

September 28, 2019 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
John 13 The Church's Model of Mission by Andy McDonald

For the years they had been together, Jesus had taught his disciples.

They had heard confusing parables that sometimes required more unfolding from Jesus.

They had watched him work,
 care,
 heal,
 restore,
 listen,
 set free,
 confront demons,
 deal with opposition of respected religious
 authorities.

They had laughed, conversed, shared many meals, and wept together.

John tells us of three occasions where he writes about it not yet being Jesus hour. To his mother's sharing information about the shortage of wine at the wedding, Jesus responded, "my hour has not yet come." (2:4) In the temple teaching the opposition wanted to arrest him but didn't John writes, "because his hour had not yet come." (7:30) And just a chapter later his radical teaching totally offended the authorities, and yet no one arrested him "because his hour had not yet come." (8:20)

But when we come to chapter 13 in John's gospel and it begins with this amazing verse: "Now before the Feast of 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." (13:1)

The atmosphere in that upper room must have been electric. Jesus recent resurrection of Lazarus and then Jesus riding the colt of donkey, coming into Jerusalem as a king to be crowned, finally everything seems to be coming together.

For his disciples there is relief and excitement.

All the sacrifice.

The time away from family and friends trekking around Israel.

All the insults.

The derision of the religious leaders.

The doubting friends.

The wait has been worth it. Jesus is about to set up his kingdom, send Rome packing, re-establish Israel to its destined position on top, and the twelve men in the room are anticipating what they imagine to be good days ahead: having servants and people to obey their wishes and do as they command! They are about to step from the ranks of the powerless to positions of power.

Certainly Jesus was disappointed as he understands what they are thinking? For 3 ½ years he's shared life and ministry and teaching with these guys, but they haven't gotten it. Satan has already put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. What can Jesus do to refocus the twelve?

As they come into that upper room they jockey for the best seats. Each one looking out for his own interests.

Jesus waits. He lets the self-focused atmosphere hang in the air. Then, during supper, Jesus has one of those confirming mental moments. He knows. He recognizes that the Father has given all things into his hands. He is aware that he has come from God and is going to God.

And it is in this moment of awareness that his mission will be accomplished. In this moment of remembering who he is from all eternity. He quietly gets up from the table. He is about to reveal what God is like. He is about to demonstrate how God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, behaves. In just a moment of personal demonstration he will put

the truth up against Satan's lie that God is a power monger. That God is about lording over.

He quietly gets up from the table. He takes off his outer robe, ties a towel around himself, pours water into a basin and begins to wash the disciple's feet and wipe them with the towel around his waist.

Just moments before as they had entered the room each disciple had noticed the absence of a servant. They realized this courtesy was needed and had been neglected. They had given each other glances that said, "I'm not going to do it you do it," and there had been return gestures that clearly communicated "Do it yourself!" But none made a move. Until. . .

Until the God become man got up from the table, took off his outer robe, tied a towel around himself, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples feet and wipe them with the towel.

The first disciples he served were so shocked as to not know how to react. But by the time he gets to Peter, Peter was about to explode. This isn't in his mind what the Messiah does. And he asked, "Lord are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus didn't answer with just a yes or no. He said, "You do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter was pretty sure he understood at that very moment. All of his expectations about Jesus are banging around in his head. This doesn't fit. This isn't what kings do. This isn't, in his mind, what Messiah is about. God incarnate in Peter's story line just doesn't do this kind of thing. And he shoots back at Jesus, "You will never wash my feet."

What will Jesus do? Will he argue with Peter? Will he insist on washing his feet? Will he just skip him and move to the next disciple? None of these is the right response. What is happening in that upper room right then is way too important. So he seeks to motivate Peter. So Jesus says, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me!"

That did it for Peter. Maybe it was his love for being with Jesus. Maybe it was his dream of having a share in the new kingdom about to be established. If he has to be washed to have a share then he's all in. "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

I imagine Jesus smiled, maybe chuckled as he said, "Oh Peter. When someone takes a bath to get ready for a special event, when they arrive they don't need another bath. They just need to wash the dust from their feet. With their feet washed they are entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." He knew Judas plan.

Beyond the voices of Peter and Jesus the room was eerily quiet. Leaving Peter and moving on around the table the silence was deafening. Jesus finished, put down the basin, put on his robe and returned to his place at the table and Jesus rescues them from the painful silence with this question.

"Do you know, do you understand what I have done to you?" He knew they didn't! Anyone of them who would have opened their mouth would have gotten it wrong. Mercifully he didn't wait for any to attempt a response. He would answer his own question.

And what he's about to explain is that what he's just done is to concretely demonstrate to them and to all who love Jesus, both the mission and the strategy of the church, his body.

Here is a demonstrative picture of what glory looks like in the kingdom of God.

It isn't having the top place.

It isn't sitting on a throne to rule somebody.

It isn't about being a special remnant.

It isn't about having the truth.

It isn't about knowing all the right answers.

It isn't about obeying all the rules.

This night in this upper room the method is the message. David Johnson writes: “In washing of the disciples’ feet Jesus chooses to empty himself rather than to promote himself. This act of humble service and submission is the church’s model of mission into the world.”

The mission of our local church is loving people into a lifelong friendship with God, and this story is telling us how to love. To love is to serve and to serve is to love. Loving this way goes against the grain of our humanity. No one seeks last place. None of us volunteer to be servants and slaves.

Yet, the heart of love is readiness to serve. And Jesus this night in the upper room presented the strategy for building his kingdom. The strategy is to set self aside and serve another. And the genius of it is that everyone can do it.

Whether you’re a little child or an ancient adult.

Whether your position is at the top of your organization or you are the lowest paid employee.

Whether you have degree letters behind your name or you can’t read.

Whether you are male or female,

Regardless of ethnicity or nationality...

WE ALL CAN SERVE ANOTHER!

But just because we can serve another doesn’t insure we will. Peter’s response when Jesus came to him tells us something about Peter and something about ourselves. Peter had his own agenda, his own idea of what Jesus should be and what Jesus should do.

What will take place in the next few minutes around that table, talk of betrayal, calling the bread his body broken, the wine his blood poured for them. Peter’s denial predicted.

These didn't fit the disciples agenda for Jesus. Still they have no idea the level of Jesus self-sacrificing serving of humanity that will take place by this same time tomorrow night.

Jesus wanted them to get it. To recognize his call. To know the identifying mark of one of his followers. He's shown it. Demonstrated it. So now he tries it as command. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

Jesus says clearly that this mark, this practice, this behavior, this attitude, this loving of others is the way everyone will know, it is the evidence that we are disciples of Jesus, if we have love for one another.

This may warm our hearts and feel good to think about...until we recognize how it challenges the very root of sin in us, our pride.

Jesus is setting a high bar. One we may admire but one which our pride makes it impossible to clear.

In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "I want to be my own law. I have a right to myself, my hatred and my desires, my life and my death. The mind and flesh of man are set on fire by pride; for it is precisely in his wickedness that man wants to be as God."

What are our expectations of God that don't match up with who God is? Any expectations that God in anyway will affirm our pride? Pander to our selfishness. Give us a skip-bo to not be like him.

Jesus said that he didn't come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. And just as the Father sent him into the world to serve and give his life as a ransom for many so he sends us into the world to serve and give our lives as a ransom for many.

Jesus calls us his church his body—the body of Christ. And here is part of the joy of coming to the Lord's table. No separated, amputated

part of the body can survive, can love, can serve alone. It happens as part of the body. And so as we come to this table today, as we share the one loaf, as we participate in the shared wine we are united as one body to love to serve people so they join in a lifelong friendship with God.

Imagine what might be if we could come together in unity that Jesus is the savior, he calls us to love, and there is a glorious future and then simply live our lives loving each other and loving people everywhere into a lifelong friendship with God. And because we loved which means because we served God's table grows in size to make room for

all of God's new friends



What do you think would have been the best part of being one of the twelve disciples of Jesus?

What do you think would have been one of the worst parts or hardest parts of being one of the twelve disciples of Jesus?

How do you think you would have reacted when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead?

When have things not worked out as you expected? After Lazarus is raised and there's the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, what do you imagine were the expectations of the disciples?

How have you felt in an awkward social situation? How do you think the disciples felt with no servant to wash feet?

Do you think it felt better or worse when Jesus started washing feet? Why?

What is it that Jesus wants us to do? John 17:18

How is loving people the same as serving people and vice versa?

How can we help each other love people?

How will you intentionally serve someone today? This week?



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