

† The Heart of Christ ~ the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Soliciting Savior **John 13:12-17**

12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

Over the past couple of weeks in our study of John 13, we have noted two key characteristics of our Lord Jesus Christ. In verses 1-4 we have noted the splendidness of the Savior, seeing in those verses the splendid attention, affection, attitude, authority and action of Jesus, the One who is from God and returned to God and yet the one who humbled Himself, to be not only then the splendid Savior, but secondly the serving Savior, who, in verses 4-11, laid aside His garments and took the form of a bond-slave, washed the feet of the disciples and patiently taught Peter and the disciples the implications of His seemingly simply action.

This morning we come to verses 12-17 and here I would have you see the soliciting Savior, who solicits, or calls His disciples, and subsequently calls us, to at least three actions. First, to reflect on the work of Christ; second, to respond to the work of Christ; and third, to rejoice in the work of Christ. To say this another way, this foot-washing scene is reflective of the work of Christ for the salvation of those who believe, calling believers to respond by imitating Christ; a response in which we can rejoice as it results in blessing for us. Let us begin then to dissect these actions one by one beginning in verse 12 and the call to reflect.

I. Reflect (13:12)

12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?”

The question of Jesus here, “Do you know what I have done to you?” is a solicitation or call for the disciples to reflect upon what it is that Jesus had just done to them. But before this solicitation, the text gives us more upon which we might reflect.

First, there is the need to reflect upon the work of Christ. John wants his readers to know with certainty that Jesus accomplished the work He set out to do, namely that **“He had washed their feet...”** Nothing thwarted this work of Christ; not the pride of Peter or the pending treachery of Judas. This singular focus of Christ to accomplish the work of the Father for the salvation of man is therefore pictured for us in this washing of the disciples’ feet. We can and must reflect upon the determination of Jesus, as He Himself says in John 17:4, **“having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”** Let us remember that Jesus left, nor does He leave anything undone, or anything to chance. Jesus had come to seek and to save that which was lost and in a matter of hours from this recorded moment in John 13, the finality of His work for salvation would be confirmed on the cross and later His resurrection from the dead. So we are to reflect upon the completed action of Jesus for salvation.

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Second, there is the need to reflect upon the person of Christ. We read next in our text something profoundly interesting, that Jesus had **“taken His garments and reclined at the table again...”** Let us remember that back in verse 4 we were told that Jesus **“laid aside His garments...”** that is, Jesus took off those clothes that identified Him as a Rabbi, a teacher, a master and put on the garb of a slave. In verses 5-11 Jesus performed the work of the lowliest of slaves, to the protests and shame of the disciples. But now let us not miss the significance of this statement, why is it here?; for once Jesus completed the washing of the feet, a scene meant to picture the humble, loving service of Christ on the cross for His own, He comes back to His position of Rabbi, of teacher, of master by clothing Himself once again in such garb and we find Him once again reclined at the table. Remember that Jesus was in the position of host at this table. It was His table. He was the Lord of the table and for a moment He left that privileged position to serve His disciples. But He would not stay in that position of service alone. No, He would come back up to the table and resume His recognized position as Lord and Master of the table; but also as the Lord and Master who serves.

As we reflect upon this picture it should not be hard to see the parallel between this action and the incarnation of the Son of God. According to John, Jesus was face to face with God from the beginning and is in fact God (1:1). In John 1:14 we are told that God became flesh and dwelt among us. The Son of God became the Son of Man. The glorious Creator of heaven and earth, clothed with the majesty of heaven, laid aside that glory and donned the garb of humanity, taking the form of a bond-servant and as a man, He would give His life for His own, for His sheep by being obedient to death, even death on a cross. Can you imagine? Do you reflect on this truth? That the Son of God became the Son of Man so that through believing, that is by the life of a changed heart, the sons of men (you and me) might become the sons of God?

This brings us then to the actual solicitation of Jesus made to the disciples at the end of verse 12. Jesus calls the disciples to reflect on this - saying, **“Do you know what I have done to you?”** In other words, considering carefully the picture of this foot-washing, will you stop and reflect upon what it all means? I am amazed by this question, “Do you know what I have done to you?” Do you see me for who I am? Truly the mighty sovereign God, but also as the truly humble servant? Realize that this question is asked of both believers and unbelievers. To Peter and ten other of the disciples whom Jesus declares clean, washed, made new, Jesus calls them to reflect upon the greatness of the truth of redemption; of salvation.

And to Judas, to the one who would soon be revealed as the one who was not clean – Jesus yet asks this question – **“do you know that I have done to you?”** Why? Because if you reject this work of Christ, if you neglect this work of Christ, your end will be as the end of Judas – a son of perdition – that is “one who is destined to perish.” Oh may it be that all of us would rightly reflect upon what it is that Jesus has done and then respond not with rebellious unbelief as did Judas to his own destruction, but with what we see in our second point – that we would respond to the solicitation to being like Christ.

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II. Respond (13:13-15)

13 “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

Just like we saw in verse 12, there is an apparent thrust of Jesus to remind His disciples of both His person and His work. Verse 13 begins by saying, “You call me Teacher and Lord...” Note that Jesus did not say, “I am Teacher and Lord...” but rather refers His disciples to their own profession of who He is. They called Him “Teacher” – a word that means “master” as in a master of something. Jesus is the master teacher, the master instructor. In Jewish culture, a master teacher would be surrounded by disciples, learners, who would listen to what the instructor taught and then they would have to respond, either to receive and believe what he taught or to reject it. In other words, as a Teacher, Jesus is to be believed in what He taught or disbelieved in what He taught.

We have a graphic illustration of this back in John 6 – please turn there. In John 6 Jesus teaches some very difficult things ranging from calling Himself the living bread and saying, **“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves” (6:53)**; as well as speaking of God’s sovereignty in salvation saying, **“that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father” (6:65)**. This was the teaching of the Master and it called for a response. Let us notice the responses. First of the many we read in John 6:66;

As a result of this [the hard teachings of the Master] many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

And then to the few, to Peter and the rest of the disciples Jesus calls for a response saying, **“You do not want to go away also, do you?”** To which Peter responds, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life? We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” (6:68-69)**. In other words, “Jesus, You alone are the Master teacher whose words we believe.” And now, back in John 13, Jesus says, “You call me Master – this teacher who alone directs you to eternal life – do you believe?”

Additionally, Jesus says that they call Him Lord, “kurios” in the Greek. The Lord, the sovereign over the house, was one to be obeyed; His words were to be heeded and followed. So, when Jesus says to the disciples “You yourselves call Me the one to be believed and the one to be obeyed”– He is reminding them of His position. But then Jesus moved from His position to His work in verse 14 saying, **“If I then, the Lord [the one who is to be obeyed] and the Teacher [the one who is to be believed], washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”**

Now some have taken verse 14 and 15 to suggest that church ought to practice as an ordinance and therefore on a regular basis, the practice of literal foot-washing, just like baptism and the Lord’s table. While I disagree that it is to be a regular practice of the church, I do admire the desire on the part of those brothers and sisters in Christ to obey Jesus, particularly in our day when so many in the Church as slow to follow diligently after the Lord. But that Jesus and the

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disciples came to understand that the point was sacrificial service and not simply literal foot-washing can be clearly seen in the following.

First, Jesus stated in verse 7 that the disciples would not realize what it was Jesus as doing right then but that they would come to understand. Certainly Peter and the other disciples would have known if their feet had been literally washed, so something deeper was meant. Second, in verse 8 Jesus says to Peter, **“If I do not wash you, you have not part with Me.”** In the history of the Christian Church there have been countless numbers who have had a part in Christ and yet never practiced foot-washing. Third, when Jesus said in verse 11, **“Not all of you are clean”** – this could not have referred to Judas if a literal foot-washing was the point as Judas did have feet washed. And finally, as we have already noted, the pointed question of verse 12, **“Do you know what I have done to you?”** would hardly make sense if the answer could be simply – “Yeah, You washed our feet.” No, the point is this – “If I the Master Teacher to be believed and the Sovereign Lord to be obeyed, have humbly sacrificed My own dignity, My own majesty, My own life in order to do the lowliest of service for you, then will you not respond by humbly sacrificing your own dignity, your own majesty, your own lives to serve one another?”

In verse 15 that Jesus is speaking of the attitude of sacrificial service rather than of simple foot-washing is made clear. Jesus does not say here, **“For I gave you an example that you also should do what I have done to you...”** No, He says, **“For I gave you an example [some done before your eyes as a pattern] that you also should do as [according to the attitude] I have done to you...”** Beloved, the solicitation of Jesus here is simply asking, “How are you serving?” Have you responded to the teachings of Christ and the Lordship of Christ by exhibiting a humble, sacrificial attitude of service? Taking the actual foot-washing of verses 5-11 and then these statements of verses 12-15, we can draw the conclusion that those who Jesus has cleansed, that is regenerated, made new by the blood of His cross; and those whom Jesus washes, that is sanctifies; washing daily the muck and the mire of confessed sin, such as these will reveal this cleansing by humble, sacrificial service. So then, I ask again, “How are you serving?” If you know, truly know how Jesus served you, then you will desire to truly serve in the same manner as He, following His example, seeking to be more and more Christ-like. Martin Luther once noted, *“It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbor.”* This is the response of the disciple who has heard the solicitation of the Savior to do as He had done.

III. Rejoice (13:16-17)

16 *“Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”*

This brings us then to our third and final point. Jesus not only solicits or calls His disciples to reflect on and respond to His position and His work, but He also calls them to rejoice; to find satisfaction in their position and the blessings that come in being obedient to the call.

In verse 16, Jesus reminds the disciples, and the Spirit of God reminds us, of our privileged position. And just what is this position. Remember that the disciples had just been arguing over who was to be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Not long before that, James and John had requested the highest seats of honor next to Jesus. And Jesus had just reminded them all of their own profession that Jesus alone was the Master and Lord. With all this in mind, Jesus says, **“Truly, truly [listen well], I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is**

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one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.” There is a simple principle we must see here.

What Jesus is saying is that no slave can rightfully regard any duty beneath him that the master himself already performs. So if it is not beneath Jesus to humbly, lovingly and sacrificially serve the disciples, then no disciple can rightly refuse to serve one another. We ought to rejoice that we have the right and privilege to serve others even in a manner in which Jesus served His disciples. Too often we are concerned about our own pride, our own reputations, the way in which other will perceive us if we were to be as humble as Jesus. To borrow from the words of Paul to the Galatians, **“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ”** (1:10).

Do you desire to be found in Christ? Do you desire to be like Christ? Do you desire to rejoice in Christ? This principle of joyfully being conformed to the attitude and image of Christ in contrast to the attitude and image of self is expressed by Paul in Philippians 3:17-4:5;

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. [pleasing self; pleasing others] 18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. 4 Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

So profound – “let your gentle spirit” – your Christ-like spirit be known to all men. And how is it known? In part through rejoicing. And coming back then to our final verse of John 13:17, we find the path to rejoicing and blessedness. We read, **“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”** The highway to blessing; the path to joy is found in obedience to the solicitations, to the calls of the Savior. Our Lord says, **“If you know these things...”** What things, Lord Jesus? What things must we know to have blessing and to rejoice? First, we must know our own need of placing our feet, which is the very manner of our lives, in the hands of Jesus for washing, knowing that if He does not wash us, we have no part with Him (13:8). Are you being washed by the hand of Jesus? This is the only means for true blessedness. Second, we must know, we must own Jesus truly as our Master/Teacher and as Lord. Do you call him Teacher and Lord (13:13)? Third, we must know it as our duty to wash one another’s feet, that is to serve those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ (13:14). Fourth, we must know to serve

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one another in the same manner, following the same example as that of Christ, in humble, sacrificial love (13:15).

These are the things we can know about; we can know they should be done; we can know that they are right; we can know them inside and out. But there is no blessing and no rejoicing in simply knowing them. No, the blessing comes, as Jesus says, we when we what, when we do them. Having a knowledge of these things without the intent, without the drive, without the actual doing of them is but a torch that lights a man's soul to hell. Conversely, the one who knows these things and does them, is the one who is blessed, the one who is happy in the Lord. This is the very principle expressed in James 1:21-22 and 25:

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness [pride, self-serving attitudes], in humility receive the word implanted [receive the words of the Teacher and Lord], which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word [responders to what you have heard], and not merely hearers who delude themselves [who think that knowledge without action is true salvation]...25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does [this one is happy, this one rejoices].

Looking back at John 13:17, please note the emphasis upon the action of the disciple. For Jesus does not say that you will be blessed if you have these things done to you [which is of course true but not the point] but rather that you will be blessed if you yourself do such things to others. True joy and happiness is always linked to obedience, to the doing of God's Word.

Do you desire to obey God? Do you desire to be blessed by God? Then follow the pattern of the Savior who calls you to reflect upon who He is and what it is He has done to you. Pursuit the example of the Savior who calls you to respond to His call by serving others in humble, sacrificial love. And finally, rejoice that you have a part with Christ, being His servant, His slave and you get to not only know what it is that the Savior had done to you, but that you also get to do to others even as Jesus has done to you. Let us reflect, respond and rejoice in the person, the work and assigned duty of our Lord Jesus Christ; to His glory and to the benefit of His people. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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