

Feb 3rd 2013 "Responsibility Is More Than Words" John 13:1-17

I have long thought that one of the most beautiful stories about Jesus' interaction with His disciples is the story about the time when He washed their feet. It is an agape love story. A story of love that gives when it is tough, and humiliating, and necessary; receiving so little in return.

John lets us know that it happened on that terrible night when Jesus was betrayed by a friend, then arrested, beaten and lied about, before being cruelly put to death on the following day.

He begins his account of it by telling us that Jesus, knowing that the time had come for Him to leave the world and go to the Father; having loved everyone of the disciples gathered before Him, now showed them the full extent of His love. And He did so by washing their feet..... That's why I call it a love story.

Of course His act of love was more than washing their feet. The verse can also be translated as Jesus loving them to the uttermost, with a deliberate reference to His death on the cross that followed so soon afterwards. A death that washes the believer clean of all sin. But it is also clear from this story that His expression of love included serving them by washing their feet—even the feet of Judas who would betray Him, and of Peter who loudly debated the issue with Him.

An act of the most menial service that was an example of what they, who believed on Him, were now responsible to do for Him. An act made more memorable because of the way he did it.

The Bible tells us (John 13:4-5)

Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

This was the age where the clothing you wore had great significance. A Rabbi like Jesus was recognized by His clothing, in particular His headwear, as much as a soldier by his uniform, a prophet by his rough attire, a beggar by his cloak, and a slave by his apron.

And here Jesus deliberately puts off His outer garments in order to wrap around his waist, just like a slave's apron, the towel. Using the end of which to wipe the feet that he washed.

He wanted them to have no doubt whatsoever, about the position He took for them. He became in dress and in manner their slave in order to serve them. And in His serving He missed nobody out, although He had good reason for doing so.

Then in v12 we read that He once again put on His robes and sat again in His position of authority, and from that place of authority He gave them a command that applies to all who would follow Him including us. Verses 13-14

¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

Now most of these disciples had begun their journey with Jesus by calling Him teacher.

But as they continued to follow Him they soon realized from His words and His miracles that He was somewhat more special than just a teacher. So they began to call Him Lord, which at the least meant Master, but had also growing undertones of divinity. So after His resurrection we read about Thomas saying to Him, my Lord and my God.

These are the words you have used for me said Jesus, and rightly so, for such I am.

But then Jesus turns the order of such words around and says, now I your Lord and Teacher, have given you a responsibility that is more than just words. Have given you something that you must now do for one another because I have done it for you. And that responsibility is service of the very lowest order for the sake of your brother and sister; for the sake of my kingdom; and for my sake.

And then, as though Jesus realizes that this is a responsibility that must be emphasized again and again, He goes on to say in v15-17

¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor

is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

It was so obvious that Jesus was the Master and they were the servants, and yet He had knelt down before them and washed their feet as an example to them of what He expected of them.

The same stands true for us. Jesus left His glory and humbled Himself and did for us the most sacrificial act of all, and therefore we have no right to hold back from any service He calls us to do for others in His name, however lowly or sacrificial that service may be.

And this particularly applies, as it did for those disciples in that upper room, to service for and with other Christians that facilitates the worship of God and ministry to others done in His name.

You see in the Temple system there was a group of people, the Levites, who did all the basic tasks that made worship for the people possible. But in the early church there was no such designated group. Everybody had to willingly do their part. It was the same with the ministries of loving and caring that became the channels by which the Gospel of Jesus reached out into the community, and also made the community of believers a family that others wanted to be part of.

Now surely nothing much has changed today. Yes we do have paid church staff, but that is to support the service of everyone, not replace it. The responsibility of all working together as servants to make worship and evangelism happen belongs to us all, and we need more than words to fulfill it.

Last Sunday in the Daily Bread Devotional notes there was the story of a man who visited the campus of an American University on an extremely cold winters day. He saw two men chipping away thick ice from the pavement near the student housing and he immediately presumed that these must be two of the newest students who had been sent out to do this unpopular task. But it wasn't. In fact it was the president and the vice president of the student fraternity. The man was impressed by that and saw it as a reminder of Jesus' example in washing His disciples feet.

I however, saw it in a different way. My response was, "where were the other students?". Why were there only the two of them when the work was obviously extensive, and the benefit was for all.

The cry "where are all the others" is often heard in churches when it comes to filling rosters, prayer meetings, giving, and outreach opportunities. Its heard as much in the large churches as in the small.

But thankfully, as we so often see in the fellowship here, it doesn't take much to change that. Just for us all, Pastor and people alike, to see again Jesus on His knees washing our feet. Calling us to accept the responsibility of whatever service for one another and Him is needed, and to meet it with more than just our words, but with our actions.

That's why this commissioning service today is not just for a few it is for all, as we commit ourselves to worshipping and working together, for the sake of God's Glory and God's Kingdom here in Craigie and beyond.

Dear Heavenly Father.

Today we come before you as your people who seek to serve you by serving one another and by doing your will as you apply it to our hearts. We humbly commit ourselves to fulfilling our responsibilities in the strength that you supply, and our desire is that the blessing you delight to pour out upon us will cause others to join us, and your Kingdom to grow in our midst.

We also pray for one another and for the leaders that you have given us that we will be united in our endeavours and faithful in our holy calling; that the Lordship of Christ Jesus will be evident in all we do and seek after; and that the fellowship created within us by the Holy Spirit will be evident to others.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Programme for Sunday Feb 3rd: Commissioning Sunday

- 22 The Servant King
- 33 Meekness and Majesty
- 111 I Simply Live for You

Commissioning service: Elders and Deacons
Introducing Bible Study/Home Group leaders
Jesus Kids announcements....Linda

Other announcements.....offering
Prayer
John 13:1-17

- 98 Thank you for the cross
Communion
- 106 You are my world(read from verse 2)
Message
Prayer of Commitment
- 91 Make me a channel of your peace