

Jesus in John: The Servant Leader

Good morning KBF,

Welcome to church this morning, it is great to have you here worshipping with us. A big thank you to our worship team for your efforts.

For those who do not know, my name is Lorne Anderson and I am one of the Pastors here at KBF. My family and I just returned last week from visiting our families in Australia so if I haven't met you yet, I am looking forward to connecting soon.

It is great to be back, especially at this time of the year as so many people are returning from summer vacations, or are about to embark on something new. This is especially true for staff and students here at CAJ who have returned this week.

There is always something exciting about starting something new, I used to love the new stationery and new books and pencil cases that would always come with the start of a new school year. To me they symbolised the potential and fresh expectations that I had for what was about to happen! I love that feeling!

Jesus in John

To be honest, I used to love that feeling for about a week. After a while, the new stationery would become 'used' stationery and would start to look worn out. The fresh smell of the new books would increasingly shift into a strange combination of smells from the different foods that had leaked in my backpack and the crisp lines on the pages of my notebook would be filled with doodles that occupied my time when I wasn't listening.

The enthusiasm of what is new does not last very long.

It seemed to happen every year that once school got underway, once all of the illusions of newness had faded, I would realize that the real joy would come from the work, from the learning and accomplishment and success that would be in the hard work.

I wonder if this picture speaks to anyone this morning? Has this feeling ever affected your faith? The feeling of being young in your Christian faith where everything is new? Or feeling the inspiration after a retreat? Or even feeling inspired for the week after a great Church service? Only to feel a little deflated on Tuesday, or after?

In those moments it is important to know how to work. At school or at work it is clear, a teacher or a boss gives you tasks to do and you do them. But, what about in your Faith walk?

I wish I had a dollar for every time that I heard someone say, I wish I knew what God wanted me to do with my life.

I would be a wealthy person. Actually, in reality, I would probably have paid as many dollars as I would receive.

I want to encourage us this morning, to think about what it is that we are called to do. Knowing what we are supposed to do, having our foundation strong, is helpful for making sure that we can move confidently and maturely through the illusionary moments in life.

Before we look at John 13, let us answer that question of what God wants us to do with our lives.

If you have your Bibles, turn to John 6:28

28 Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

29 Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.

There you have it, you shall now always know the answer to the question of what God wants you to do with your life.

This morning we are going to examine Jesus washing the disciples feet. We are in a series called *Jesus in John* where we are in particular looking at the ways in which Jesus inspired service. We are preparing for our ministry fair, where there will be opportunities for everyone to learn about the ministries at KBF and discover where you can get involved. The goal, however, is not to guilt you into service, but rather, shine a light on how Jesus served in order to inspire and equip a more Christlike service - wherever you choose to enact that.

Now, let us see how this plays out practically a little later on!

The Situation (John 13:1)

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Today's reading takes place during the Last Supper. As we note, Jesus knows that his time on earth is coming to a close. The phrase 'loved them to the end' gives us an indication that what is coming is intimate and important. When a person knows that they are about to die, what they do with their last moments says a lot about who they are and what they value. In this situation, we aren't just talking about any person, we are speaking about Jesus! We should treat these passages with particular care.

It is time to leave, and Jesus is going to love them to the end.

Adopting the Garments of Service

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

Again, the importance of the situation is reinforced. Jesus has already been betrayed, however, he knew that all things were under his power.

What an incredible description. All things were under his power. All things were under his power, Jesus knows who He is and where He is going.

Who here would love to confidently know the answers to these questions; Who are you and where are you going? Like know them with every fiber of your being? What would you do with that knowledge?

Confidently and powerfully, Jesus does this, he takes off his outer clothing and wraps a towel around his waist.

During his final moments on earth, Jesus removes the outer garments and adopts the garments of service.

We use clothes to send a message about who we are. It gives us confidence, security, and helps us to signal what group we belong to. It is amazing to me that here in this moment, Jesus is removing those outer garments, those outer symbols, and replaces them with a simple towel. Jesus adopts the garments of service.

Service in the Context of Fellowship

We continue;

5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

It never ceases to amaze me how many of the most important moments in life happen around a dinner table. Conversations with family or friends with a cup of coffee, or over dinner. Secrets are shared, conversations happen, and special occasions are celebrated.

How much service, and I mean true serving of others, heart to heart, how much of that happens in the context of true fellowship. Jesus is going to do some important work here, but he has not called a special prayer meeting, he has not invited people to a talk or a performance, he has not organized a big rally, instead his service happens in the context of fellowship. During the fellowship of a meal he adopts the garments of service, and using what he is wearing, begins serving them intimately by washing their feet. Powerful service happens in the context of Fellowship.

The Importance of Intentionality

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

Simon-Peter is a great character! I wonder how many disciples had already had their feet washed? The sentence, He came to Simon Peter seems to indicate that Peter is not the first, and yet he still asks the silly question

Are you going to wash my feet? Really, Peter? Yes, that is what is going on here. Jesus, to his credit is quite polite about it. He could just say to Peter. Dude, just give me your toes, you can clearly see what is going on here!

It is a funny situation, but it is deeply important. Through this interaction we can see how intentional Christ's service is. Jesus is not just doing this for the sake of it, He is using this moment to teach them something important.

You won't understand now, but when you do, it is going to blow your mind!

We can see Peter's reverence for Jesus here. I would be very uncomfortable if Michael Jordan wanted to wash my feet, partly because of the reverence I have for his accomplishments.

But, if MJ said to me, just let me wash your feet and you'll get to run like me. I think I would be like Peter. Dude, don't just wash me feet. I don't just want to run like you. Wash everything so I can be as much like you as possible! This is kind of like what happens:

9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

While it is a little funny, it is also beautiful. Peter is in many ways, a lot like you and me. He is passionate, jumps to conclusions, and makes mistakes, kind of like you and me. Jesus uses this enthusiasm to teach an important lesson, and here we will see the intentionality of His service. Again, it is not just for fun that Jesus is washing their feet. With *intentionality*, He tells them this important lesson:

10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

There is much to say about these two passages but I don't want to rob you of the enjoyment of praying about these passages and letting the Holy Spirit aid your understanding. If you are curious, let us get coffee this week and chat! What I do want to make sure you don't forget is that; Jesus has adopted the garments of service, he is serving in the context of fellowship and, importantly, he is doing this intentionally!

Answering the Big Question

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.

Remember the question from John 6 that we started with?

“What must we do to do the works God requires?”

And then the answer

“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.

Notice that through His service, Jesus has given them extra information by which they can believe. After serving them by washing their feet, Jesus confirms to the disciples that he is Teacher and Lord. He is who they think he is. Jesus is helping them to do the work that God requires. It is a beautiful model that we should not forget! Jesus uses service to help his disciples understand with more clarity that he, Jesus, is the one that they have sent.

His actions are intimate and intentional, they are highly symbolic and were done even though the disciples may not have immediately understood the significance. It is a brave step to act in such a way. I think that it is no accident that at the start of this passage we are told that “3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.”

The Call to Action (Creating a Model to Follow)

14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

I wonder if they then did this at the last supper, washed each other’s feet?

15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them

To conclude this part of the passage, Jesus leaves them with a call to action. Do not just watch me do these things. Don’t think that I am doing this just for you. I am doing these things so that you will know what to do for others!

The lesson is not complete unless it inspires others to follow it in thought and in action! I love how Jesus has set an example and explicitly encourages them to follow. There are many models of leadership, many models of service and Jesus is making sure that they keep their eyes on him, that they stay true to his example. In the midst of the disciples he

was able to build a beautiful, heavenly moment on earth, one that encouraged the disciples to know Jesus more deeply, and in that moment he reminds them that this gift is not just for them. It is supposed to be a transformative experience, that is a moment so profound that it would change the way in which they interacted with others around them.

Pulling It All Together

This morning we have covered a lot of ground. Let us take a moment to tie it all together.

We are talking about Jesus in John, particularly the way in which Jesus encourages and inspires service.

How do I serve God? What must I do to serve God?

This is the question that we started with, the same question the disciples asked thousands of years ago.

The work of God is this, to believe in the one He has sent. This is the answer Jesus gave and to help us understand how this plays out we looked at the moment during the last supper where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. Here he gives us an intimate picture of what Godly service looks like.

We were encouraged to see that Jesus humbled himself and was not afraid to adopt the garments of service. In the company of friends he wore a towel, the same one he would use to wash their feet.

Jesus served in the context of fellowship. He didn't schedule anything fancy, instead he used the special moments around a meal, during fellowship, to serve those he was with.

He was intentional. He used the moment to teach, revealing more about who He is. In doing so he helped his disciples to do the work of God. That is to answer the big question and to believe in the one God sent. Jesus is teacher and Jesus is Lord.

More than simply leaving them with information, Jesus sets an example to follow. He leaves them with a call to action and encourages them to do as He has done from them.

When we read this story, it may seem inaccessible or slightly unnatural. How often is it appropriate to wash someone's feet? However, by breaking it down and seeing the various ways that Jesus serves, we can get a clearer model to follow. We can do these things. Infact **17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**

I don't want to conclude though, by telling you what to do. I don't want to turn this sermon into an attempt to manipulate you to serve at KBF. I would be stoked if you did, however, today I want to remind and encourage us that Christ served in amazing ways and we are encouraged to do the same. But as we consider how to walk this out, let us not forget that

the reason we are to do all of this, is to partner with God in His work, which is beautifully simple, for us, personally, to believe more deeply in Jesus, and to encourage others to do the same.

God may you encourage us to know these things and may you guide us and bless us as we attempt to follow your example.

Benediction:

Romans 15:5-6

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.