

John 13:1-17 – Do as I Have Done

Intro

- What would you do if you knew that you had only a day or two to live?
 - o Fight against it in every way possible even though you knew it was futile? (e.g. *Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night* by Dylan Thomas with the repeated phrase “Rage, rage against the dying of the light!”)
 - o Do something adventurous? (e.g. *Live Like You Were Dying* by Tim McGraw)
 - o Spend as much time as possible with loved ones?
 - o The next five chapters in the Gospel of John show us how Jesus spends the last few hours before his death (and it’s a version of number 3).
- Jesus’ public teaching ministry has ended.
 - o He was rejected by most of Israel, and some Gentiles are beginning to seek him (12:20-23).
 - o This signaled to him that the time has arrived to fulfill his purpose for coming: the glorification that comes from dying for the sins of the world to provide eternal life.
- Chapters 13-17 tell about the last supper and the events surrounding it.
 - o John focuses mostly on different details than the other three Gospels.
 - o He focuses especially on the final teachings that Jesus gives his disciples and the prayer he prays on their behalf.
 - These are the last words of love & wisdom to and for them before his death.
 - He makes it clear that most of these teachings extend beyond the 12 to all who would become disciples of Jesus...including us today.

(1-3) Love

- (1a) Jesus knows that it is almost time for him to suffer and die.
 - o We have already seen that the thought of this suffering causes him distress (12:27).
 - As a human being, Jesus experienced the negative emotions that come with knowing that something really bad is about to happen.
 - Luke 22:44 records him sweating drops like blood – probably describing a real physical condition (hematidrosis) that happens only when the body is under extreme emotional anguish.
 - o Yet, he can bear this emotional distress because of what he knows to be true.
 - He is returning to the Father – suffering and death are part of the plan he willingly undertook that will end in glory with God the Father.
 - This plan is going to provide salvation so that everyone who belongs to him can have this same confidence in the face of death (2 Corinthians 5:8).

- (1b) This is because he loves his own with a complete and perfect love.
 - i.e., Those who trust in him as they are drawn by the Father (John 6:37-47, 10:1-18).
 - The contrast between Jesus' own and those who belong to the world is going to pop up repeatedly across these chapters, so be watching for that.
 - Jesus is described as loving his own "to the end."
 - This can refer to the end of his mission (his death/resurrection/ascension).
 - This can refer to loving them to perfection (another way to translate *telos*).
 - Either way, the point is the complete, self-sacrificing love that Jesus has for those who trust in him. *Jesus Loves Me* is not just a cute children's song!

- (2-3) Jesus knows that he is the divine ruler of all things as Father and Son are working together in perfect unity.
 - Even though Satan is plotting against him with one of Jesus' own followers, God's will *is* going to prevail on earth just as it does in heaven.
 - One day, all will acknowledge him as Lord (Philippians 2:9-11 – either Lord & Savior or Lord & Judge).
 - With this knowledge of who he is, Jesus gives his disciples a concrete example of his love for them.

- (4-5) Jesus washes his disciples' feet (including the feet of Judas who he knew was about to betray him).
 - It was customary in their society to wash your feet (or have them washed) because you walked around all day on dusty roads wearing sandals.
 - Washing someone else's feet was considered just about as degrading as it sounds.
 - It was the job of the lowest servant/slave, and some Jewish rabbis argued that even a slave (especially a Jewish one) should not have to do it.
 - According to one commentary, there is no known example in non-Christian Jewish or Roman writings of a person washing the feet of a social equal, let alone of someone of a lower status or authority than themselves.
 - Jesus taking off his outer clothing and wrapping a towel around himself was assuming the clothing of the lowest of servants...
 - ...even though we have just been reminded that he is God the Son, King of the universe.
 - This humble service is a concrete demonstration of the mind of Christ that loves us so much he came to earth to die for us (Philippians 2:5-8).
 - Jesus is going to use this foot-washing to make three points to his disciples.

(6-11) Forgiveness

- (6-8a) The first two points that Jesus makes relate to cleansing from sin (aka forgiveness), helped along by Peter's well-intentioned, but ultimately foolish objections.

- Some of the strength/shock of Peter's objections are lost in translation so I'm going to paraphrase them a little.
 - Are *you* going to wash *my* feet?!
 - i.e. it is socially unthinkable that Jesus who is clearly his superior would lower himself like this. If anything, he should wash Jesus' feet.
- Jesus assures Peter that this is going to make sense to him later.
- Peter again refuses in the strongest possible terms.
 - There is no way that you will ever wash my feet in all of eternity!
 - He feels that this just can't be right.
 - This is not something that Jesus should have to do! It is so far beneath Jesus that Peter is going to put a stop to it!
- (8b) Jesus replies that washing is necessary.
 - Washing becomes an illustration of cleansing from sin just like the feeding of the 5,000 became an illustration about Jesus as the bread of life (chapter 6).
 - Only someone whom Jesus has washed shares in his life.
 - Unless our sins are forgiven, we do not have a right relationship with God or a right relationship with others (1 John 1:6-7).
 - Holding on to a sinful lifestyle (walking in darkness) is evidence of not belonging to Jesus.
 - 1 John 1:8-9 – Complete forgiveness is offered freely when we confess our sins (acknowledge it as unacceptable and desire to turn from it).
 - If you have never confessed your sins to God, asked for his forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death & resurrection, I urge you to do so today!
 - Only those who are cleansed from sin belong to Jesus.
 - Only those who are cleansed from sin can have a right relationship with God as their Father and walk in light and fellowship with others.
 - (9) Peter (always "all in") asks Jesus to wash him, which gives Jesus the opportunity to make a second point about forgiveness.
- (10) Jesus makes it clear that the disciples are already washed.
 - In this illustration, Jesus is probably looking back to the ritual purification that they would have undergone earlier that day...they just need to "freshen up" now by washing their feet.
 - The point:
 - Those who have already placed their faith in Jesus (as the disciples have) are already cleansed from sin: its eternal consequences are gone.
 - If we want our relationship with God to stay close/fresh we need to confess any sin that we become aware of ("keep short accounts with God").
 - The difference between once-for-all-time save-me-from-hell forgiveness and daily get-rid-of-the-awkwardness-in-our-family-relationship forgiveness.

- (11) Jesus knows that Judas does not truly believe in him & is about to betray him.
 - Judas is part of that inner group of 12 men who spend more time with Jesus than anyone else.
 - He has done the same things as the other disciples (traveling together, going out to preach, having his feet washed by Jesus, etc.)
 - He has no saving faith; he does not recognize Jesus as his Savior (just as a way of making money, apparently).
 - We'll talk more about Judas next week, but for now, this is a reminder that being associated with a church and doing the things that church people do does not make you a part of the family of God; only faith in Jesus does that.

(12-17) Humility

- (12) Jesus explains that there is more to understand about what he has just done.
 - It is an illustration of cleansing from sin...
 - ...but it is also an example to be followed.
- (13-17) Jesus commands them to do what he has done.
 - Some churches take this woodenly literally and institute ritual foot-washing as an ordinance like communion & baptism, but that seems to miss the point.
 - Jesus is emphasizing humble service of which foot-washing is just one example.
 - He is their authoritative teacher & Lord, just as they say...and yet he serves them as if he were the least important of their servants.
 - If he, the greatest of all, acts in this way how can his disciples (including us) do otherwise?
 - Do we think that we are more important than Jesus? That what is not beneath him is beneath us?
 - Or do we find blessedness in serving others? Blessed = happy (because of God's favor)
 - Do we find our happiness in serving or in being served & catered to?
- We should not expect the church or our brothers and sisters in Christ to exist for the primary purpose of serving us.
 - Church is not just the place where we come a couple times per week to get our "spiritual fix" or "joy recharge."
 - We should not look at fellow believers as people who are there to do our bidding or people who we can scold, gossip about, or give the silent treatment when they don't do what we expect of them.
 - Instead, we should be looking for ways that we can build up the church and our brothers and sisters in Christ – actively involved in contributing rather than complaining that "I don't get anything out of it."

- We should not look at any act of service as being below us. For example:
 - Behind the scenes things like doing the dishes, setting up/tearing down, helping someone with a physical need (meal, lawn mowing, moving, etc.).
 - Some people think of these things as “less spiritual” and thus less rewarding than up-in-front or leadership kind of roles.
 - Jesus’ actions in this passage show us that this is not the case...humble acts of loving service follow the example of our Lord himself.
 - Doing something that is “not my job” when the usual person is unable to or forgets (without scolding, shaming, or having a “you owe me” attitude).
 - Negative example: the person who created a ruckus at a church business meeting because they spotted a Cheeto on the floor of a classroom and wanted to assign blame (rather than just picking it up & throwing it away).
 - Jesus’ actions in this passage should lay to rest this kind of “not my job” pettiness.
 - Volunteering in a compassion/rescue kind of ministry (BWARM, Spero, WAR, etc.) without looking down your nose at the people you are helping.
 - Not having a “you don’t deserve my help” attitude.
 - E.g. WAR International leader bowing and placing a prostitute’s foot on her head to humbly request that she be allowed to help her.
 - Like Peter, some people react with “she shouldn’t have to do that” and get indignant on her behalf.
 - Who are we to discourage someone from serving God just because it is humiliating or difficult? Is our judgment superior to Jesus’s?

Application: Philippians 2:3-5

- Is there an area where I am able to serve but I have been telling myself “I shouldn’t have to do that”?
 - It’s someone else’s job
 - I refuse to put up with the disrespect that comes with it
 - They don’t deserve my help
 - I already put in my time
- Ask God to give you the mind of Christ who willingly lowered himself to our level, acted as servant, and died for us because he loved us perfectly.