

Humility: Servant Leadership (John 13:1-17)

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[0 : 00] Oh, William. Ian was too slow. Good afternoon, everyone. Just turn with your Bibles to John chapter 13, verse 1 to 17.

Sorry, I've only got my phone, so we're reading off ESV, but feel free to follow in whatever translation you've got. Amen. This is the word of the Lord.

Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with a towel that was wrapped around him.

[1 : 23] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? Jesus answered him, What I am doing you don't understand now, but afterwards you will understand.

Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I don't wash you, you have no share with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.

For he knew who was to betray him. That was why he said, not all of you are clean. When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I've done to you?

You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

[2 : 26] For I have given you an example that you also should do, just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a sermon is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

If you know these things, blessed are you, if you do them. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you. Well, I tell you what, looking at your faces, it's a lot better than looking at the normal screen of the computer.

So it's so good to see, and it's nice to see some new friends here. Welcome, and hope you feel at home here. Yeah, I'd like to share about this passage.

And in this last quarter of our church, we've been learning about deeper into life questions, okay? Things we don't understand, and things that it's not easy to answer. And sometimes, you know, when we think about, we're talking about humility today, you think, does it work?

[3 : 31] I mean, if I kind of stay humble, will I get taken advantage of? Does it work in this world? You know? Yeah, we'll look into it a little bit more today and see.

Now, I think, I'm not sure if anyone kind of heard of this term, servant leadership. In a commercial world, anybody heard about that? In a commercial world, you'll actually encounter anything like this?

Servant leadership. Now, I'm not talking about church. This is actually in a commercial world. And this way of doing business is quite, it's not new, I mean, it's not old.

It's only about 50, 60 years old, okay? It was this guy, Greenleaf. Greenleaf. The actual name is Greenleaf, okay? And he was actually very, yeah, he read a book around about 1958 or something. He was very much inspired. And he just thought, wow, the traditional way of kind of managing a company is top-down, a CEO and the managers and other leaders and then the workers, okay,

laborers.

[4 : 48] And it's kind of, that's all every, you know, most of the commercial firm work like that. But then it was very much inspired. And 10 years, he kind of developed this servant leadership model, okay?

And even today, there's a lot of big companies, successful companies, they actually adopt that kind of model, okay? And still, there is called a servant leadership center.

And it's established and it was promoted in many places, okay? Sometimes we think in this cruel world, you know, in this, in this, everybody's trying to grab and, you know, in this egoistic world, humility, servanthood, does it work?

You can talk about it later in your group, okay? But talking about lead, servanthood, I think for us as Jesus' disciples, it's not new to us.

Because Jesus actually is the greatest servant leader. In fact, the Bible describes him as the servant king.

[6 : 05] He is the king of kings, but he came in the Christmas time, you know, celebrate that he came as a little baby and born in a manger and lived 30-something years and lived the harshest of life.

And at the end, he died on the cross for us. So just as the book of Philippians, Paul was describing Jesus.

I think you all could recite that passage. Actually, it was a hymn during those times that Jesus, having the image of God, he did not think he had the image of God, something to get hold of and not releasing, and he emptied himself, became a slave, took on the image of a man, and become lowly, born in a manger, submit to death and death on the cross.

So that's a real supreme model of humility and servanthood. And the passage we've just read before, it was another picture of how Jesus demonstrated that in a real, real way.

Okay? So the passage we've read before, it was the text was telling us that Jesus was demonstrating that kind of servanthood by at that time washing the feet of his disciples and taught them to do likewise.

[7 : 39] We were not there in the Last Supper, up in the upper room. We were not one of the twelve, but we are following Jesus.

And the Word of God has a message for us for today. Okay? And I believe that the meaning of this text for us today, we are to follow the example of Jesus to serve one another in humility.

Now what does it look like? Okay? We talk about, we talk a lot about humility. And I think humility is a mark, is a precept of Christianity.

You know? Because we follow Jesus, the servant king. And we cannot go to the other direction. You know, Jesus was the humble servant who laid down his life to serve us so that we can have the salvation.

Okay? And we cannot say, we come to Jesus, Jesus, yeah, I accept you as Lord and Savior, but I'm not going to be humble like you. That's not the way.

[8 : 45] So if we are the followers of Jesus, we will follow his example to serve one another in humility. Now the context of this event, washing feet, it was actually at a night of the Jewish Passover.

Okay? Jesus and his disciples were Jews. Okay? So they celebrated the Passover, just like Chinese celebrate Chinese New Year's or Autumn Moon Festival.

But the Passover for them was like a national day because that was the day they were released from Egypt and starting a new kind of a nation.

Okay? So it was very, very meaningful for them. And it was during those times they celebrated the exodus, the time God brought them out from Egypt.

Okay? And they were slaughtering the lamb as the Passover lamb. Okay? So it was around from around, for the Jewish traditions, it was around about three o'clock in the afternoon.

[9 : 54] So they got up to the upper room and preparing for the feast, preparing for the meal and every other thing. And there was a bit of time. And actually, the disciples were actually having some disputes.

Disputes for what? Who was the greatest amongst the twelve? Okay? And Jesus, because of their disputes, Jesus taught them and demonstrated what is the meaning of humility by washing the feet of his disciples.

And then, later on, Jesus foretold that someone would betray him. And during the feast, while they were eating, the guy, Judas, left. And after that, Jesus was giving his last words to his disciples and prayed for them in a very famous priestly prayer in chapter 17 of John.

Okay? And then, after that, they left the upper room and went to this garden of Gethsemane and Jesus prayed. Okay? The book of John actually recorded quite in detail about what happened in the upper room.

Okay? 13, 14, 15, 16, five chapters recorded the things that happened there. The other Gospels only recorded a few verses, half a chapter maybe, talking about things that was, so we need to look at the whole four Gospels to see what actually happened in the upper room in the night of the Passover.

[11:25] So, that was kind of like that. It was like that. But tonight, today, we're going to focus in that part, the disputes of the disciples and Jesus washing their feet.

Now, John did not record the disputes, but you look at Mark or Matthew, you could see something like, it was like that. In Mark 10, James and John, who was the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus. I was almost going to say came to Jesus and he said, teacher, they said, we want you to do for us whatever we ask and whatever you're asking.

And they said, let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory. Now, this is very oriental. What is the meaning of sitting one on the right and one on the left?

I mean, for Kiwis, what does it mean? But for Asian, for oriental people, it means the seats of honour.

[12:37] If the king was in the middle and one on the left and one on the right, they would have the honour for sitting right beside the king. Now, obviously, they were thinking in a very carnal way.

They would never understand what the glory of Jesus was. Actually, John, for John, the glory of God and the glory of Jesus was actually the crucifixion.

They would never understand. But in the very carnal, very selfish way, they wanted that. And the other ten, when they heard about that, they were so angry with James and John.

Now, they were not angry because they thought they were, they'd done the wrong thing. They were angry because they got the better of them. I should have gone to Jesus to say that first. And just imagine Peter, okay, Peter, James, and John, they were amongst the closest circle of Jesus, right? In the transfiguration and mountain, it was Peter and James and John. And just imagine what Peter would have felt. James and John, you've betrayed me.

[13:47] We're supposed to be the closest circle. And you two gone to Jesus without me? You know? And imagine in that kind of setting and these were so, so arrogant, so selfish that they couldn't even see the picture and couldn't understand what Jesus was going to go through.

And Jesus took the opportunity to teach them. He said, Jesus called them together and said, you know, there are those who regarded as rulers, the Gentile lord that lorded over them and their high officials exercised authority over them.

Now for some of you, this is very familiar. We just finished that leadership essential and this is one of the passages that we had to recite. Do you still remember?

Shiva? Do you still remember? Given back to the book already. All right? Now this is one of the passages that we were talking about, servanthood. Venus, you still remember?

Can you recite for it? All right? So, I mean, the model, the pattern of power and, and, and, and, yeah, it's very different.

[15:03] The one wanted to be great is to, is to serve. Okay? Even though the servant leadership in this secular world, they kind of knew it's not the one top down, I mean, not necessarily the top down can work all the time.

And the Bible teaches us, Jesus taught us that the one, you want to be great, you lay down your life just like Jesus. So, let's have a look at this servanthood, this humility, serving.

How does it, what does it mean? Okay? Let's have a look. firstly, the impact of this servanthood demonstrated by Jesus. Now, in verse 1, he said, it was just before Passover festival, Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and to go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. It was amazing love. The song we sung before, it was amazing love. Now, imagine, it was the Passover festival, okay?

We don't understand too much about, but it was a big meaning for the Jews, okay? But, for Jesus, the hour was to come.

[16 : 23] Now, what's that hour? Okay? Now, if you search the hour in the book of John, in the Gospel of John, almost every time, it referred to the crucifixion, the death of Jesus, okay?

Horror. I mean, not English horror, but Jewish, I mean, the Greek word horror, okay? It was the hour, and NIV translated the hour, the time.

But that hour was designed and timed by the Father. and Jesus willingly submitted and the reason he came was for that hour.

That hour was for the glory of God and that hour was Jesus to die on the cross. For him, it was a very troublesome time.

In chapter 12, 27, Jesus' heart was troubled and he knew the hour was near. But he said, but this is the hour that I came for.

[17 : 33] Okay? It's not easy. And he was troubled not because he was going to be betrayed by his disciples, not because he physically had to hang on the cross, but because he was bearing the whole load of the human sin and because the righteous Father, God his Father, because he was bearing our sin, he had to deny Jesus.

He had to cut himself off from Jesus and for Jesus, it was unbearable to be separated with his Father. Even in those troublesome times and troublesome in his spirit, he still had his love for his disciples.

Now just think, when we are in trouble, what will we be thinking of? Of course, myself. Natural, you're not Jesus, right?

But if you have experienced sometimes, even in our troublesome times, even when we are sick, when we're in real dire problems, in our spirit, God enabled us to still think of someone, to care for someone, to concern for someone, this impact of servanthood kicked in because we have been exercising that.

Okay, it's nothing to brag, but if God has allowed us, praise God, the impact of servanthood allowed us to think and concern, to care for others.

[19 : 15] And in verse 4, Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing and wrapped the towel and started washing the feet of the disciples.

Now that was shocking actually, that was really shocking for his disciples. And Peter being the first to respond, you cannot wash my feet, never on earth a teacher would wash his disciples' feet. But the thing is, the bunch of disciples, they were having disputes about who was the greatest. Now I was just thinking, when they went into the room, actually, did they actually wash their feet? Right? Because in Jewish customs, when they went into someone's house, they had to wash the feet.

and there was some big jars of water sitting out in the front. In John 2, you read about Jesus changed water into wine, right? And it was those six jars out in the front that Jesus changed them into the wine.

[20 : 28] Now those waters put there were not purely for the reason Jesus turned them into wine. The reason those jars put there was for feet washing.

Who was doing the feet washing? Slaves of the house. Okay? During those times, in the upper room, I don't think there were any slaves there because that room was kind of hired.

And I was wondering who was, either they went in there without the feet washing, or they just did their own feet washing. And I couldn't imagine John would wash the feet of Peter, or James would wash the feet of Thomas.

I don't think they did. And now Jesus took a towel, a basin of water, to wash each of their feet, even Judas.

Humility allowed us to put down our pride, in Chinese, our face, and willing to serve.

[21 : 46] Now that's the impact. If God has, in His Spirit, have impacted us, willing to serve, putting down our pride, willing to care, to concern, even in our difficult times, praise God.

Keep exercising it. it's not us doing, but God in His Spirit, transforming us. And how are we going to do this?

I really love this verse, you know, in verse 3. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and He had come from God, and was returning to God.

Now this is something if we grasp hold of these ingredients, we can serve in humility. Jesus put all things under His power.

That means what Jesus has received, it was inherited from God. Okay? And He knew that He came from God, He was God, but took on the mission to come, took on flesh.

[23 : 01] So He had the status, even though He was human, He was totally God. And He was returning to God after the mission, after He crucified, He would go back to God.

He knew His destiny, and that's why He could humbly serve. He did not need to prove anything. Now for us, we're not Jesus, of course, but I think this passage is very powerful if we're concerned about whether we can serve in humility.

Yes, of course we can. If we knew that all the things that we have received are from our Father through Jesus, we have the inheritance from Him, then we would have the contentment, because all things were given by Him.

It's not what I could dig it up myself, right? Or I could explore them, or I try to earn them myself. No, everything I have given by God.

So I don't need to brag about it, I don't need to boast about it, even if I'm not given as much. I'm terrible with IT, I'm not good with it, and some are really good at it, and some are really excel in certain gifts and talents.

[24 : 34] I don't need to worry, because it was God who has given gifts to individuals for the building of His kingdom.

I didn't have that, I don't have as much, that's fine, I praise the Lord for what I have, and I give thanks for those who have more than me, and I don't need to prove anything, and if I knew, if I know that I come from God, yes, surely I come from God, but I became a sinner, I sinned, and I separated, I'm separated from God, but in Jesus, I'm brought back to Him.

Once again, I'm called the children of God. I know my status, so I will have conviction in all that I say, in all that I do, and I know after these several, 50, 60, 100 years, I will return back to God.

I know my destiny, I will have the confidence. If I have the contentment, I have the conviction, I have the confidence, these are real things.

I don't need to prove anything. I don't need to be affected by what people's comments about me. I have the assurance, right? There was a long time ago, there was this ad, have you heard about this?

[26 : 01] Coca-Cola. It's the real thing, have you heard about that? Of course you haven't, because you're too young. In my age, when I was about your, no, I was much younger, I was about 15, 14, it's the song, it's the real thing, actually in Hong Kong they translate it as it's a little bit different, you know, but the English is really say it's the real thing, okay, what, real thing compared to what, compared to this.

Now if you have the real thing, you don't settle with the second best, or the fake stuff, you know, yeah, and so, yeah, that's the Jesus, when we have, when we have the full contentment in knowing that we have the inheritance of God, and we know we have the full conviction, we know that we have the status in God, and we have the confidence, we know where our destiny, go.

These are the real things, and these will allow us to take the risk of humble service, just as our Lord did, okay.

And thirdly, the intention of servanthood. Now this is the dialogue between Peter and Jesus, and he came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet?

And Jesus replied, you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand. No, you shall never wash my feet.

[27 : 58] Jesus answered, unless I wash you, you have no part in me. now this this, you know, I feel, I felt that kind of this dialogue is not meeting one another.

It's like Jesus was speaking something higher, and Peter was speaking in a very practical, tangible, but fully missed what Jesus was saying.

Okay. Jesus said, you do not realize what I'm doing now, washing your feet. obviously they did not realize. Jesus say, through this symbolic action to washing the feet of disciples was to tell them that you have a part in me, you believe in me, what I did, what I'm doing to you now, I'm serving, I'm giving my life as a humble servant, and then you will realize later.

They did not realize until Jesus actually died and rose again, and when the Holy Spirit came and fully revealed that in their hearts and they knew, oh, the meaning of Jesus dying on the cross was the full servant leader, king, and redeeming them, redeeming them.

And during that time, they did not realize. That's why Jesus was saying that to them. And in Jesus, I mean in Peter, as in a very, carnal self, he said, no, no, you cannot wash my feet.

[29 : 36] Never in my life, you see, the teacher would wash the disciples' feet. He was really missing the point. I like what the message Bible was describing.

Jesus was saying to Peter, the message was like that, paraphrased like that. Jesus was saying to Peter, I'm doing this in order to cleanse you.

But what Peter missed, he thought Jesus was talking about hygiene. You know, just cleaning, just washing the feet. But Jesus said, no, I'm cleaning, I'm cleansing your life, cleansing the sin out of you.

So, the intention of Jesus serving through this feet washing was to allow the disciples to know that their lives need to be cleansed.

And Peter would say, in that case, not just my feet, my hand, my head as well. So, he was missing the point. I think the intention of Jesus was serving so that people, through believing him, accepting him as Lord and Savior, their lives would be cleansed from sin.

[31 : 05] I think that would be our mentality when we serve as well. In church, when we serve the community, it was good to see you guys packing up these gifts for the people, for the family, through Salvation Army.

Great. But the intention is not just, yes, we truly want to bless them in a real way. We don't just say, we pray for you and go in peace.

We do give them the needs, the real needs. But we have higher intention. we want them through that to know the church cares.

Why the church care? Because Jesus cares. And in due time, we want them to come to know Jesus so that by knowing Jesus, accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior, their lives will be cleansed.

salvation army, YMCA, World Vision, and these Christian agencies, social agencies, when they first started, surely they want to serve and help in very practical way, but they always had that in mind, to bring people whom they serve to know Jesus.

[32 : 33] So, when we serve, let us not to forget, we'll, through our service, we'll bring people to Jesus so that the lives will be cleansed.

And lastly, instruction for servanthood. Very clear. Jesus said, you call me teacher and Lord, rightly so, for this is what I am. Now I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also wash one another's feet.

In verse 17, now that you know these things, you'll be blessed. Let's serve one another.

Not necessarily like, you know, just wash someone's feet. It doesn't mean much today. I know some churches, I actually participated once or twice, feet washing kind of practice.

Okay. But it kind of felt funny. And I was trying to, I was going to wash Ivan's feet. I don't, my feet, I'm not dirty.

[33 : 44] Why do you wash my feet? And don't tickle me, you know? And it's sort of kind of, because it's not, it's not, it's not the principle. The principle is, I'm willing to lay down myself and to help and to serve the need, the real need at a time.

Right? So, giving by giving, supporting families with our groceries, giving the needs at the right time, which is good. But what is my mentality? Am I willing to really sacrifice myself in order to do that? So, maybe in today's term, when you go back home, wash the dishes for your parents. That's, that's feet washing.

Or try to clean, not just your own toilet, but someone else, your, your, your siblings toilets. Okay? That's, that's servanthood. And, and I want to share something during the lockdown.

Okay? Um, there are different impacts. During the lockdown. Some lost a job, some work less, so financially it's a bit stressed, and some, yeah, there's different kind of stress during this lockdown.

[35 : 04] Okay? If you haven't experienced that, praise God. Okay? But, but there are some, some brothers and sisters who actually really, when they prayed, they really felt the need, the urge to give in a, in a real practical way.

So, they, they just gave. Um, to buy, money to buy vouchers, um, grocery vouchers, and some actually give, just give, given money. And, they wanted the church if we could help.

Because, we are charity organizations, we cannot give via church, because RLD, I mean, RLD wouldn't like it. Okay? So, the pastors and deacons, we sat together and said, um, okay, we appoint

three people.

Okay, I'm the one and two deacons. To administer that in a kind of a, uh, private ways. But we are, you know, we are accountable to one another. Okay? And to, to, to take those money that's, that's given by brothers and sisters and to distribute to, to those we think we know that are in needs.

And a good thing about it is that those who receive the gifts didn't know who were, who were the givers. And those who gave didn't know the, where the money would go to.

[36 : 27] Purely, they would trust pastor and the two deacons to administer that. And this is something really, I would, you know, when I was, and, I was distributing them with, and discussing these for the other two, I, my heart was just full of gratefulness, you know.

It's like your right hand don't know what your left hand is doing. And the father sees in secret will reward them. This is humble service.

This is servanthood. And, and, yeah, pastor William just said before, or Isaac said before, we're sitting here, there are a lot of people done a lot of work.

you know, a lot of, a lot of procedures and requirement that, that given by the government, someone need to do it. And you see these plastic screens there, and, and you see the, these are not, not, not, not some crosses, okay.

So, so sit on the, on someone, something that's not on the cross, not without the cross, okay. These are all done, and the, and the pews being shifted, and the Bible is taken away, and every, every service after another, there'll be, there'll be cleaning.

[37 : 44] So, a lot of people have done a lot of work behind that, and you don't know them, that's fine, because they're serving for God. So, I encourage you, we are following our Lord, who is the humble servant.

Once, there was this guy called John Calvin, he, he expressed in this way, he said, humility, or servanthood, is the precept of Christianity.

It's just like the soil to the plant. Humility is like the soil, and our Christian life and deeds are just like the plants.

People can only see our outside, our appearances, the things we do, the things we say, but if the things our lives and deeds not grounded, soiled in this humility, one day, the plant will wither.

Agree? I mean, we can look, we can talk, we can make ourselves look godly, but if we are not grounded, we are not soiled in humility, one day, our lives will crumble.

[39 : 01] Let's follow our servant leader, our servant king, and work on this humility and this servanthood in our lives, and may God get all the glory.

Let's pray. Father, I just want to thank you for your word, and thank you, Jesus, you have given us such a great, great example. You are the servant king, you are the servant leader, and you lay down your lives for us, and because of your servanthood, we have life, and we can, we can, yeah, we can serve according to what you have given to us, according to what you're instructing us.

Father, help us, help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.