



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 13: 1-17

John

"The Sovereign Servant"

TRANSCRIPT

We are in John 13 this morning. We begin that chapter, and in beginning John 13, we begin a new section of the Gospel of John. The Lord's public ministry has ended, in which the Lord did miracles. John records seven of them, seven signs that attest to His deity, which is the theme of this book. Now, the Lord turns His attention to His disciples. He moves from His public ministry to a private ministry in the last hours of His life, and it begins with an amazing expression of His love for them, and illustration of His ministry for His whole people upon the cross. We read now:

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would 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, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my

feet, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

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? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 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. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and bless our time of study together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to be here, grateful for Your goodness, grateful for the opportunity to come together, to read the Scriptures and study them. What a blessing it is, Father, as we consider that You gave us this record, an inerrant record of the life of Your Son, faithfully recorded by the apostle John. We thank You for him, we thank You for the Spirit of God who kept the pages of this text free of error, and that we have this picture of Jesus Christ, this amazing picture of Him, a king of kings kneeling before His disciples to wash their feet. Father, help us to truly see Jesus in this picture, to appreciate what we see in Him and what this represents, what it represents in the illustration it gives of His work for us on the cross and what He has done for us, what He is doing for us, and what it means for us as an example to us and how we're to serve one another. Father, to truly be servants of one another, we must first understand who Christ is and what He's done, and appreciate that, and have that affect us as it is intended to. And so, we pray, Lord, that You would use this time to teach us, and change us, and make us like Your Son, that we might act like Your Son, and be servants to those around us. We thank You for the privilege to read this text and study it together, and we look to You to bless us. May the Spirit of God open our eyes to see and understand. Father, You've blessed us in so many ways. You blessed us with Your word, and with this picture of our Lord. You have blessed us spiritually with life that's eternal in Him. We can't fathom all that You've given us.

And You've given us much in the material realm as well. You've blessed us with health, and with possessions. Sometimes, those are taken away, but only for our good. Still, those are difficult times, and we pray for those who are sick, those who are going through difficulties. We pray for those whose names are listed on our prayer requests. We pray for those who are discouraged by the experiences of life. Encourage them. May the Spirit of God help them through those difficulties and give them strength.

Thank You Father for the time that we spend together this evening, the opportunity we have to worship You and to give thanks for the coming of Your Son and the death that He died in our place, to remember that tonight. Bring us here this evening to do that. Bless those who participate. Bless all of us in whatever way we participate, that we would be sanctified and blessed through our remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You, Father, that He who came the first time is going to come a second time, and He'll make everything right when He comes. He'll bring His kingdom, establish it in this world, and bring with Him His reward. May we live for that day, not live for this present time in this present evil age, but live for Him, and live for the future. Bless us to that end this morning as we study together. Bless us now as we sing our final hymn. May it prepare our hearts well for our study together. We pray in Christ's name.

[Message] People often like to claim a word or a phrase as their motto, as what expresses their character or principle of conduct. Clans and royal families all have mottos. For example, the motto of the Prince of Wales is "I serve." That is a good motto, though I wonder how many monarchs have lived up to it. I know this: the greatest monarch of all, the king of kings did. And He gave His disciples a lesson in serving the last night of His life when He knelt before them and washed their feet. Then He gave them an evening of instruction which ranks as some of the most important teaching in the Bible. The Upper Room Discourse, or the Farewell Discourse as it is sometimes called is the title of the next chapters that we will study in John's gospels, chapters 13 through 17.

They divide into three sections. The first section is the Lord's act of love and Judas's act of betrayal in chapter 13. And then, a second is the Lord's final discourses, His teaching to the eleven disciples, minus Judas. That is in chapters 14 through 16.

And then the third section is chapter 17 with the Lord's high priestly prayer. This division of the gospel, this section, is unique to John. There's nothing like it in the other gospel accounts. Matthew devotes 11 verses to the instruction that the Lord gave in that evening. Mark gives 10. Luke gives 25. But John devotes four chapters to it. The other gospels tell us that Jesus instituted the Lord's supper at the Passover meal, but John says nothing about that.

Instead, what we read is that the Lord speaks about His departure from this world, speaks of heaven and the Father and the Holy Spirit. He teaches about the spiritual life, and about spiritual fruit, how we bear that fruit. He speaks of peace, and He speaks of love. This is one of the major themes of this portion of Scripture. Our love for one another and His undying love for us. That is how this great portion of Scripture begins. Having loved His own who were in the world, John says, He loved them to the end. The end had come. Jesus knew that. The nation had rejected Him. We've already been prepared for that, if we've been reading through the Gospel of John. John prepares us for that at the very beginning in chapter 1 and verse 11 when he writes that Jesus came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. And so, in the few hours that remain before His arrest and crucifixion, He concentrates on the few who had received Him, those who are now called His own. They were His own by His Father's gift to Him. They had been given to Him. They were His own because they had come to Him. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, they had been convicted of sin, they had been led to repentance in faith. They had come to the Lord Jesus Christ. They were His sheep, whom He had brought out of the sheepfold of Judaism, as He would bring out multitudes from the sheepfold of the Gentiles. They had heard His voice, the voice of the good shepherd, and they had followed Him.

They were His own by redemption. He would go to the cross for them. He would pay the price for their sin in His own blood, and in that way, He would purchase them for Himself. He would purchase their salvation. All believers in Jesus Christ are included in the number of His own. He has loved us always. He loved His disciples. During His ministry, He had lived selflessly for them, and now with the end coming, John writes, He loved them to the end.

That phrase, "to the end," is a bit difficult to pin down because it can mean more than one thing. It can mean that He loved them to the very end of His life, or

that He loved them to the fullest extent, to the uttermost. Some commentators suggest that the ambiguity in the phrase is intentional so that we'll see both meanings in that expression. But either way, the Lord's love for His disciples was unyielding. It was to the very end, and it was to the fullest extent, as it was demonstrated there at the cross where He died for them, died for all His people. His love for them, His love for us never fails. He loved them absolutely with a love that never ends, and knowing that He would soon be departing this world to the father, He took the last evening of His life to prepare them for that with some instruction.

Now that in itself is a great illustration of His love and His concern for them, because the cross is looming before Him. He sees it. He's already beginning to feel the effects of that. His soul, His spirit has been deeply troubled. And now, He's closer to it. In a few hours, He will be arrested; in a few more hours, He will be nailed to the cross where He will suffer the pain and the indignity of the crucifixion. But not only physical pain, but the spiritual suffering, infinite suffering. And yet with all of that before Him, and with all of that weighing upon Him, He did not sequester Himself. He did not go off by Himself to meditate. He gave Himself to His disciples. He thought nothing of Himself. He thought everything of them. He gives them instruction to prepare them for that hour. So, He gives instruction, and instruction that is introduced with an amazing act of humility and service that illustrates the sacrifice that He will make for them on the cross, the purification ministry that He will give to them. And also in that, giving them an example of the service that they were to render to one another. During the Passover meal, He got up from the table, got down on His knees, and He washed the feet of His disciples. All of them. Even Judas' feet, whom John reminds us, was there and was there plotting the Lord's betrayal and death.

The devil, John writes, had already put into the heart of Judas to betray Him. Now there is another translation of that, probably a better translation because it's based on the best texts of the Greek manuscripts, and that is that the devil put it into his own heart. That is, the devil put it into the devil's heart to use Judas, and that is probably the meaning here, so that the idea is that the devil had already made up his mind that Judas Iscariot should be used as his tool in the betrayal of Jesus.

But either way, Judas was now in league with the devil. He was among the Lord's own, but he was not of the Lord's own. He was a spiritual stranger in the room

that night. The contrast between the two, the contrast between Jesus and Judas is a stark one, and we should see that. The humble, sacrificial love of Jesus against the selfish pride of Judas. The love and the faithfulness of our Lord to the end, against the treachery and the betrayal of Judas there at the end. The character of God versus the character of the devil in the world. The Lord loved His own who were in the world, John said, but they were not of the world. They were in the world, but they were not a part of the world.

Judas, on the other hand, was of the world. And his conduct is expressive of the spirit of this world. The world looks out for itself. The man or the woman of this world seeks to promote himself or herself, to exalt himself above others. Christ is the opposite. Christ humbles Himself and serves, and He did so knowing full well who He is. He knew, John says in verse 3, that the "Father had given all things into His hands." He knows who He is. He knows that He is the eternal Son of God. He knows, as John says, that He has come from God, and that He is going back to God. He is an eternal person who has come on a mission, and that mission is about to be completed. He knows who He is. He knows His authority. He knows that He has full authority over the world, authority over the universe itself, knows what's taking place around Him, knows that Judas will betray Him, knows that Peter will deny Him, knows that all of the disciples will forsake him. Nevertheless, John writes in verse 4, that Jesus "got up from the supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself."

The king of kings, dressed Himself like a household servant, and began to do the task of a servant. Poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

Now, it's hard for us to understand the impact that this must have had on the disciples. We're so familiar with this scene that it seems acceptable to us, but it was not at all acceptable to them. Teachers, rabbis, were men of great dignity. They were men who are very much elevated in the minds of others, and they didn't do things like this. This was slave's work. Beneath the dignity of a teacher. It was reserved for the lowliest of menial servants. In fact, some insisted that Jewish servants should not wash the feet of other Jews. That was to be reserved for Gentile slaves. So when He began this menial task, this humble act, this humble work, they were shocked. They were speechless.

I had an experience some years ago that gave me a sense of what these disciples must've thought and seen, a sense of what was going on in that room that night. I was in New York City in the office of a brokerage firm. It was next to the World Trade Center. It looked out on the Hudson Bay and the Statue of Liberty. It was an impressive place, filled with investors sitting at their computers watching the numbers of the stock exchange going across the screen, talking on telephones, very busy men. I was the only one in there that wasn't busy. I wasn't there doing any kind of business. I was there visiting an acquaintance, and I had some free time before I left for the airport. So I just sat there and I watched what was happening.

I was behind one young, well-dressed man, a friendly guy, who had recently graduated from a college up East. He was working at his computer when a young man, a man about his same age came in to shine his shoes. The broker had scheduled an appointment to have his shoes shined, but the man was late, so when he arrived, the broker looked at him indignantly, long enough to scold him for being tardy. He felt that his shoes needed to be shined 30 minutes earlier, I guess.

Well, the man quietly apologized and began to shine his shoes, and the broker went back to work. Didn't give the man another thought. It was clear that he considered himself to be a man of class. He had an education. He was doing important work. He was dealing with millions of dollars, whereas this other man was earning just a few dollars working for chump change. And I couldn't help but notice the contrast between these two. And as I thought about that, the thought entered my mind: do you think there's any chance that that young broker would have gotten up from his desk, rolled up his sleeves, and shined the shoes of that other man? Or shined the shoes of any of his coworkers? Not a chance. No more than the disciples would have washed one another's' feet. They were too dignified to do that, and to do that would have been a submissive act to others. It would have suggested that others were greater than they were. In fact, Luke records that when the supper began, they were arguing over which one of them was the greatest. That's what's on their mind as this supper unfolded. They were full of self-importance.

And so, the Lord took the place of the servant. He did for them what they should've done for Him and began to wash their feet. It was an act of service, but it was more than that. It was an illustration, a kind of parable in which He acted out the service that He would perform for them on the cross in His work of salvation, His

work of purification. In fact, this was a graphic illustration of what Paul said the Lord did at His incarnation when He entered this world. In Philipians chapter 2, verses 6 and 7, he writes that He who existed in the form of God, the very nature of God, the second person of the Trinity, the one who existed in the form of God emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant.

We see that here. He got up from supper. He left the place of preeminence at the table. And at His incarnation, He left the throne of glory. In the upper room, He laid aside His garments. Paul says that when He came into this world, He laid aside His glory. He emptied Himself. He made Himself nothing. He did that by taking the form of a bondservant, and here we see, and we read that He took a towel and He girded Himself. He dressed Himself like a household slave. Then He did the work of a servant, washing the disciples' feet with water, which is a picture of what He would do a few hours later when He shed His blood on the cross to wash away our sins.

All of this was being illustrated in the Lord's humble act of service, but the disciples understood none of what was happening. They were lying there around the table, that's how they did it in the ancient oriental societies. They reclined on pallets around a low table. They would rest on one arm, usually their left elbow, and leave their right hand free to take food. Their legs were extended out from the table, and there they were reclining, watching all of this take place in stunned silence as Jesus began His work.

They didn't know what to say. They didn't know how to react. They were probably embarrassed for Him and embarrassed for themselves. Very uncomfortable what was happening. Then Peter broke the silence and spoke His feelings when Jesus came to Him. He objected. "Lord," he said, "do You wash my feet?" Now, in the original text, there is a strong emphasis on the contrast. Literally, it is "You, my?" So, we could translate it: "Lord, do You, my feet, wash?" He couldn't believe it. He was astounded that this was taking place. The Lord explained to Peter that he didn't understand what was taking place, but that he would later understand, referring to the time of His resurrection and the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God would be given who would explain all things and lead them into all truth. In the meantime, Peter was to submit. He was to submit in faith to what the Lord was doing.

Now, that was good advice for Peter. That's good advice for us, because very frequently, we come to texts in the Bible, or we may be introduced to a doctrine of

Scripture that we don't understand. Maybe it troubles us because it goes contrary to what we normally think in our view of things. The way to respond to that is not by rejecting it because it doesn't fit with our way of thinking. Take what the Scripture teaches and hold onto it. Wait upon the Lord. Pray for insight. Pray for understanding, and the Lord will give that in His time. But the way to deal with something that we do not understand is not to reject it. It's to wait on the Lord, and that's what the Lord was instructing Peter to do, to trust Him, to wait.

That wasn't good enough for Peter. He could only see the Lord's act in a social sense, not in a spiritual sense. And to Peter, it was beneath the Lord's station. It was completely unthinkable, what He was doing. And so He continued to protest, and protest very strongly, verse 8. "Never shall You wash my feet!" Now, that was a well-meant protest, one that Peter no doubt thought was being given in a spirit of humility and reverence. But whatever humility he had, he also had enough pride to dictate to his Lord and master, to tell the Lord Jesus what He would and would not do, to inform Him of what was proper and what was not proper. So, he acted in pride and he acted in ignorance. The Lord told him he was ignorant of what was taking place, but Peter insisted that he knew better. But in acting in ignorance and making the objection that he did, he was unwittingly declaring that he didn't need the washing that only the Lord Jesus Christ can give. He was denying the need of the Lord's purifying ministry.

And so, the Lord calmly but firmly replied, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." That does not say, "You have no part in Me," because Peter is already in Him. But He says, "You have no part with Me." Meaning, you have no communion with Me, no fellowship, no part in My ministry. That got Peter's attention, and so he said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." In other words, give me a complete bath. Wash me all over then, if that's what I would be missing. Peter's like a pendulum. He's always swinging from one extreme to another. He truly loved the Lord. I think that's expressed in this in a misguided way, but it was that. It was misguided. His expression of love, his expression of reverence to the Lord was one that lacked understanding. It was zeal without knowledge.

And so, the Lord again corrects him patiently and replies, "That's not necessary. He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean."

The picture here is taken from the Orient. Before going to another person's home for dinner, the Oriental would first bathe completely, take a complete bath, and then would walk to the friend's house. But as he walked along the road, his open sandals would pick up dust, and he would arrive with dirty feet that needed to be washed. Not the whole body; just the feet needed to be washed, and that's a picture of the Christian. The believer in Jesus Christ has been bathed completely. Every believer in Jesus Christ has been justified once and for all, completely forgiven of our sins, past, present, future. We don't need to be born again all over. That can't be. That is once and for all. Believer in Jesus Christ has been born again, having believed in Christ, he or she has been justified once and for all. It is an instantaneous act. It is complete, it is forever. We are new creatures in Jesus Christ. We can never be unborn. We can never be unjustified. That is permanent. But we still live in the world. We need daily cleansing from the defilements of sin that we pick up on our walk through this world, in order to have open and free fellowship with the Lord.

This occurs through sanctification. That's what the Lord is speaking of here. The Lord's continual ministry of renewing our hearts, the work that our Lord performs through the Holy Spirit, in which He gives spiritual growth, He increases the new life within us, then holy disposition which He has implanted within our new hearts, creating with us new attitudes, the fruit of the Spirit, humility, a desire for holiness. That's the work of the spirit of God, but we have a part in that, and our part comes through study. It comes through obedience. It comes through the regular confession of sin.

Now, John develops that later on in another book, in 1 John chapter 1 and verse 9 where he writes, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Well, that word that he uses there, "confess," is in the present tense, and it has what's called a durative force. In other words, it is a continual practice of confession that he is speaking of. Now, as you know, 1 John is written to give us the tests of life. In other words, to inform those to whom he was writing, and to inform them of the characteristics of the Child of God. And one of those characteristics is this: that he or she does not hide his or her sin from the Lord, but rather confesses it. That is a characteristic of a vital relationship with the Lord. It is a relationship that is open, it is earnest, it is honest. That is what the Lord was requiring of Peter.

It's what He requires of us. Because every day, we come in contact with the defilements of this world. We are soiled by them, as it were. We become polluted by sin. It affects us continually, and we must deal with it immediately and not allow sin to take root in our hearts, not allow it to become a habit of life. We bring that before God. We live in submission to His work, confessing our sins and our failures. And in that way, as Arthur Pink stated, we put our feet in the hands of Christ for cleansing. And that way we have a vigorous spiritual life, a vital relationship with Him. We are in Him, we are connected with Him. We receive His life and His life changing ministry so that in that way, through that open and free relationship with Him, we become fruitful in our service for Him.

So, a complete bath wasn't necessary. Peter and all of the disciples were clean. The Lord assures them of that, but then adds: not all of you. He was speaking of Judas, who though a disciple, had never been regenerated, was with the Lord in that room, and associated with Him, but not in union with Christ, not in Him. That's a sobering thought, that a person could be with Christ for some three years, benefit from His life and teaching, even serve with His disciples and not be saved. It shows that a person can be religious, a person can be under the best teaching, be associated with the people of God, even see miracles, as Judas did. In fact, Judas participated in the miracles when he was sent out with the disciples. And yet, be unrepentant and not born again. That's a sobering thought. That was the reality with Judas, and in saying all of this, the Lord was making it very clear that He knew what was happening in that room. Not just in the externals, the events that were unfolding, but what was taking place within the hearts of the men that were there. He knew their hearts. He knew who they were. He makes that clear.

And then following this conversation with Peter, He again takes His place at the table, and He begins to explain to them what He had done. He asks, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." Now, in saying that, He moves from the theological meaning of that to the practical outworking of it. The theological meaning of all of this, He's explained, it has to do with His ministry to them. It has to do with His purifying ministry of them. But that has a practical outworking, and now He tells them: they're to emulate that. They're to follow His example. They're to do this.

Now, that raises the question of what exactly does He mean? Does He mean that we are to literally wash the feet of others? Some have understood the Lord's words to mean that. There are groups and denominations that practice foot washing as a Christian sacrament, on a par, on a level with baptism and the Lord's supper. On the Thursday before Easter, popes, bishops, princes have often washed the feet of junior clergymen and washed the feet of paupers to commemorate the Lord's action. They've taken it as an ordinance of the church. But it's very unlikely that the Lord intended His act to become an ordinance. First of all, because nowhere else in the New Testament is it treated as an ordinance like baptism. Paul does mention foot washing in 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 10 in reference to widows, but that was in a day when it was a very practical thing to do this.

It was a good deed to do that. It had practical values, and it is one of a list of good deeds that qualified a widow to be included on the support list of the church. So if that's reason for taking foot washing as an ordinance of the church, then I guess we'd have to include all of the other good deeds as ordinance as well, and that would not follow. Secondly, and more importantly, the point of the Lord's instruction is not really what a person does. It's what a person is. It's the motive behind what they do, and His instruction here is about humility. He is commending to these men service to others that begins in the heart, that is genuine. Zeal for the Lord's work is good. It's important to have a zeal for winning souls to Christ. It's important to be earnest and diligent in teaching the Word of God and teaching it correctly and purely, and it's important to be helping the saints in anything that we can do. But all of that, regardless of how much zeal is behind it, is empty, absolutely empty, if it's done in arrogance, and if it's done in pride. The Lord desires a humble heart. He desires a broken and a contrite heart. He desires that we serve others out of love for Him and love for them, with a disinterested activity, simply because we love them and love Him. What He did in washing His disciples' feet was an example, He says. It's an example. It's an illustration of that service. We are to be humble and take the servant's role, and He enforces that with the statement that if He, the master, the teacher, the one whom they recognized as their Lord; if He did this, well, how much more should they do? That they who recognized themselves as His servants. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God, James tells us, is to visit orphans and widows in their distress. It is to help the helpless. It is to look out for them. It's the

service that is active. But he also adds: it is to keep oneself undefiled by the world, to avoid sin. And serving also involves helping people to do that, to help them in their restoration, having fallen, having stumbled, having sinned, to bring them back.

All of that is involved in this kind of service, of seeking out the best for the other person, serving people, helping them in the material matters of life, and helping them in the spiritual matters as well. And it can take many different forms. It can happen in many different ways. It can be as simple as a husband helping his wife do the dishes in the evening, or taking her out to dinner, or a parent helping a child with his or her homework, or a student helping another student with homework. The list is endless of the things that we can do. The Lord doesn't deal with that, though. He doesn't give us a list of things to do. He doesn't give us the details of how we are to wash one another's feet. He gives the principle of conduct in His example. And it is to be applied broadly.

What He does do is affirm that His example is to be followed, and that following it is the way to happiness, true happiness. Verse 16 and 17. "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. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." How completely contrary that is to what the world says. It tells us that the way to happiness, the way to fulfillment is by self-seeking, by self-indulgence, by getting and spending. That's the way you're really going to be happy, to be a consumer.

But Christ says happiness comes not by spending on self, but by spending on others. It is in serving; it is not in being served. That's what our Lord came to do. Not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life for ransom for many. And to lay stress on this service, He begins His statement by saying, "Truly, truly." In other words, He takes note that the things that He is saying are very much different from what the world says, that His teaching here, His instruction is foreign to the spirit of this age. It's not what we get from this age. It's not what we learn from this age. This is something different. And so He says, "Pay close attention to this." Truly, truly, I say to you.

Happiness comes in first knowing what to do, and secondly, in doing it. It's not enough to hear. It's not enough to know. We must act upon the knowledge that we have. But knowledge is necessary. It's not all about action. This is about knowledge as well. And what these things are that we should know is what Jesus has

said, that He is Lord, and that His example is to be followed. Christ is our law, and our thoughts and behavior are to be patterned after His. When they are, He assures us that we will be blessed, that we will be happy in the truest sense of happiness. Not so much because of what we do, but because of what we are. Christ served because He was a servant. He wasn't a servant because of what He did. He did what He did because He was a servant. He was the perfect servant. He was the sovereign servant. That sounds like a contradiction, a sovereign servant, the king who serves, but that is what Christ was. He came into this world to serve. And He did it wisely. He did it graciously. He did it naturally.

This was not an unnatural thing for Him to do. That night in the upper room, there was a real need. The disciples' feet hadn't been washed, and they needed to be washed, but there was no servant to do it. And so, He did it. He did it gladly. He saw the opportunity, and He took it without complaint, because He was a servant. That was His heart. That was His character. This was a natural expression of who and what He is. And when we become that, when we become like Christ, then we serve naturally. We see opportunities because we have the eyes of a servant and we take those opportunities. And that is the happy person. That is the blessed person, the person who is like Christ.

To say that Christ is our law is to say much more than His conduct is the standard for our conduct. His character, His motives, His being is our standard. He emptied Himself, Paul told the Philippians. He became a servant. He put us ahead of Himself willingly, gladly, joyfully. That's what we're to do for one another.

That's not natural for us to do. That's very much the contrary, just the opposite of what we do naturally. Our inclination is to look out for ourselves. Our inclination is to consider our personal interests as far more important than the personal interests of other people. And so we seek our own happiness first; we seek our own security first. We live for self, in other words.

That's the opposite of what our Lord did. That is the natural course of things, but it is the opposite of what our Lord did. We are to live in a very different way: to live not for self, but to live for others. But if we do, when we do, I should say, because we all do this. This is characteristic of all of us. We have everything in our lives orbit around ourselves. When we do that, that does produce certain results,

results that we want. It gains for us some advantages, some happiness, but nothing that is full, nothing that's lasting.

James Boyce illustrated the point from astronomy. In the early days before Copernicus, the model of the universe was based on the Ptolemaic system, which imagined that the world was the center of the universe. The sun, the planets, the stars, they all revolved around the Earth. Now, it wasn't a completely deficient system. It could predict the sunrise, the sunset, new moons, and to some extent, the course of the planets. But it was not always accurate. And in attempting to adjust the system in order to chart the planets, the system broke down. It didn't allow for progress. It didn't allow for a greater understanding of the universe. All the new discoveries that were made were always against it. The difficulty with the system was the first principle. The sun, as we know, is the center of the solar system. When that was learned, there were new discoveries, there was progress. In fact, the universe opened up to us.

Now, we can find a parallel to that in our spiritual lives. Those who live as though they are the center of their spiritual universe, that everything must orbit around them; well, they may have some results. They may find some pleasure, some happiness. They may gain some wealth, some prestige, some prominence, some pleasure in life. But they gain nothing that lasts. Eventually, that way of life breaks down. Happiness and fulfillment eludes them. It must. Because it's not living life the way life is to be lived. It's not living life according to the reality of things. It is when God's grace corrects them, and they understand that their lives orbit around Christ, whether they like it or not. Then, they live with reality. Then, they live as life was intended to be lived. Then, life truly opens up for them. He is Lord, and a fruitful life can only be lived in obedience and submission to Him. Lived in obedience and submission to His example of service in a selfless life.

So, Christ should be the study of our lives. We should be learning from Him and learning much from Jesus Christ, and patterning our lives after Him. Robert Murray M'Cheyne said many years ago, "It is not great talents that God blesses, so much as great likeness to Jesus." That's true. That should be our desire. The greatest motivation for doing that, for being like our Lord is not the happiness it will bring to us. It will bring fulfillment and happiness. But the greatest motivation of that is the

sacrifice He made for us when the next day, those same hands that wash the disciples' feet were nailed to the cross.

John writes in Revelation chapter 1 verses 5 and 6 that He loosed us, or He released us from our sins by His blood and made us to be a kingdom of priests. Kings and priests to God. That's what we are, by the grace of God, but also servants. Chiefly, servants in this world. That's what the church ought to see in each of us. That's what you should see in me. That's what I should see in each one of you, a servant. And that's what the world should see in the church. May God help us all to see that clearly, and desire to serve Him faithfully, desire not only to act as servants, but first and foremost to be servants, to be as Christ Himself was, and to love one another as Christ Himself did, who loved His own to the end. Because we are His own, because He has made us His own, because we are new creatures in Christ. We can do that, and we will do that, because of what we are, as we live in submission to Him and live in obedience to Him, as we learn from Him and obey Him.

Do you belong to Him? Can you say yes, I am His own? You can, if you have believed in Him, because every believer in Jesus Christ belongs to Jesus Christ. If you've seen yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior, you've turned from what you are and turned to Him and trusted in Him, you are His child. But if you are here without Christ, if you have not believed in Him, you are not His own. I urge you: look to Him, trust in Him, believe in Him. Be bathed with His blood and become clean, free of the guilt of sin, forgiven forever, because of what He did when He paid the price of our sin in His own death. Works are important. Good works, good deeds. They are important. But they are the fruit of the changed life. They are the product of the changed life, if the new life that Christ gives. We can't earn that life. It is a gift of God. We can only receive it by faith. So, if you're here without Christ, look to Him, trust in Him, and receive from Him eternal life. And may all of us have the motto: I serve. Let's stand now for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, what a magnificent picture You have given us of Your Son and what He did that last night of His life as He got up from the supper and got down on His knees and washed the feet of those proud, self-centered men. Father, we're no different than any of them. In an of ourselves, we wouldn't wash anybody's feet or shine anybody's shoes. It's not within us to do that, but it is within the new hearts that

You have given to us. And so Father, we pray that You would continue to sanctify us and draw us close to Yourself, and conform us to the image of Your Son that we might be like Him, that we might be what He is, and then do –