

Humble Servitude

Let this be in you which was also in Christ...
Philippians 2:5

That verse speaks volumes when we consider the context, for Jesus “made Himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:7) in order to walk this earth and serve His creation. There are so many stories of the life of Jesus that impact us, but few spoken of as often as the one located in John 13. The scene is what we call the last supper and the twelve, along with Jesus, are being served. It was customary after travel to have your feet washed before such a meal; but no servant seemed to be present. Suddenly, Jesus gets up and does the unthinkable: taking off his outer clothing, he wraps a towel around his waist and fills a basin with water. Jesus, Lord of Lords and King of Kings, visually becomes that which none of them would want to be, a lowly servant.

It was, after all, a menial task, that is, a task to be discharged by a servant. (William Hendrikson)

What makes this scene become more intense is a glance at Luke’s account of the last supper. Luke writes, “*Now there was also a dispute among them [the disciples], as to which of them should be considered the greatest.*” (Luke 22:24) As they considered who might be “right up there with Jesus,” something catches their attention. Jesus, now dressed as a servant, kneels before them to wash their feet. None of them thought of doing this, it wasn’t their responsibility, they weren’t lowly servants!

It appears that everyone was speechless; that is, until Jesus came to Peter. The Greek suggest that what Peter says next was emphatic, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” (John 13:6) He was not comfortable with the idea of his Lord and Master being a menial servant. But the lesson they were being taught was critical to the health and well-being of the church which would soon be brought forth.

The text is rich with imagery that teaches us so many things, much like it did the disciples long ago. But I must admit, my attention is drawn towards just two people. First, there is Peter, so bold and foolish all at the same time. I marvel at the patience of Jesus concerning him. Then there was Judas who would betrayed Jesus soon after this event. Even so, Jesus still washed his feet. (Matthew 5:44 rings out) Why all this? In part, we find the answer in vv16-17. But I want us to go back to John 13:1 and have it sum up the life of Jesus, our humble servant.

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Thank you Jesus!

Dennis