

Who are the Servants?

During the American Revolution a man in civilian clothes rode past a group of soldiers repairing a small defensive wall. The leader on the ground was shouting instructions to the other men, but was making no attempt to help them do any of the work. When the horseman asked why he didn't join them in the work, he retorted with great dignity, "I am a corporal!" The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to join the other and helped the exhausted soldiers until the job was done. Then he turned to the corporal and said, "Mr. Corporal, next time you have a job like this and there are not enough men to do it, go to your commander-in-chief. Then he unbuttoned his coat and revealed that he was wearing the uniform of a general. He continued, "Then I will come and help you again." The apparent civilian was none other than George Washington himself.

Later today we are acknowledging one of our own members who has devoted her life to service. She learned long ago that her purpose in life was to serve. And each of us should also know that our purpose is to serve. Each of us are called to service. On the Thursday night before Jesus was betrayed Jesus did something quite unexpected and impressive. He took off his robe and dressed for service. He wrapped a towel around his waist and took a basin of water and a cloth. Then Jesus stooped down and washed each of His disciples' feet. He did this to show them and us several important truths about serving

The first thing is that Jesus shows the Priority of Serving. It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

What would you do if you knew you would die a violent death in about 12 hours? Would you want to be alone in prayer? Record some final thoughts? Would you spend time with those you loved? What would you want to emphasize? Jesus chose serving in the humblest way. He took off his cloak put a towel around His waist and washed the dirty feet of His disciples. Who's going to take time to do something as demeaning as that when the end is so near? Jesus did just that because He wanted to show them how important it is to humbly serve one another.

Mother Teresa once visited Phoenix, AZ in 1989 to open a home for the poor. During that brief visit, she was interviewed by KTAR, the largest radio station in town. In a private moment, the announcer asked Mother Teresa if there was anything he could do for her. He was expecting her to request a contribution or media attention to help to raise money for the new home for the needy. Instead, she replied, "Yes, there is. Find somebody nobody else loves, and love them." Serving others, demonstrating our love in tangible ways is of first importance. Jesus considered it a priority

The second thing Jesus showed us by washing his disciples feet is that we serve in spite of our assumed rank and status. The disciples seemed to think they were better than others since they followed the miracle worker and great teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. But Jesus had to continually teach his disciples that service was more important than their supposed special ness. Matthew, Mark and Luke all wrote in their gospels about a time when Jesus shared this conversation with James and John. They asked Jesus, "Let one of

us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." The other 10 became indignant and Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus was the son of God and he knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 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. Jesus did this act of service because He understood who He was, and that his very purpose from God was to be the servant of all mankind and foot washing was not below his own status as Savior of the world.

The late Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's hamburgers was known for his humble service even though he was owner of a multi-billion dollar empire. When asked what made him so successful; he replied, "my MBA." He didn't have a graduate degree. What he meant by MBA was that he had "a mop- and-bucket attitude." No task was too insignificant for him to tackle; he simply jumped in and got the job done.

Jesus, was the Lord of the Universe. He certainly didn't have to humble himself to wash the feet of farmers and fishermen. But because he knew he was Lord of the Universe, He knew that showing his love in humble service was his very purpose for coming to save mankind and so he took up the towel and basin and stooped to serve.

The third thing Jesus showed us by washing feet is Our Need to Be Served by Him. When he came to Simon Peter's feet, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus offered to serve Peter. And at first Peter didn't want to accept the Lord as his servant. But Jesus made it clear that being served by Him is one of the conditions of having a relationship with Him. And so Peter had a change of heart and accepted Jesus washing.. Like Peter we have difficulty accepting Jesus' service as our Savior. Our pride often keeps us from letting Jesus cleanse us. We want to be self-sufficient. It shames us that the Son of God should have had to die for our sins. We want to be considered good people in our own right, by our own effort. But unless we let Him cleanse us, we have no part with Him.

Peter and all of us need to learn, that our salvation is by God's grace, not our works at all. Christ has made us clean by his blood shed on the cross. We must walk in the faith God supplies. We must receive salvation by grace freely and without any work or merit in ourselves. Once we come to faith there are things God would have us do in response to his love in Christ. Jesus gave Himself for us, to purchase our forgiveness at the price of His suffering and death on the cross. He also taught us how we are to live. We are called to live as servants willing to do even foot-washing service, loving one another as he has loved us. What kind of humility, and great self-giving love that act of humble and loving service must have required. And Jesus holds this lesson out to us on

the night on which He was betrayed as an example that He would have us follow. Foot-washing humility before one another, and self-giving love toward one another is the way of the cross for us his present day disciples.

The last point of Jesus' foot washing is for us to realize that we are redeemed so that we can indeed be servants. 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. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus said, If I your teacher, your Lord, your Master, found it necessary to serve you, then you should serve others. In fact, to serve is what it means to follow him and to be his disciple. We cannot call ourselves followers of Christ and be unwilling to serve in humble ways. There are so many places and opportunities for us to serve one another. Today we're recognizing one of the many members who serve among and with us here at Trinity. We can indeed connect with God's purpose for our lives by being servants even as Jesus is. In fact because of Christ's service we are called servants of the living God..