you're not going to be able to serve other people this way.

You'll have no share of my kingdom. Peter, being Peter, swings the other way.

Because he's missing the point. He doesn't understand what Jesus is doing to him. But he will. And so, Peter, in Peter dramatic style, says, not just my feet, but yea, also my hands and head.

Kind of like all of me. If you're going to go wash something, wash it all. I can just imagine Jesus kind of like, oh, Peter. Peter, Peter, Peter.

And in verse 10, we read this. the one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean. What Jesus is saying here is, Peter, you've already been forgiven of your sin based on what I'm going to do in just hours.

[16:47] You're already clean. So, Jesus is saying to Peter, Peter, you've already been forgiven based upon what I will do at the cross in just moments from now. For us, living on the other side of the cross, we are forgiven based on what Jesus has done millennia ago.

What Peter is missing is what Jesus is doing. It's like Jesus is saying, would you just let me finish with the object lesson? I'm just trying to wash your feet.

I'm trying to make a point. And at the end of verse 10, Jesus says something a little ominous. And you are clean, but not every one of you.

He's referring to Judas. He knows who will betray him. Again, divine knowledge. And what's interesting here is that Jesus must have washed Judas' feet too.

Judas is not completely clean like Peter. He's got, his heart is far from Jesus. But Jesus has washed his feet. But there's something going on here that you need to see.

[18:12] This section begins in verse 2 with a reference to the betrayer, Judas. And verse 11 ends with a reference to Judas.

And so what bookends the actual example Jesus gives is an example of betrayal. This example is bookended by betrayal.

Why? Well, it happened. But it's the very opposite example of what Jesus is modeling.

Judas models for us here selfishness. serving himself. Jesus is modeling selflessness. Serving others.

Considering others better than himself. A humble posture of heart that is serving people very practically. In this moment, we get a line of sight on our creator, on our sustainer, our savior and our judge and he is kneeled down at his disciples' feet and he is getting the gook out between their toes.

[19:28] It's extraordinary. He has purposefully selected and taken part in this, the most menial job of a household at this time.

And you know, he has served you as well. You know, he hasn't put his fingers between my toes. No, he hasn't. But in Philippians chapter 2, we learn that in an act of humility, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity took on human flesh.

He took the form of a servant. just by becoming a man, a human being, it was an act of service. That's conspicuous and he did that for you.

But even more so, in Mark 10, 45, Jesus says, I came not to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. You have been served by this man in the most conspicuous act of servanthood of all, and that his work on the cross.

[20:44] It's not his fingers getting the grit out between your toes. It's the blood of the cross making you white as snow. This is the one who is giving us an example.

I hope you feel the love. Remember, he loved his own to the end. So, example given. Now, let's look at the example explained.

This is verses 12-20. So, following this conspicuous, even scandalous act of service, verse 12, Jesus puts back on his outer garments, resumes his place at the table, and then he asks his disciples a question.

He asks them, do you understand what I just did? In other words, do you get it? Do you get the object lesson? Do you understand what I just did to you? Because this object lesson is a gospel kingdom lesson.

You know, when I was a young football player, which was a long time ago, my coaches would show me how to tackle and how to block. And they would show me how to tackle and how to block, not so that I could just get head knowledge and like, oh, exceptional form, coach.

[22:04] No, they wanted me to do it myself. And they would ask, do you get it? After they would show me. And then they'd be like, do it. Practice it.

What Jesus is asking here is, do you understand what I've just done to you? He's not asking if they get it conceptually. He's asking if they get it conceptually so they can do it themselves.

Do you understand what I've done to you? He's not asking about foot washing technique. What he's asking is more about heart posture.

A heart posture of a citizen of his kingdom. He's like, do you have the same kind of heart towards one another as I have to you?

Are you a servant? We're going to see in just a second. He's going to tell us blessed are those who serve.

[23:11] What we have here in verses 13 through 17 in particular is he gives an explanation for his example. And he uses what's called an if-then argument.

He says, if this is true, then this is true. And in verse 13 he starts setting it up. Look how he sets it up. Jesus says, you call me teacher and Lord and you are right for so I am.

Do you know what he's saying? He's saying I'm greater than you. He's saying you call me teacher, it's a position of authority, you call me Lord, master, and it's true, it's good and right you're saying that because I am.

And what we know is Jesus has more authority than just by way of role. He has authority over all people because he is God incarnate, the Christ, son of man, the son of God.

So then he goes from 13, he's established that he has greater authority, greater nature than them, and then 14 is the actual argument.

[24:19] He says, if I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, then you also ought to wash one another's feet.

That's the if-then argument. If it's true of me that I'm washing your feet and I'm greater than you, then you, my disciples who are less than me, then you must wash other people's feet as well.

See the argument? In verse 15, Jesus says, for I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.

There's the explanation. This example, this object lesson, is an object lesson in how his kingdom, how it rolls. Kingdom ethics, how we relate to one another.

Verse 16, he drops a truly, truly, he's like saying, let me give it to you straight. This is how it really is. I say to you, a servant is no greater than his master, they're the servants, he's the master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent them.

[25:30] In this case, they're the messengers, he's the one who sent them, and he's saying, because of this, because I'm greater than you, you're going to follow me, because I'm your king, into serving one another, being a servant.

And then in verse 17, what we see is the beatitude. He says, if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Do you know where the blessing is found? Not in the knowing, in the doing. The blessing that he's speaking of is not in the knowledge, in the theory of being a servant, servant, the blessing is in the practice of being a servant.

It's posture of heart lived out in practice. When you think of beatitudes, maybe you think of the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, that's in Matthew chapter 5.

Do you remember what the first beatitude is? Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Poor in spirit is just talking about another way of humility, talking about servanthood.

[26:53] It's a posture of heart that is true of those who belong to Christ's kingdom. It's the beginning of servanthood. At the very heart of servanthood is humility, being poor in spirit.

That word blessed carries the sense of joy and happiness. What Jesus is getting at is this, it's the good life.

The good life in God's kingdom is not being served by others, it's serving others. There's joy in that. I define humility as simply this, living in reality.

Humility is living in the reality of who Jesus is and who you are and who other people are. And when you're living in the truth and reality of all that, you're living humbly.

You've got the right posture towards God, yourself, and others. That's humility. It's the Copernican revolution of the soul.

[28:02] Remember Copernicus? He's the guy that discovered that the sun doesn't orbit the earth, but the earth orbits the sun. And similarly, when we have our eyes open to Jesus, Jesus brings us into the reality that Jesus doesn't exist for me.

I'm not the sun of my solar system, and Jesus orbits me. No, I orbit him. He's at the center of all things. I don't live for myself.

I live for Christ, and he says serve others. And so when you come into Jesus' orbit, you're going to become like him. in serving other people, and doing that in maybe menial ways.

What we have here is an explanation that has now moved into exhortation. You're being urged by Jesus.

It's like, this is who you are. Now live it out. I'm not telling you these things or showing you these things so you can be like, oh, that's interesting. No, he's telling us these things for us to do them, to

live them out as he himself has.

[29:24] He's like, go be blessed. Serve others as I have served you. It's, another way to talk about it is Philippians, the way Paul talks about it in Philippians too.

He says, so if there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind, what does that look like?

He says, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others, having this mind among yourselves, which is yours and Jesus, and then he talks about how Jesus humbled himself by taking on flesh the form of a servant.

It's normal Christian living. Humility is the essential posture of heart for every Christian who follows Jesus.

This beatitude in verse 17 Jesus is speaking of a joy that he knows personally. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame.

[30:49] He knows this joy, and he wants us to personally experience the good life of the kingdom, the joy of serving others, but he does touch on an exception at the end here.

He says in verse 18, I'm not speaking of all of you. I know who I've chosen, but the scripture will be fulfilled. And then he quotes Psalm 41:9 in reference to Judas.

He who ate my bread at the supper has lifted his heel against me. He's going to betray me. And then he says, I'm telling you this now, before it takes place regarding Judas' betrayal, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he.

And that little I am he is the Greek phrase ego emi, I am. In other words, even in my betrayal, it will be made known to you that I'm God in the flesh.

the point of all this is that because Jesus has served us, we serve one another.

[32:04] Blessed are those who serve because he served us with a humble posture in very practical service.

We serve one another both in posture and practice. because of Jesus, we no longer serve ourselves and we no longer see other people as serving us.

Because of Jesus, now we serve others. So let's apply this for the time that's remaining in two general categories, posture of heart, day-to-day practice.

So let's talk about posture of heart. the way to leave this building is sensing a call to humility that leave this building this morning saying, it is good for me to humble myself because Jesus humbled himself.

Remember, humility is just living in reality of who Jesus is and who you are. So let me do some math and you answer the question, is Jesus greater than, less than, or equal to you, greater than.

[33:15] He's greater than me, he's greater than all. And if he humbled himself, if he became a man, washed grimy feet, gave himself his life as a ransom for many, we must humble ourselves too.

So humility is to characterize all of us. It's Philippians 2. It's the principal posture of heart. So when you leave here, you might want to leave here saying, oh God, would you help me to humble myself?

The second heart posture is joy. It's joy to serve others. So if you are grumbling, complaining, whining about helping others, that should be an indicator that your heart is not postured right. Maybe it's the result from being overextended, there are realities there, but sometimes it's because you're insisting on your own way. You're actually wanting to serve in practice without having the right posture of heart.

And the way that we go about getting the right posture of heart, a humble posture of heart, when we're in the midst of serving, is fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross.

[34:43] Joy is to be fought for in the Christian faith. We can descend quickly just into the nuts and bolts of serving practicalities and not tend to our hearts.

Humble yourself, experiencing the joy of the Savior. Fix your eyes on him. Blessed are those who humble themselves. I just want to say one more thing before I get some more practicalities.

This has to do with posture of heart. What Jesus is telling us here is not a matter of gifting. All of us are called to serve.

All of us are called to have a humble posture of heart. It's not a matter of how gifted you are. It's a matter of posturing yourselves under the glorious kingship of Jesus and serving from that. What we have here is a normal kingdom way of building being for all citizens of Jesus kingdom. So if you're to be a follower of Jesus Christ, you're being called into humble service of others.

[36:07] No exceptions. No exceptions in the room. We're all called to serve. So the question that you could ask right now yourself is this. How am I serving others?

In what practical real ways can I point to that demonstrate me serving other people? And if you find yourself coming up short of examples, bring it to the Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus, would you help me to serve others as you've served me? Okay. You ready for some practical steps?

First one, I'm going to isolate a group in the room, husbands and fathers. Husbands and fathers, whether you are acknowledging it or not, you control the thermostat of your home.

You're setting the tone. Whether you are stepping into responsibility or avoiding it, you are setting the tone of your home. And we, in light of Jesus' example here, are called to be servants of our wives and children.

[37:27] We lay our lives down for them. We do good to them, even sacrificially. So, husbands and fathers, serve your wives and children.

Don't whine and complain. Don't grumble underneath that. There's joy in that. That's God's good design. Now, I have a caution, and I caution you because I know myself, and this is what I do. After a long day of serving my family, you're legitimately washing dishes, mowing the lawn, cleaning out the garage.

Do you know what I do? Jenny, did you see my Christ-like service today? Guys, don't do that.

Don't Christ-like serve your wife and children, and you're like, what do you think about that Christ-like service? That's not Christ-like service. Christ-like service, generally speaking, likes to go under the radar.

[38:31] Learn from me, brothers. One of the things you need to understand about helping people and serving people, we need to help people in a way that doesn't hurt them.

So just because someone says, you need to serve me this way, doesn't mean you should serve them that way. What you want to do is you want to dignify them in the way that you serve them. So husbands, fathers, serve your wives and children in the best way possible according to God's word. That's going to mean some hard conversations, but they're good conversations.

It's called servant leadership. Here's some other ways you can care for one another in the church. Childcare, a.k.a. wild care. Find and initiate a young couple with young children, a single mom, families with challenging situations in the children they're raising, and you go to them and say, hey, can we watch the kids for a night?

Get you and your lady out. Get the two of you out to refresh. We'd love to do that for you. And you can just pay us \$400. That's all. We bear one another's burdens.

[39:53] This is big, folks. And we have young families all around us that you will be called blessed by them if you're like, we'll give you a night out.

Meals. Blessed are those who watch children. Meals. We can serve one another by preparing meals for one another when crisis hits.

But even better than that, you invite people over to your house when they hit a crisis, and you share a meal together. You do this together. You minister to them not with just a meal, but with your presence.

Blessed are those who serve up a meal. You give rides. Some people among us don't have cars, and so we can use our cars to serve other people by getting them places, grocery stores.

The downtown area has a bit of a food desert. We can get them to and from appointments. We can gather them, get them, and bring them to our Sunday gathering, get them home from our Sunday gathering, and as they're in the car with you, you're not an Uber driver, a Lyft driver.

[41:01] You're a brother and sister in the Lord, so you get to know them in the car. Rides.

Blessed are those who give rides. Friends. The last one I want to share with you is probably the hardest.

It's not getting grime out of people's toes, though. It's harder. I titled it a listening presence.

We live in a high-paced, individualistic culture. People often feel left out and isolated, and so we can serve one another by just showing up and listening.

You show up and listen. You hear people. People. I regularly ask God when I meet with people, oh God, give me an instructed ear and an instructed tongue.

So you listen. You listen for where people are, and when they know that you're listening, do you know what happens? You get to serve them. Get to love them.

[42:07] Blessed are those who show up and listen. There's other kinds of serving. Sunday morning breakfast, the Tuesday night shalom meal, king's place.

Oh, that's a great place to serve. King's kids. Do you know what? We also serve our enemies. Jesus washed the feet of his betrayer.

Do you know what you do when you don't feel like serving? Fix your eyes on Jesus. In verse 20, we have another truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

Up until this point, Jesus has been talking about the Father sending him, and now he's shifted that. He's talking about him sending us, and he's sending us out as lowly servants.

servants. We are Christ, his servant representatives, and our gospel serving will open doors for our gospel seeking in order to expand his gospel kingdom.

[43:27] How about this? God in heaven, Lord Jesus, let's start serving one another more and more with these conspicuous acts of service, not for us, but for his glory.

Blessed are those who serve and who get caught in their serving. Let's pray. God in heaven, Lord Jesus, we thank you so much for the way that you have served us and are serving us and will continue to serve us.

You've served us in the greatest way possible by becoming a ransom for us. Lord, would you bring us into greater degrees of joy as we serve more and more people, not because we have to, but because we want to.

Would you bring glory to your name through us, this little church in the middle of Kenosha? Make a name for yourself, Lord Jesus. It's in your name we pray.

Amen.