

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Love Serves
John 13:1-17

When I was in my early 20's I bought a luxury car that was just a couple months old. I was working my way through school hanging wallpaper and painting, so it was a bit surprising to people when they would see me driving around in an expensive car. But I had a bit of a secret. I bought two luxury cars and that's how I could afford the car I drove.

I bought one car that had been demolished in the back and another car that had been demolished in the front. And I paid a guy to cut them in half and weld the good sections together. He did an incredible job, and the car looked brand-new when he was done with it. There was only one, slight problem. When the cars were welded together, they weren't welded perfectly straight. I mean, they were just barely off. Since the car was slightly crooked, no one could put make it stay in perfect alignment. You couldn't tell by looking at it, but I could feel it when I drove. It was constantly trying to steer me into a ditch. If I didn't continuously work to re-align my car, it wouldn't stay on the road.

And our lives are a lot like my car. We have a tendency to get out of alignment with what Jesus desires for our us. And, since that's true for us as individuals, it's true for us as a church. We have to routinely bring our lives and the life of our church back into alignment with what Jesus desires for us. Otherwise, we'll wind up in a ditch.

That's what the month of January has been about for us in these Sunday morning gatherings and that's what our Wednesday night Bible studies are about. We are focusing on 3 priorities Jesus has laid out for us as His people. They are like lines on the road of life that help us stay on course as followers of Christ. We've taken these three priorities from two pivotal teachings of Christ: the Great Commission (Mt. 28) and Great Commandments (Mt. 22).

Make disciples – Love God – Love Others

- We make disciples as we Make Jesus known...week one...Matthew 28
- We Love God as we Know Him Better by abiding in Christ...week two...John 15
- We Love Others as we Make Church Smaller and live in Christ-like relationships with others...

That's what this morning is about. What does it look like to live in Christ-like relationships with others? What does it actually mean to love others in a way that fulfills the call of Jesus?

John 13:1-17

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. 2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 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. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." 8 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." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus 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, but not every

one of you.” 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.” 12 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? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

At the time of Christ’s earthly ministry, the average person spent most of their day outside. And they walked almost everywhere they went on dirt roads that were shared with animals that weren’t house broken. Since most people were either barefoot or just wore sandals, you can only imagine how filthy their feet would be when they arrived at their destination at the end of the day.

For that reason, it was customary to have a jar of water, a large bowl, and a towel by the door so people could wash their feet as they entered the house. But that job was so gross that people preferred not to wash their own feet. So, it became the job of the lowest-ranking servant. It was such a demeaning job that many Jewish households wouldn’t even allow their Jewish servants to do it. They would insist that a Gentile servant be the one to wash feet.

That makes this an astonishing scene. But there’s even more going on here.

In Luke’s account, he tells us that the disciples were in an argument about who was the greatest among them. Jesus had told them His hour was coming and that His Kingdom would be established. And they imagined that King Jesus would need a right-hand-man. So, an argument broke out among them over who would be the top-dog beside Jesus in His Kingdom.

Jesus watches them for a moment. Then, without anyone even noticing, He gets up from the table and walks over to door. He lays aside His outer clothes and ties the large towel around his waist - the traditional uniform for the lowest servant in the house.

The King of Heaven, the Creator of the world, gets on His knees to wash their feet.

After Jesus finishes, He takes His place at the table and what He says is something we all need to hear.

John 13:15

“I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

You don’t have to be a bible scholar to identify the big idea of this passage of Scripture.

Bid Idea: Disciples of Jesus serve others as Jesus has served us.

Some of you might wonder what following Jesus looks like in real life. This is a great place to start. Following Jesus looks like serving others the way Jesus has served us.

And, as I was preparing for this morning, I spent some time thinking through the ways you, as a church family, serve others. And I was blown away. And it dawned on me that most people only realize what is going on in their area of life in this church. So, let me share with you some of what Jesus is doing just through a few of the organized ministries of this church family.

Every week...

- We provide incredible ministry to children and teenagers.
- We have dozens of small groups for young couples and young professionals and senior adults and everyone in between.
- We care for individuals with special needs.
- We have people who translate our services into Spanish while I'm preaching.
- We have a Spanish speaking Bible study.
- We teach English as a second language.
- We have a team working to broadcast our services to hundreds of people joining us online right now.
- We have people keeping our website up to date.
- We have people producing content for social media.
- We have a praise and worship team.
- We have welcome teams at every door and a parking lot team riding around on golf carts and a coffee team that provides Heaven's nectar for you to enjoy.
- We have teams of prayer partners who pray with individuals after the service and throughout the week.
- We have a security team working to provide a safe and secure environment.
- We have a team of people who are taking care of widows.
- Hundreds of people serve complete groceries to nearly a thousand families each week in our House of Hope.
- We have a bicycle shop and clothing ministry.
- We are providing pregnancy tests and ultrasounds to expectant mothers.
- We are reaching out to women who are being exploited and trafficked and are helping them escape that life and start a new life in Christ.
- We have a team visiting people in the hospitals.
- We have 700 hundred students being taught about Jesus in our Christian school.
- We have people who minister on the campuses of our public schools.
- We have missionary support groups who are caring for our missionaries overseas.

And I literally could go on and on. So, as you hear me teach this morning, please hear me say that I am humbled and honored to see Jesus work in and through your lives. This church is filled with people who are serving others like Jesus has served us. But that doesn't mean we don't have room to grow, as individuals and as a church. Nearly every ministry I mentioned could use additional people to serve as Christ's hands and feet. Even more, many of us who serve on a regular basis need to be renewed in our approached to ministry so that we don't grow weary in doing good.

So, let's walk back through this passage and see what there is to learn about serving like Jesus.

1. CHRIST-LIKE SERVICE IS MOTIVATED BY LOVE

1 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.

As John sets up this section, he makes sure to start with Jesus' heart. Everything Jesus is doing here flows out of a heart of love. Jesus explicitly emphasizes this for us, as well.

John 13:34–35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

There’s only one motive for Christ-like service and it’s a heart of love.

Now, that isn’t to say that love is the only reason people serve.

- Some serve out of duty or guilt – they think it’s what they have to do.
- Some serve out of selfishness or manipulation – they think if they do this act of service it will get the other person to do something for them.
- Some people serve out of pride – they hope others will see them serve and think their great.

There are lots of reasons to serve, but only one motive matches Christ’s. It’s a heart of love for others. Think about why you do what you do, whether it’s part of our church family or just in relationship with the people in your life. Are you serving out of love?

And just think about what stood in the way of the disciples serving each other out of love. Who were they loving? Themselves. That’s why they were arguing about who was greatest. They loved themselves so they were self-serving in the way they lived toward each other.

And, church, we need to be careful here. It’s easy to ridicule these self-serving disciples and completely miss the ways we are just like them. How many people attend a church service like this or walk into a small group like one of our connection classes with the primary focus of, “What’s in this for me?” Countless people want to attend a church service that caters to all their preferences and provides services for all their needs. And, I’m not saying it’s wrong to value a church family that meets your spiritual needs, that’s part of what a healthy church is supposed to do.

But at some point in time, genuine Christ-followers have to ask the question, “Do I walk into the room looking to serve or expecting to be served?”

2. CHRIST-LIKE SERVICE SEES AND MEETS NEEDS

John 13:5

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.

We have a tendency to complicate things that don’t need to be complicated. My entire life, I’ve watched Christians struggle to find their place of service...taking spiritual gift inventories and personality profiles and reading books on discovering your perfect role. And, all those things have their place, just don’t let them be a source of stress for you. If you are looking for ways to serve, just start the way Jesus does in our text. He looked around the room and saw what was needed. Then, he served to meet that need. Christ-like service is as simple as seeing and meeting needs in the lives of others.

And, as much as we celebrate the work that Jesus is doing in and through the organized ministries of our church, most service happens in the body of Christ simply by living in close relationship with others. Jesus knew the disciples needed to have their feet washed because he was close enough to smell their feet.

This is one of the reasons we use the phrase “make church smaller.” What we mean is that our life in a church family should consist of something more than just showing up to this big group each

Sunday. Obviously, there's an essential role for all of us gathering in worship with each other, but most ministry and discipleship happens when you make church smaller and smaller. It's what happens when you join a small group Bible study and have an opportunity to meet individual people AND THEN invite someone from your small group to dinner or coffee or fishing or golf. You make church small enough to learn the needs in the lives of others so you can be part of meeting those needs.

- So, how are you making church smaller?
- What needs do you see? If you need a place to start, talk with one of our pastors...

3. CHRIST-LIKE SERVICE SEEKS WHAT IS BEST FOR OTHERS

8 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." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus 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, but not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Ok. So, notice what Peter wants to do. He wants to take control of how he is going to be served. He thinks he knows what's best and starts telling Jesus what to do. "Jesus, I'm never going to let you wash my feet. That's not what is best."

Five seconds later, Peter goes to the opposite extreme. "Jesus, how about you wash my hair and put in some conditioner while you're at it!"

You see what's happening. Peter thinks he knows best. He tries to take control and dictate the terms to Jesus. But Jesus isn't having any of it. As a matter of fact, Jesus says something pretty hard in verse 8. He tells Peter that if he doesn't let Jesus do what Jesus wants to do, he won't have any share with Him. That word share is a word that would describe having part of an inheritance.

Obviously, Jesus is pointing to the fact that if we don't trust Jesus and yield our lives to Him as Lord, we won't be cleansed of our sin, and we will have no share in His inheritance. But, the principle we see here is that Jesus isn't going to allow Peter to dictate the terms of service. Jesus determines what is best and serves according to that.

I point that out because our world says that you are only serving someone if you do exactly what they say you should do. Our world says we don't love people unless we are willing to endorse every point of view and yield to every demand of culture. But Jesus doesn't serve like that. Jesus never endorses sin. Jesus never seeks the approval of a godless culture. When Jesus bows before people to serve them, He isn't bowing before them as though they are lord. He is bowing before them as their Lord because the very best thing for people is to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

And there are so many applications of this truth in our lives.

- Parents, serving your children like Jesus doesn't mean allowing them to do whatever they please. Serving them like Jesus means lovingly pointing them to what Jesus says is best for them and calling them to yield their lives to Him.
- Husbands and wives, serving your spouse doesn't mean allowing them to do whatever they please. Serving them like Jesus means lovingly pointing them to what Jesus says is best and doing what Jesus tells you to do in your marriage.

- Friends, serving your friends doesn't mean you endorse everything they do. Serving your friends like Jesus means lovingly pointing them to what Jesus says is best and doing what Jesus tells you to do in your friendship.
- Church, serving our community doesn't mean we affirm the sin and godless rebellion that is rampant everywhere within culture. Serving our community means lovingly pointing them to what Jesus says is best and doing what Jesus tells us to do each and every day.

I could go on and on. But how might you need to re-align the way you serve with what Jesus says is best? In your home or within your group of friends? Jesus knows what is best and we bow before Him as Lord even as we bow before others as servants in His name.

4. CHRIST-LIKE SERVICE IS ENABLED BY JESUS

10 Jesus 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, but not every one of you."

Jesus is pointing to a cleansing beyond the external washing of feet. He's talking about the internal cleansing that He brings to our sinful hearts. That's why He says that not every one of them was clean. He's talking about Judas. Judas had not turned in faith to Jesus as His Lord and Savior. So, while Judas had clean feet, he had a sinful heart. Only Jesus can cleanse our hearts as we trust in Him.

And that's why I say only Jesus can enable Christ-like service within us.

- Only Jesus can cleanse and forgive our hearts from being unloving or prideful or self-absorbed with our own perceived greatness.
- Only Jesus can cleanse and forgive us of prejudice and bitterness and arrogance that would cause us to refuse to serve certain people.
- Only Jesus can cleanse and forgive us of the fear of man that would keep us from living as though Jesus knows best.

Christ-like service is enabled by Jesus. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. So, we pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit that would empty us of self and fill us with the very life of Jesus. If you want to live in the example Jesus set for us, then look to Jesus to live His life through you.