

A Portrait of Love
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 13:1-17
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...search and rescue kind of thing. They are right over here—Alan, and Barbara, and Rebecca. John 13, we continue to look at this wonderful, amazing moment in the life of the disciples, as Jesus reveals His heart to them on the night before He is crucified. We looked at it last week and I mentioned as we started into it that it was something, so much here that we would have to look at it almost as a diamond has many beautiful faces. You turn it so that you can see the various facets, the light shining off of them. You turn the diamond, you see the glory of it. Certainly everything about Jesus, every act that He ever did is that way, and certainly this is true as well.

So today we are going to be looking at this from a slightly different angle. Last time we noted that, we talked about, we said look at what Jesus does, and we looked at the foot-washing. We considered why does He do it? Why does He do what He does? We noted that one of the reasons, there were several, but one reason was that He is explaining His death beforehand. That by humbly taking the form of a servant, and washing His disciples' feet, He is explaining that for them to be cleansed spiritually something scandalous must take place. That their great teacher, the one whom they've come to understand is something much more than a teacher, as Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." That the one who is entitled to all worship, and all honor, is going to do the unthinkable. He is going to take the form of a slave and cleanse them. So He was really explaining the cross the day before it happened to help them interpret the wonder of all that He would do to save them. That was one of the reasons that He washed their feet.

The text tells us there is another reason though and that is to explain and to give an example of what true love is, and to show us how to love by showing us the full extent of His love. God is so gracious, He doesn't just command us to love one another, which He does that. He doesn't just merely command us to love one another, He also shows us how. That is what we have in this passage. Let's read John 13:1-17.

*John 13:1-17 ~ 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. 2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, 3 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, 4 *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.*

*5 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. 6 So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." 8 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." 9 Simon Peter *said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." 10 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." 11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."*

12 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? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 16 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. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that You might now grant grace, in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to apply Your word to our hearts, to help us understand, to help us obey for Your glory. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

The command that Jesus is going to give, *‘Love one another’*, is something He reiterates throughout the night, this last evening of Jesus before His crucifixion. John really spotlights that last evening. If you think about it, Chapters 13-17, which are called *‘The Farewell Discourse’*, or *‘The Upper Room Discourse’*, that these things, these dialogues with Jesus and His disciples, happened in the upper room the night before He was crucified. So it is called *‘The Farewell Discourse’*, or *‘The Upper Room Discourse’*. Chapters 13-17 of John are that subject, *‘The Farewell Discourse’*. He gives five chapters to it. I mean, that is stunning! Almost a quarter of the book, John has 21 chapters, five chapters. He has set forth in his Gospel to tell us who Jesus is. He begins with eternity past, ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*** He starts all the way back there. He ends with the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to the disciples in which he recommissions Peter and John. John tells us, “You know, Jesus’ life was filled with acts of glory. He did so many things that if they were all written down there would not be books to hold them.” So he has been very selective. He has chosen the most important things. But isn’t it interesting that he spends five chapters on *‘The Upper Room Discourse’*? God, in His sovereignty, in the last Gospel-writer, John writes latest, as we’ve noted before, probably 85-95 A.D, well after the other Gospels have been written. The Lord does that to reveal to us things that we had to know, and John wants us to know the heart of the Savior. That is really what you get in *‘The Upper Room Discourse’*, the heart of Jesus, and the wonder of His love. He doesn’t just tell us to love one another, but He shows us how. Verse 15 is important, there is an important word in Verse 15, after Jesus has sat down again at the table. He says in Verse 15:

John 13:15 ~ For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

The word *‘example’*, it is a word that can be translated *‘pattern or instruction’*. The idea is to set before someone a pattern to be followed, but it is interesting, the etymology of the Greek word here. It is a compound word. The verb means, there is a verb and a preposition attached together to give you the word *‘example’*. The verb means *‘to offer to view, to exhibit, to display, to make a public showing’*. That is the verb and then you add the preposition *‘under’* before that. So it has the idea of to make this public display intensifies the meaning right under your eyes. This is

a vivid display, a clear demonstration that is to be followed, and is to be an instruction for us. Jesus says, “I have given you this vivid, memorable event.”

I mentioned last week the number of verbs, eight different verbs in the text where, as John tells us what happened, he wants us to see it. He uses the continuous present. The NAS marks that in the text with a little star beside each verb. The word ‘*got up*’, the verb for ‘*get up*’, ‘*got up*’ is really in the present. It really says, “Jesus gets up from supper,” and rather than “laid aside” “lays aside His garments”. Verse 6, He comes to Simon Peter. Peter says to him, and the idea is that you use the present tense and dramatic present to help the reader to, or the listener to enter into the experience. It is not just, “He got up and He laid aside His garments.” No, “He gets up, He lays aside His garments.” You can see it happening and he wants you to see it, he wants you to feel the force of the impact. I really believe that Jesus did this, it is the first thing He does that evening. Now of course it needed to be done, in the time before the meal gets going it needs to be done, but at the same time, He’s only got a few hours with them, and He takes time to demonstrate His love in this way.

We noted last time, and I mentioned earlier, it was scandalous for someone to wash someone’s feet other than the lowest slave, and for Jesus to do it it was shocking. It made an indelible imprint on His disciples. It was one of those things that happened, you know you may have the experience often of having something happen in the course of an evening that you just can’t forget. You know, something happens, a lot of times it will be something that maybe was an embarrassment. Somebody said something that they really shouldn’t have said, or whatever, and it kind of stays with everyone at the table the rest of the evening. Usually we do it by mistake. That is how we make our best impressions. But Jesus does something here that I think they had to be thinking about throughout the course of the evening. You know Jesus is talking, they are listening to Him, they are giving attention to Him, and yet they can’t get out of their minds what just happened, and that’s the force of this word. It is an example, it was a display that was offered to clear view, with unmistakable clarity, and that was for the purpose of making an impact upon them. And it is an example of love because Jesus is going to call them again and again to love one another. This was what was on His heart in the hours before He was arrested. In the shadow of the cross, He’s going to call them again and again to love one another.

The same chapter, Verse 34, after the foot-washing is over, after then Judas is sent away by Jesus. The disciples don't understand what is going on, but remember the issue, "Someone is going to betray me." Who is it, they don't know. Jesus dips His bread, gives it to Judas and says, "What you do, you do quickly." They don't know that He's talking about being betrayed by Judas. They think He is sending Him out for more food or something. The disciples were completely, as often the case, they are clueless about what is going on. When that wraps up in Verse 30, then the next thing Jesus deals with is really explaining more what He just did. He says in Verse 34:

John 13:34 ~ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

"The reason that I did what I did is because I want you to love one another. The reason I made that indelible impression upon you, the reason I made that display is because I want you to love one another as I have loved you. And I've just given you a model, an example, a pattern for how you are to love." He'll come back to that theme again in Chapter 15, just a little bit later in the evening. He comes back in Verse 12 of Chapter 15:

John 15:12-13 ~ "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Verse 17 He says it again.

John 15:17 ~ This I command you, that you love one another.

So what we have here in the passage then is an example of how to love, and how to love to the full. Look at Verse 2, we're told that it is an example of love in Verse 2, or in Verse 1, I'm sorry.

John 13:1 ~ 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.

John introduces this event, but he understands what Jesus was doing. He was showing us the full extent of His love. In fact, the word '*to the end*' in the NASB, New American Standard, there is a little note there that tells you it can mean '*to the uttermost*' because the Greek word here is a word which means, can mean '*perfection*'. It can mean '*temporal, to the end*', or it can mean '*to the end of love, to the full measure of love, to the perfection of love*', and that is what I think is the main focus. He did love them to the very end of His life, and He continues to love them in His resurrected life, and His victory in Heaven. He continues to love us, but He showed them the full measure of His love in the foot-washing, and the cross.

So we have before us a pattern of how to love. Now think about this, I know as Christians, when we talk about this, we know we're supposed to love one another, right? "Love one another," "Yes, I know that. I knew that even before I was a Christian. I was told that by my parents. You are supposed to love your brother. You are supposed to love your sister." I mean, the world knows that. The world's philosophers have even stumbled onto that. "All we need is love, love. Love is all we need." They even understand another one of those philosophers more recently, a couple of decades later said, "I want to know what love is. I want you to show me. I need to know what love is." Yeah, you do, we do, and Jesus has shown us. We know that we're supposed to love unconditionally. We know we're supposed to love sacrificially. Why is it so hard? Why is it so hard to love ones we are supposed to love the most? Our family, our spouse, our children, our parents, our friends?

I struggle with self-interest. I'm too selfish. How do I learn to love? If it is hard to love our friends, if it's hard to love those so close to us, how much harder is it to love those who have offended us? Those who have, in a sense, made themselves our enemies? Or they feel like they are our enemies. Christians that offend us, when in reality, when you've really been hurt by someone you feel like they are your enemy. They've attacked you, and you feel attacked. We tend to magnify that, don't we? Oftentimes we feel offended when someone didn't even try to offend us. They didn't even know they were offending us. Such is our self-interest, but when you are in that situation, how hard it is just to say, "Love them." It seems almost trite, "I know I'm supposed to love them, but how?" "Love your enemies," Jesus

said, “then you’ll be doing more than the Gentiles. Then you will be like your Father.” How do we do that?

I think we have before us here the pattern, and really, basically, I want to consider the pattern under two major points. There are two major points in the message, and they are this: ‘*Embrace His love for you*’, ‘*Express His love to others*’. And really, you have to embrace His love for you before you can express His love to others, and it is an ongoing, continual, daily need, to embrace His love for you. In fact, when you are having trouble loving, what you need to do is embrace His love for you, Jesus’ love for you. When you are filled up with His love for you, then you start moving out and expressing His love for others. Those are the two points, but the pattern really, we’re going to see, we’re going to consider under both points, and it is a three-point pattern. There are three things that I think we see Jesus do that we’re going to look at as we embrace His love for us. Then as we seek to express His Love *to* others, we try to do those same three things.

1) Embrace His Love for You:

So first point, ‘*Embrace His love for you*’, and let’s look at the stunning demonstration of His love for *you*, and see the three things that He does here.

A) He Lays Aside:

The first thing that Jesus does in the passage, He gets up from supper, and He lays aside His garment. We are going to say, “He lays aside.” There are basically three verbs here, He lays aside. In Verse 4, He lays aside His garments. He laid aside His robe, His tunic, His outer garments, His signs of honor. He now is clothed as a slave would be clothed, in a linen garment, emblematic of a much more profound laying aside. The laying aside of His garments is really a picture, a vivid picture of what He is doing in His whole incarnation itself. The passage we read earlier from the apostle Paul in Philippians 2, He emptied Himself, that is laying aside. He didn’t cease being God, but He laid aside His rights and prerogatives as God. He lays aside, that is the first thing we see, and there are two sub-points under this.

a) His Real Concerns:

What does He lay aside? Verses 1-3 tell us what Jesus really lays aside. John is careful to introduce the foot-washing with this lengthy introduction.

John 13:1-3 ~ 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. 2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, 3 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,

The first thing He does is He lays aside His real concerns. I mean, think about this, what is the most important thing going on in that moment? As we look back at it, we know what the most important thing is that is going on in that moment. The disciples had no idea, they thought it was another Passover meal. “We have another opportunity to be with Jesus, and to hear from Jesus.” They had no idea that it was *the* moment, and here Jesus is in the shadow of the agonies of Calvary. They are pressing in upon Him. He is the one that has legitimate concern. His hour has come! His death is looming right before Him, the physical agony of the cross, that is overwhelming, but more than that, the spiritual agony of the cross, when He will bear the sins of everyone who would ever believe, when the one who knew no sin became sin for us. He knows that He who is holy is going to now become sin, that the Christ, the mediator is going to be credited, the man Christ Jesus, credited with the sins of everyone who would ever believe, credited to His account. He would experience the wrath of God, the full force of the wrath of God, and that hour is upon Him. Is that not the most important thing that you could possibly think of? He lays that aside to tend to the practical needs of washing dirt off of their feet. He lays aside the other concerns, He lays aside His real concerns, first that His hour had come.

Secondly, that there is a devilish plot underway, unfolding right before them. He knows that the devil has already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him. None of the disciples know it. I mentioned earlier, they are going to be struggling later in the narrative. They don't have a clue. Can you

imagine? Put yourself in a situation like that, with your dear friends, would you not want the support of those dear friends? “Do you realize what is happening to me? I am being betrayed. I am going to experience agony that is going to make me sweat drops of blood, and you want to talk about your trivial problems? Think about our problems in relationship to what He was dealing with. I mean, Judas, the one who kisses Him later that evening, is really stabbing Him in the back, and Satan is present, and He knows it, and nobody else knows it at the table. But He lays aside His real concerns, He lays them down. He lays aside His rightful position. We’re still talking about how to embrace His love. We see what He lays aside. He lays aside two things, His real concerns and His rightful position.

b) His Rightful Position:

John 13:3 ~ 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,

He lays aside His authority. He has all things at His disposal. God has given all things into His hand. This means He could call a million angels, He could speak a word and God would make anything He wants to happen. He has authority right now to end the reign of Rome. He has the authority right now to end the reign of Herod, His enemies, but He lays it aside. “He emptied Himself,” Paul said, Philippians 2:7, He laid aside, He didn’t grasp equality with God. He laid aside His claim to glory, and honor, and respect, and worship. He ought to be worshipped right now. He ought to be being praised right now for the wonder of what He is going to do, but He can’t even begin to explain. “Listen guys, you know what I’m going to do for you.” He is teaching them, but He knows they have no ability to conceive, but He lays that aside. He lays that aside for you and me.

B) He Takes Up:

Secondly, He takes up. Embrace His love for you, a love that lays aside, and secondly takes up. Verse 4, He takes up a towel and girds Himself. He wraps a towel around His waist. He wraps it around, and He has a long towel, and now He has some free to then dry their feet. What He has done, He lays aside His real concern, He lays aside His rightful position, and He takes up the mantle of slavery. This is love. He lays aside His real concerns, His rightful position, and He takes up the mantle of a slave.

His earthly life was one of slavery to the Father. Philippians 2:7, He took the form of a bondservant, that is a slave, a *'douλος'*, a slave. In the 1st Century, throughout history, a slave doesn't have any rights. A slave is owned by another. A slave has no will of his own, has no agenda of his own, is completely unconcerned with his own position, or his own interest. He is concerned only to do the will of his master, and Jesus is exhibiting that kind of heart right before their eyes. Now who is He a slave to? He's a slave to the Father. That is really what John has been telling us throughout his Gospel. That Jesus, though He is eternally God, He is equal in power and glory with the Father, that He is the Alpha and the Omega, that through Him all things were made that have been made, as John said in John 1. But the reality is that in the economy of redemption in the workings of the Godhead, the Trinity, the Triune God, that Jesus defers, and submits to the Father. The man Christ Jesus lived a life of human submission to the Father.

Look with me just back a couple of places in John. Turn back to John 4:34, and see how He tells them again and again, "I'm not doing My own will. I'm doing the will of another." A slave does the will of another, not his own will. Remember when the disciples, they were in Samaria, they went off, they were hungry, they had been walking a long way. They stopped in that village. Jesus has had the encounter with the woman there. They come back, she's walking away, they are puzzled. "Why is He talking to a woman," and then they say, "Hey Rabbi, eat. We've got some food here." He says, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." They think, "What does He have some stuff stashed away we didn't know about?" He says:

John 4:34 ~ Jesus *said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

"My food, what satisfies the need of My heart more than anything," I mean think about the imagery of that. Food, you know, when you are really hungry, it is amazing how something really plain can taste if you are really hungry. My mother used to talk about one of her aunts that when you go to eat at their house, it was actually my mother's grandmother used to say this, that she would make you wait long enough that whatever she served tasted great. When you are that hungry, and you're longing for food, how wonderful it is to eat. Then if you eat something that really tastes good on top of that, amazing! Jesus says, "What satisfies the need of

my soul is to do the will of Him who sent me.” What an amazing reality. Turn over to Chapter 5, Verse 30. Jesus says:

John 5:30 ~ “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

Chapter 6, Verse 38, in the aftermath of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus is giving the ‘*Bread of Life Discourse*’. He says in Verse 38:

John 6:38 ~ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

He says the same thing later in the night that we are looking at in John 13, when He begins His ‘*High Priestly Prayer*’ in John 17:4, He says, He’s talking to the Father, “You see, I’ve come down, not to glorify My name, I’ve come down to glorify the Father. That is my agenda, to glorify the Father.”

John 17:4 ~ I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

So He lays aside His real concerns, He lays aside His rightful position, He takes up the mantle of slavery, slavery to God.

C) He Gives Himself:

And thirdly, what does love look like, embrace His love for you, look at how He lays aside, look at how He takes up, and look at how He gives Himself. He gives Himself!

John 13:5 ~ 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.

He washed their feet, He met the most basic, practical... I mean, He was meeting their most profound spiritual need at the same time. He was telling them what they needed to know more than anything is, “That for you to be cleansed, and to be in the presence of God, for you to sit down at God’s table in Heaven, you must be washed. And for you to be washed, I have to do something that is scandalous.” But

He is also meeting a very practical, basic need. They have dirty, smelly feet sitting at the table about to eat. He gives Himself to meet their needs, and He does it... Charles Spurgeon in his sermon, one of his sermons on this passage, makes some wonderful points. He says that what we see here in Jesus, the love of Christ, I mean think about this, this is what Jesus' act means. He says Jesus gives Himself to act as the host of His people, but what I would say, let me phrase it this way, gives Himself. There are a couple of sub-things under '*Gives Himself*'. We had a couple under '*Lay Aside*', now a couple of sub-points under '*Gives Himself*'. He gives Himself to joyful fellowship, and He gives Himself to humble service.

a) To Joyful Fellowship:

He gives Himself to joyful fellowship. Spurgeon notes that if you just step back from this and look at this, and you step back and you look at the ministry of Jesus, one of the things you see is that Jesus gave Himself to enjoying the communion and fellowship with His disciples. Listen to what Spurgeon says.

Has it never struck you how much the life of Christ with His people lay in intense familiarity with them? How in common things He displayed His brotherhood with them. He began His ministry at a feast at Cana of Galilee, working His first miracle at a wedding. Again and again we find Him eating with His disciples. The last thing He did was to sit at supper with them and He still says to His church, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man open to Me, I will enter in and sup with Him, and he with Me.'

Do you see that? He's saying that Jesus, there is something profound about this. He wants to sit down and have a meal with you. That's what He did with His disciples. He acts as, and He points out that that evening, He's acting as the gracious host of His people when He washes their feet. I mean, there was something that needed to be done. It's like you think about when you host people in your house, it is a blessing that we have, isn't it? It is wonderful to sit down over a meal and talk with people. When you have people in your home, it takes a different level, doesn't it? When you go out for a meal there is somebody else that is hosting you, and you may be the one who invited to the place, and so you have some interest, you are hoping they are going to enjoy the food, you know? "Have you ever eaten here? Well, we've tried this. This is really good." You are trying to be a host that way,

but it is a whole lot different when they are in your house. “Do you need anything?” If they need anything, you want to... “Do you have a headache? Let me find some Advil, or would you like some Tylenol?” “Is the food okay?” “Do you like this?” “Can I get something else for you?” “Would you like some more?” “Is there any need that I can meet for you?”

b) To Humble Service:

Now we do it imperfectly, but what he is saying is that Jesus had that approach in the supper, but it is really His heart, and it is His heart in saving us. There is this sense in which He is the wonderful, marvelous host of His people, and He gives Himself to joyful fellowship. He enjoys being with those whom He has redeemed, and He tends to the most basic need. I mean, how can it be that He would stop and do what He does? Spurgeon goes on to write, listen to what he says, He cares for minor matters with a personal interest. Spurgeon writes:

Jesus washed their feet and showed a very familiar and tender consideration of their little needs. That He should ease their weary hearts, I can understand. That He should enlighten their clouded brains, I can understand. But that He should wash their feet is amazing! A little soil on their feet, will He attend to that? Yes, that He will, and personally too. He would Himself take the basin, and the towel, and wash their feet. Had they been diseased with leprosy it would seem natural that He should touch them and say, ‘Be clean.’ Or had they been blind or crippled, it would have been probable that He would touch their eyes or heal them. But a mere defilement of their feet is so small a matter, and yet there is the Savior attending to that.

It tells us that He loves us completely. This means that there is no need in your life that is too small to bring to Him. He cares. Now we know that as we grow in Him, we learn how to pray by saying, “Hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come.” “We need to be reoriented, our biggest need is to be on Your agenda,” but the wonder of it is, when we are on His agenda, and when we’re following Him, He is attending to those very small things. D.A. Carson in his commentary on John’s Gospel has a poem in it in which this guy that wrote the poem pictures how Jesus breaks the bread, how we find Him washing our feet. The poem reads like this: *As we go to Heaven we strain to see the mercy seat.* Picture that, we strain to see the

mercy seat. “May I see Him?” Then we find Him at our feet. The wonder of who God is. How can that be? He cares for the minor matters of our lives. He gives Himself to joyful fellowship and to humble service. He rejoices in serving us. That makes no sense to us, but it is reality. His cross tells us that and this glorious demonstration of His love tells us that.

Now when that seizes your heart, that Jesus is willing to deal with the very most pressing things that I have, sometimes that seem very small, and I think, “How could I possibly bother You with all the things that You have to worry about? This is too small.” Run to Him. “Lord, here I am, I’ve got a need,” and to realize that there is something in the heart of our Savior, there is something in the heart of God that rejoices. That’s why He calls Himself a shelter, and a refuge, a rock. He wants us to run to Him.

2) Express His Love to Others:

Now when you embrace His love for you, then you can begin to express His love to others, the second major point. “Show me how to love,” He does. Now it is important that the hinges, us receiving the love. We love because He loved us. We love Him because He loved us. And really, the hinges, the way I’m able to love the unlovely person in my life, the way that I’m able to love the lovely person in my life, is by being loved by Christ, and seeing the wonder of that love, and overflowing with that love because He loves me, and I love Him. “I want to do something for a God like that,” or, “Jesus, that You would do this for me, I want to serve You in some way. Oh, that I could wash Your feet! Oh, that I could meet Your need. Oh, that I could feed You. Oh, that I could give You the most precious thing that belongs to me.” And Jesus says, “You can.”

Matthew 25, the picture of the judgment. Remember what He says to the sheep on His right? “Come in, you were blessed of My Father. For I was hungry and you fed Me. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was in prison, you visited Me. I was sick, you visited Me. I was a stranger, you took Me in.” And the sheep will say, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You? When did we see You thirsty and give You a drink? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You? When did we see You as a stranger and accept You in?” And He will say, “I tell you the truth, that when you did it unto the least of these My brethren, you did it

unto Me.” So we are filled up with the love of Christ for us. We want to express it back to Him. “Lord, I want to do something for You.” He says, “Love those around you. Wash My feet by washing their feet.” Express His love to others, how do you do that? “I want to do it. How do I do that?” Well, you lay aside, you take up, and you give yourself. You lay aside your real concerns, we lay aside our real concerns, we lay aside our rightful position.

Isn't it amazing how we always think that what we are doing is the most important thing in the world? I've confessed how the Lord has shown me this in traffic. I'm better than I used to be. He is sanctifying me, but you know I pull out in front of someone, and I think I have a good reason, and I do try to get going when I pull out in front of someone. I just thought I'd let you understand that, but if somebody pulls out in front of me, I feel indignant. Now he has somewhere to go, and he is in a hurry too, but he pulled out in front of me, and I'm in a hurry, and I've got to make that next light. Even if I'm not, it's so funny, if I don't even have to be somewhere, I feel the compulsion still to make the next light. Isn't that crazy? It must be a guy thing maybe. Maybe it's not a guy thing. But we think that, “What I'm doing is so important. What I'm doing right now is more important than anything else, and I wish somebody else would notice that. Like that driver should have waited.” “I know that guy driving that Tahoe, he's got something important. I'm going to just sit here and wait, and not pull out.” How ridiculous is that? Isn't that amazing? But we think like that.

So, what the Lord is saying, those aren't legitimate concerns, but there are times when we have real concerns, where something heavy on our hearts is so great, and we feel the weight of it. Jesus says, “Lay it aside so that you can love.” Now there are times where you have to deal with it, but the way to love is to lay aside your concerns, even when they're real concerns. Lay aside our rightful position. Say, “I'm a child of God. I'm a joint-heir of Christ. In my life I'm a father, I'm a husband, I have a position. I have a right to certain respect. I'm a taxpayer.” Lay aside your position and then take up. Take up the mantle of the slave.

This is where we have to talk to ourselves rather than listen to ourselves. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, “The problem with us as Christians is we listen to ourselves far too much when we ought to be talking to ourselves.” That is taking the word of God and redirecting our thinking. I think, “Hey! Why are doing that to me?” and

then God says, “Wait a minute, the word says that I’m a slave.” Isn’t that what it is to be a Christian? “Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.” What was Paul’s favorite self-designation? Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ. That is what the apostle said. Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ, not the half-brother of Jesus, a slave of Jesus Christ. So I belong to Christ. I’m a slave. I have no rights of my own. I have no will of my own. I have no agenda of my own. I’m not to be concerned with my position, or my interests. I’m to do the will of my Master. Jesus is my Master. What is Your agenda right now, Lord? What is it that You want to do right now? I live for that, and having laid aside my concerns, and having taken up the mantle of a slave, now give yourself in joyful fellowship to other people around you. Especially the Christians, but you can do that to unbelievers too. “Lord, I know that there is this need happening over here, and I feel like I’ve got these heavy concerns, but I feel I’ve got to do something here. I’ve got to show Your love.”

“How do I do that? I’m being so selfish right now, Lord. I’ve been rude to my wife, or rude to my child, or rude to this person. Help me. I’m a sinner. Look how selfish I am.” This is how this works out. “Look how selfish I am. I need my feet washed. Look how dirty I am. How quick I am to turn away from You.” And if we’ll just look to Jesus we’ll find He’s washing our feet. He’s cleaning us up, He’s preparing our feet, He’s shodding our feet to take the good news, but you’ve got to look to Him, and embrace His love again. “You have done that for me. You would stoop down and love a sinner like me? How can I not love You back, and serve those around me?”

Then we find the strength to then take up the mantle of the slave and the joy of it. The most joyful thing in the world, the most wonderful freedom in the world is to be a slave of Jesus Christ. That is life. To take His yoke upon you, look what He said about that, “Come unto Me you who are weary and heavy laden.” You are tired, you’re worn out, because you are living for yourself. You are tired and you’re worn out because your agenda is not working out because it never works out in this fallen world, does it? Don’t you get amazed at that? You fix something in your house and then something else breaks. “I just got everything finally fixed. Boom! The roof starts leaking.” I hate to say that because I have a way of prophesying future things at my house, but we want everything the way that we want it, and yet it is not about us. We are so heavy burdened and weighed down, we have the cares of the world upon us because we take them upon ourselves

because we have our agenda. We are living for ourselves. Jesus says, “Come to Me, you who are weary, and you’re weighed down with concerns. What do you need to do? Take My mantle upon you. Take My yoke upon you.” A yoke of an ox is the yoke of a slave. “Take My yoke upon you, for My burden is easy, My yoke is light. When you take it upon you you’re going to see that to be My slave, it’s easy and light because I am meek and lowly. I’m a meek and lowly Master and you find that freedom from all the cares, and weight, just lifted off of you because as a slave, you don’t live for yourself anymore.” You don’t have a dog in the fight. It is all about Him.

The default position, we wake up, the world keeps pressing in upon us. We find we are living for ourselves, what do you do? Look at Jesus again, “I need You to wash my feet. I need You to cleanse me. I can’t believe that You are a God who would do that. I still can’t believe it, Lord. I’m so glad. Now, let me follow You. Let me follow Your example. Let me do the best I can. It’s going to be a halting, half-way kind of thing, but help me.” And when we start living that way, when we start laying aside our real concerns, when we start laying aside our rightful position, when we take the mantle of a slave, when we serve each other, when people have offended us we come with this attitude, then the world looks at that and says, “I want to know what you have.” How can you do that? That is the glory of the Gospel being lived out. That is a picture, that is something you’re setting on display.

One of the reasons people don’t hear what we say, and we need to say it, I’m not saying don’t say the Gospel. Of course, preach the Gospel to every creature. I’m not saying don’t, but one of the things that hinders our message is our life. Don’t wait until your life is where it needs to be, you’ll never get there. Preach it, but work on your life too. When we can speak the Gospel with a life that is humble, and broken before such a glorious Savior, they will have a hard time not listening. The most wonderful thing is we will know that Jesus is pleased. We can know when we have tried to lay aside our concerns, laid aside our position, take up the mantle of slavery—we have blessed our Savior. He is blessed by that and He is going to thank us for that at the judgment. “I was hungry, I was thirsty, you met My need,” and God help us do that.

Why would you not serve a Savior like that? A Savior who would leave the glory of Heaven and come all the way down to wash you, to cleanse you, to love you, to enjoy fellowship with you. He enjoys being with His children. He enjoys eating with His children. He enjoys spending time with His children. He's done everything necessary to save you, but He calls you to Himself and He says, "If you come to Me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me. You have to lose your agenda for your life, you have to lay down your agenda for your life." You may want to live a certain way, the Lord says, "No, you follow Me." You say, "I can't give this up. This is too precious to me, this part of my life." Lay it down and you will have joy beyond your imagination. It is a lie of the devil. And for those of us who already know Him, why would we not labor to run after Him, cling to Him, and serve Him by serving others. Let's go to Him in prayer.

Our Father, we struggle with the ability to express our hearts in light of the glory of Your salvation. It is too wonderful for us and too amazing that You would even allow us to exist, much less love us, and draw us to Yourself, and humbly bless and serve us. God help us to live lives that are worthy of that kind of love. Grant us grace to every day be controlled by the love of Christ. Grant the grace of repentance and faith. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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