

# INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE

## *PART 1 - HE SERVED US FIRST<sup>1</sup>*

"He who wraps the heavens in clouds wrapped round himself a towel. He who pours the water into the rivers and pools tipped water into a basin. And he before whom every knee bends in heaven and on earth and under the earth knelt to wash the feet of his disciples." Severian of Gabala (AD 400)

During His last meal with His disciples, as they celebrated the Passover together, Jesus got up from the table and did something absolutely no one expected. He took off his outer garments and wrapped a towel around His waist, exactly how a servant would have dressed. Then, he bent down and began to wash the feet of each of His disciples, even the one that would betray Him.

Right before Jesus stooped to wash His disciples feet, John first tells us what Jesus "knew." Jesus knew who He was, He knew where He was going, He knew all authority had been given to Him. Secure in His identity and purpose, He then gives Himself to serve. He didn't serve us because He wanted to be needed by us or out of some attempt to pay a debt. He served out of a secure relationship with His Father, loved and full of purpose.

When we have received Jesus' love and His unmerited service to us, then we are secure and we know who we are: beloved children of God. This frees us to turn towards those around us and offer our lives freely without expecting anything in return. Instead of needing to be needed or attempting to repay a debt, we have all we need and can give ourselves away. Service is an overflow of abiding with Christ and one of the primary fruits that shows up when we are attached to Jesus, the Vine.

So, do you know who you are? Do you know you are loved? Are you secure in how the Father feels about you? Are you free to give yourself away in hiddenness, without receiving anything in return, because you already have all you need?

As Jesus made His way from one foot to the next, imagine how uncomfortable each disciple felt as the Messiah crawled around the floor wiping filth from their feet. He then came to Peter, and in true Peter fashion, Peter said out loud what every one of them is thinking:

"Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." (John 13:6-8a)

"This isn't right! The Messiah can't wash our feet!" Peter, and the others with him, were uncomfortable with the idea of receiving this kind of service from Jesus. They felt embarrassed for Jesus and humiliated. How could their King stoop down to do something so menial?! Receiving service like this assaulted their pride. It exposed how dirty they were and how needy. They could not cleanse themselves, they needed the King of the universe to kneel on the dirt floor and cleanse them.

Jesus answered him, "If I do not 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!" (John 13:8b-9)

Jesus' response revealed that unless they received His service to them, then they had no share with Him. He literally said, "If I can't wash you, you can't have me!" Remember, this wasn't about dirty feet. It was a picture of what they truly needed: forgiveness of their sins and a righteousness that was not their own. Unless they saw how sinful they were and their need to be cleansed, they couldn't have Jesus. And when Peter saw this, He responded beautifully: "Wash all of me!"

Before the disciples had anything to offer the world, they needed to first be served. Just like their filthy feet, they needed to be cleansed from their sin and washed clean. In order to have Jesus, they first needed to receive His service and love.

Last quarter, we focused on being with Jesus through the practice of Bible Reading. This quarter, we will focus on becoming like Jesus through the practice of service to others. We cannot become more like Jesus, the suffering Servant, unless we are willing to give our lives in service to others. Yet, what this story makes clear is that before we go to serve others, we must first receive Jesus' service and love for us. Will you submit to the King of the Universe crouching down in the dirt to wash your filthy feet? Will you humble yourself to receive His love?

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<sup>1</sup>This reading is based on Spiritual Formation Guides written by Ken Flower and Amy Latrop at Doxa Church