

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK TWENTY-SIX: JESUS, THE SERVANT

READING

1 Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. 2 It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. 4 So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, 5 and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

12 After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. 14 And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. 15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. 16 I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. 17 Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them. John 13 (NLT)

TEACHING

In this story, Jesus is celebrating the Passover feast with his disciples. He knew his time on earth was coming to an end, so he took the opportunity to leave his friends with an unforgettable moment and an important lesson. John makes it clear that Jesus' motivation in washing his disciples' feet was love. The phrase, "he loved them to the very end" speaks of the full extent of his love for them. This story should remind us of how he loves you and me!

The disciples watched in stunned disbelief as Jesus wrapped himself with the servant's towel and began to wash their feet. Not only was this the job and position of a servant, this was a job for the lowliest servant. Equals would rarely, if ever, wash each other's feet in the Jewish culture, but a Rabbi would never wash the feet of his disciples. This was an upside-down moment: Jesus revealing that his kingdom has a radically different set of values and priorities. Jesus explains his actions and instructs them to follow his example: wash each other's feet. Jesus was teaching them to serve others with humility and a heart of love. Although God always blesses obedience, we shouldn't serve to get anything out of it. We serve because Jesus first served us. We love because Jesus first loved us. He washes not just our feet, but our hearts – cleansing us from our sin.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Have you ever had to clean up after someone else? How did it make you feel?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who is Jesus having dinner with?
- What did Jesus do for his disciples?

CHILDREN:

- What did Jesus do for his disciples?
- Why were Jesus' actions surprising?
- What was Jesus teaching his disciples (and you and me!)?

TEENAGERS:

- What was surprising about what Jesus did for his disciples?
- What was Jesus teaching us by his actions?
- Who is someone in your life that you can better serve? What will you do?

ADULTS:

- What does this story teach you about what it means to be like Christ?
- Who is someone in your life that you can better serve? What will you do?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you humbled yourself to become human. Jesus, thank you for coming not to be served but to serve and to give your life as payment for our sins. Your example of being a servant convicts me and motivates me to serve others. Keep me from serving to be noticed or to prove something. Help me to serve from a pure heart – a heart that loves you and others. As I see you serving others, let that change me into a servant. Help me to live humbly and to live well with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

According to D.A. Carson's commentary on the gospel of John, there is evidence that Jewish slaves were not expected to wash the feet of their masters. It was considered even beneath them. Gentile slaves might be expected to do so or children or woman, but not a Jewish male adult slave. And here we see Jesus, a Jewish male Rabbi, stooping to wash the feet of those considered socially beneath him. Is there anyone you would consider socially beneath you? Maybe they don't live like you live, vote like you vote or hold your values. How can you still serve them in love?