

## “Finding Joy in Servanthood”



### **Luke 4:5-8**

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**6 And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.**

**7 If you worship me, it will all be yours.”**

**8 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’4:8 Deut. 6:13” (NIV)**

Special Music: “How Much More A Servant Could He Be” Michael Card

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kIIX2KJKfM>

It was just before Passover and Jesus and his disciples had been on the road the entire day. The roads around Jerusalem were hard, dirty roads. Jesus and His disciples walked just about everywhere so their feet must have been covered with dirt and mud. Jesus had sent Peter and John ahead to meet with a man regarding a room that they could use to eat the Passover meal. The man showed them to an upper room that was already ready for them. Now Jesus and His disciples had already sat down and were enjoying the meal when Jesus gets up, takes off his outer robe and wraps a towel around his waist. He then gets a basin of water and starts to wash the disciples' feet, drying the washed feet with the towel around his waist.

We hear this story a lot. It is one of our favorite Bible stories and elements of this story can be found in Matthew, Luke and John. It is a beautiful and wonderful example of what it means to be a servant leader. And because the person doing the foot washing is Jesus, we find ourselves totally humbled.

Peter is the only disciple to speak out in protest with regards to how inappropriate it is for Jesus to be washing his feet. The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the gospel of John describes Christ's interaction with Peter this way,

**6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"**

**7 Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”**

**8 “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.”**

**Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”**

**9 “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”**

**10 Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.”**

**There are several things that we need to talk about here with regards to what has transpired here:**

- 1. Why is Peter the only one that seems to be taken aback that Jesus is washing his feet? Why are the other disciples not protesting? After all, having your feet washed by Jesus is not a normal experience. Generally, at this time during Jesus’ ministry, if one had their feet washed, it was by a servant, not their teacher and certainly not by the Son of God. We come into this situation knowing that the disciples have been bickering over who is going to be greatest in the Kingdom of God and it is possible that some of the relationship boundaries between Jesus and His disciples had become blurred. After all, Christ treats these men more like brothers than followers.**

Still, it takes the simple nature of Peter to notice that this whole equation is somewhat out of kilter. It almost seems like the disciples expect for Jesus to do this sort of thing. But Peter sees how it is totally inappropriate for the Son of God to be washing his feet and protests. But Peter's vision is also warped here. He asks simply "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" spoken in such a way as if to say, "I am not worthy."

Where have we heard that before? Where have we seen this humility occur at this kind of level with regard to Jesus? We find it back over in Matthew 3:13-15.

**"13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.  
14 But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'**

**15 Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented."**

John the Baptist feels totally unworthy to baptize Jesus. In both the case of John baptizing Jesus and Peter having his feet washed, we see that Jesus is doing something that is totally opposite to the way culture sees as proper. We see Jesus stooping in humility to serve and elevate the people around Him. It is totally opposite to the way the Pharisees and Sadducees elevate themselves to positions of superiority and with the

expectation that those around them should serve them. And to be quite honest, this humility that Jesus presents makes them look bad.

The major point here, is that both Peter and John the Baptist realize that the example that Jesus is setting is one that can and should be embraced with Joy; that being a servant as exemplified by Jesus is not without reward. In fact, once Peter understands what Jesus is doing, he's all in and his response is **“Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”**

Jesus has been trying to teach the disciples all along with stories that end with the punch line **“The first shall be last and the last shall be first.”** But this entire foot washing incident isn't a story. It is a true life, in the flesh, in your face, right here and now, in person example of what He has been talking about.

2. The second thing that we need to note in with regards to this example that Christ is setting, is that no one gets left out. Jesus washes all of the disciple's feet. He knows that Judas is going to betray Him. He knows that Peter is going to deny Him. He knows that Thomas is going to doubt Him. He realizes that many of the men that He is calling

**brother, men that He loves, men who are His friends, are not going to be there with Him at the time that He will most use their support.**

**If you have ever had the privilege of holding the hand of someone who is in the process of passing from this life, you understand the importance of knowing that no one should have to face that time alone. Yet, for so many, it is a time of darkness and fear, especially if we know that person well, family or friend. But in truth, if we have our faith in the right place, it can be a blessing to provide comfort and support at that moment. It may take a great deal of courage, but it is possible to find joy and peace as you provide presence, grace and reassurance during that passing.**

**We know that Mary, Jesus' mother, and the disciple John were at the cross, but we don't know if any of the other disciples were there. Still, Christ, sitting and washing the disciple's feet knows where each and every disciple is going to be at that crucial moment when He is hanging on the cross and His spirit leaves His body. And no matter where those disciples will be, Jesus is still going to wash their feet at this moment. There is no condemnation. There is no requirement. There is no judgement. No pulling back. No pushing away. Only grace. This was His last opportunity to show each of them what grace looked like on a**

personal level. This was His last opportunity to example to those He had been teaching, how He expected them to show and teach grace to one another and to the people they were reaching out to.

3. The third thing to note in looking at this lesson, is that Jesus' does what He does intentionally. In the middle of the meal, without a word, Jesus gets up, takes off His robe and wraps a towel around his waist. Jesus is always in teaching mode, but you have to wonder if the disciples weren't a little confused by Him doing this. What was He doing? Where was He going with this? But one thing they did know was that Jesus was doing something intentional. They needed to pay attention because He was going to teach them something extraordinary.

Why is that important? When we serve others, our actions should be intentional. Jesus' actions show an intent to serve others and by doing so, serve His Father in Heaven. It is through this intentional act of service that Jesus presents a new sense of communion with those He is teaching. This is an intimate moment of compassion, grace and love. He doesn't say anything to any of the disciples until Peter protests. It is intentional compassion that occurs even though He knows the betrayal and abandonment that is coming. It is grace without expectation. It is love, complete, cleansing and intentional.

**This is what service should look like when we allow our Heavenly Father to serve through us. We need to give compassion, even when we know that there will be those who neither reciprocate nor appreciate that compassion. We need to offer grace with no expectation of reciprocation or remuneration. We need to provide love and grace, pure and simple, just as God loves us. Love that is complete, cleansing, non-judgmental and intentional.**

- 4. The fourth thing that we want to take away from this example is that we often don't see the true nature of service. While it is true that Christ is washing the disciple's feet, the process of washing those feet was in service to God Almighty, not to man. Yes, the disciples received the benefit of the foot washing, but the nature of the foot washing was actually the process of worshipping and serving God the Father, Creator of All Things.**

**Jesus' teaching was letting us know that by serving those around us, we are worshipping God and serving Him. It is through this understanding that our service to God allows us to provide grace and service to others without judgment. We are giving God's grace. Not man's grace. It is not service by us but God's service through us. It is next to impossible for us to give grace without prejudice, unless we let the love and grace of our Heavenly Father flow through us. He needs to**



be our source, and our eyes need to be focused on Him while we provide that service. The praise goes to God, not to us.

Let's go back to our actual scripture for today.

**Luke 4:5-8**

**5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.**

**6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.**

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**8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'4:8 Deut. 6:13"**

We see in this passage that Satan once again appeals to the human side of Christ. He snaps his fingers and shows Jesus all the kingdoms in the world and says that he will give Jesus authority over all them if only Jesus will worship Satan. Saying this to the Son of God has absolutely no significance. As the Son of God, Jesus already sits in authority. Appealing to Jesus' human side is the only way this makes any sense, but Satan forgets one very important thing that Jesus knows and understands, even in His weakened condition.

I don't know if you ever said something like this to your children and I don't recommend it from a parenting standpoint. Have you ever had your child say to

you, “This is my room and you need to stay out of it unless I invite you in?” And your immediate thought, whether you speak it out loud or not, is, “This is only your room as long as it is my room. This is my house, and this is only your room because I choose to let you use it.” Not a good moment for any parent as we are trying to teach our children responsibility and respect for privacy.

At the same time, Jesus knows that Satan’s authority over the kingdoms of this earth is only in place as long as God grants him that authority. Satan’s words are specific, **“it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.”** Given to him by whom? By God. And that authority is only in place as long as God allows it. Jesus knows this. Even in His weakened condition, Jesus recognizes who has the ultimate authority and that anything that Satan offers is, at best, temporary. And ultimately, this world will pass away, and with it any authority that Satan has over it.

Once again, Jesus quotes scripture. Not because He has to. Not because He is unsure of his own response. Not because he lacks authority. But because he is in the process of fulfilling the old covenant so that the new covenant can be established. Instead of answering Satan with an emphatic “No,” he quotes Deuteronomy 6:13, **“It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’** He doesn’t even bring up the temptation that Satan offers, but explicitly tells him that there is nothing that Satan could ever offer that would make

**Jesus worship Satan instead of God, because the law states, without compromise, that we must worship the Lord our God and serve Him only. That law is fixed in stone, immoveable and immutable. We cannot worship money, fame, fortune, power, authority or anything else if we choose to accept the grace and love that God offers us. Anything that could be offered in this world is dull and without value in comparison with the grace, mercy, peace, joy and love that God provides to us. When we put anything that this world has to offer between us and our Creator, we put up a barrier that makes it difficult to worship God and embrace the blessings of that He has for us.**

**This week I have a very difficult challenge for us. Let's take a magnifying glass to our lives and look at those things that we have told ourselves are important and then determine if those things are things that can be considered blessings from God or are they things that we have embraced that put up barriers between us and God. It isn't wrong to have money. It is wrong to love money. It isn't wrong to be a leader. But we need to be servant leaders. It isn't wrong to have authority, as long as we remember the source of our authority. It is not wrong to find pleasure in life, as long as we realize that pleasure is a gift from God and not a treasure to be sought, and certainly should never be obtained at the expense of others.**

At the core of everything that we do, of everything that we are, we should keep those words from Deuteronomy as our focus so that we do not fall prey to values not held in esteem by our Heavenly Father. **“It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”** By doing this, we can find Joy in servanthood as we allow God to work through us meeting the needs of his children. Let us look for ways to let God wash a few feet and serve others with compassion and grace through us.

Amen

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