



Deeper Waters
Serving One Another

Main Text: John 13:1-5, 12-17

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he 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...

Main Text: John 13:1-5, 12-17

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 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. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, 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.

Towel and Basin Greatness

- It is when we are first deeply rooted in our identity as children of God that we can most effectively and genuinely serve others.
- It is clear that this act of service is an act of love, not obligation.
- Being confident in our standing as children of God and acting out of love will direct us toward "true service" and away from "self-righteous service."



True Service vs. Self-Righteous Service

- Self-righteous service seeks out the "big deal." True service finds it almost impossible to distinguish between small and large acts of service.
- Self-righteous service requires external rewards. It needs to know that people see and appreciate the effort. It seeks human applause – with proper religious modesty, of course. True service rests contented in hiddenness.

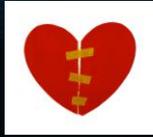


True Service vs. Self-Righteous Service

- Self-righteous service is highly concerned about results. It eagerly waits to see if the person served will reciprocate in kind. It becomes bitter when the results fall below expectations. True service is free from the need to calculate results. It delights only in the service itself.
- Self-righteous service picks and chooses whom to serve. Sometimes the high and powerful are served because that will ensure an advantage. Sometimes the low and defenseless are served because that will ensure a humble image. True service is indiscriminate in its ministry.

True Service vs. Self-Righteous Service

- Self-righteous service fractures a community. Once all the religious trappings are removed, it centers in the glorification of the individual. True service builds community, quietly and unpretentiously caring for the needs of others – binding, healing, reaching.
- Self-righteous service is temporary. It functions only when acts are being performed, then rests easy. True service is a life-style, springing from ingrained patterns of living.



Towel and Basin Greatness

- The act of washing feet in Jesus day was something everyone knew must be done, but no one wanted to do.
- Multiple times in the Gospels, we read that the disciples debated who was "greatest" among them.
- Even if they had trouble deciding who was greatest, what is most evident in this scene is that none of them wanted to be least.



Towel and Basin Greatness

- Jesus performed this most humbling act of service even for the man who would begin the chain of events leading to his crucifixion!
- Jesus does not *give up* his role as leader among them *in order to* wash feet, he *transforms* the role itself by washing feet.
- This act is not a unique one-time event. Jesus tells his followers, "You should do as I have done for you... you will be blessed if you do."



What Service Looks Like

- We must fight the lure of radical self-denial in the spotlight and devote ourselves to the bore of mundane triviality in the background.
- "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." (Mother Teresa)



What Service Looks Like

- The service of "small things"
- The service of common courtesy
- The service of hospitality
- The service of bearing another's burdens
- The service of listening

Closing Reflections

Choose one area of service, and get specific:

- The service of "small things"
- The service of common courtesy
- The service of hospitality
- The service of bearing another's burdens
- The service of listening



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