

I am Among You as One Who Serves

2018-03-29 - Year B - Maundy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 78:14-25; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

- What would you include in a letter to your family and friends for them to open after your death? This kind of reflection can show you the things that are really important to you.
- The words of Jesus which we find recorded in chapters 13-17 of John have often been called the “upper room discourse” or “farewell discourse” and they contain Jesus’ final instructions to his disciples on the night before his death.
- Jesus says many things in these chapters, but love stands out as a key theme.
- John 13:34-35 - A new commandment, love one another (“Mandatum,” the word from which we get “Maundy”).
- When Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, he is giving them “an acted parable of the Lord’s humiliation unto death”¹ as an introduction to much of what he wants to share with them that night.
- He is calling his disciples to love and serve. This is the example he wants them to follow when he is gone.

Self-Righteous Service vs. True Service

- Your motives are just as important as your actions when you serve.
 - Service to earn favor with God - “Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace...yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.” (Article XIII, Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion)
 - Service for ulterior motives - When you serve someone with the wrong motives, it feels icky to that person and they will not feel served. Instead they will feel used.
- True service springs out of Christ’s love and it has no strings attached.
- “yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.” (Article XII, Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion)

Kinds of Service (taken from Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*)

- Service of hiddenness - intentionally serving in ways where you can’t be identified.
- Service of small things - helping others with the trivial stuff of life
- Guarding the reputation of others
- Service of being served - Peter didn’t want Jesus to wash his feet, but Jesus said unless I wash you you have no part in me. To refuse to be served comes from pride.
 - Accepting the service of others is very different from demanding that service!

¹ Rodney A. Whitacre, John (vol. 4; The IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 328.

- Service of common courtesy
- Service of hospitality - "Do not neglect to show hospitality" Hebrews 13:2.
- Service of listening
- The service of bearing one another's burdens - Galatians 6:2
- The service of sharing the word of life with one another - we need the body of Christ to help us hear God's voice together. We also serve others by sharing the Gospel with them.

Benefits of Service

- Growth in Holiness
 - In the Gospel of Luke, just after the institution of the Lord's supper, a dispute arose amongst the disciples regarding which of them was the greatest. Perhaps this was the reason Jesus engaged in the object lesson of washing feet! Luke 22:24-27 - I am among you as one who serves
 - Pride is at the root of so much of our sin. It was Satan's pride which caused him to fall. Is it pride that is at the root of our selfishness and inwardness. To combat the pride in our lives, we need the opposing virtue of humility.
 - "More than any other single way, the grace of humility is worked into our lives through the Discipline of service" (Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 130).
 - "Nothing *disciplines* the inordinate desires of the flesh like service, and nothing *transforms* the desires of the flesh like serving in hiddenness. The flesh whines against service but screams against hidden service. It strains and pulls for honor and recognition. It will devise subtle, religiously acceptable means to call attention to the service rendered. If we stoutly refuse to give in to this lust of the flesh, we crucify it. Every time we crucify the flesh, we crucify our pride and arrogance" (Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 130).
- Growth in the Kingdom
 - John 17:20-23, 26
 - When we love one another, and when we love those who are outside of the faith, we are demonstrating God's love to the world. And God's love is compelling!