**Series: What Jesus Would Say**

*VBC*

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*John 13:1-20*

*September 14-15, 2013*

**“A Fundamental Start Point for Every Leader”**

Whenever I go on a trip, my dog Sherlock has a sense something is up

-once the suitcase is opened, and I start packing, he is by the door

-if he could talk—he would be asking—*where are you going? Can I come?*

-he would be saying—you can’t go without me

In the Upper Room, just on the eve of Passover, the disciples suspected Jesus was making plans to leave—and they were right

-He will soon tell them He is leaving—and no, *they cannot come!*

-but they did not want to be left behind—*we would have felt the same*

-who will lead if You leave? Who is going to stay with us?

-and so Jesus began an extended conversation with His disciples, beginning with Peter—chap 13-16

-only John tells us about this conversation

-instead of focusing on the last supper (as the other gospels)—he focused on the dialogue

1. this is the part of John that slows down—tells us to turn off our cell phones, stop texting[[1]](#endnote-1)

-we need to enter into the company of Jesus

-for this is a *conversation He is ultimately having with us*

2. think of this section as Jesus’ final briefing

-Jesus was transitioning—preparing to leave—preparing His followers for life without His physical presence

-the hour had come—the time all of eternity had been pointing to had arrived

-later this night He would be betrayed, arrested, brutally beaten, sentenced to death, and executed

-these who had been in the background now take center stage

*-the future of the church would have to rest upon these men*

3. on the surface, chapters 13-16 is hard to outline

-eight times—the disciples will make comments, ask questions

*-they come off more as members of the cast of Duck Dynasty than members of Jesus’ elite seals*

-they are slow to get it—but this is their history

a. Jesus was always saying odd things they did not get—“Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it”—2:21-22

b. they would urge Him to eat, but then He talked about food they did not know about—4:32-33

c. they did not get metaphor—“Lord, if Lazarus has fallen asleep he will recover”—11:12

d. were clueless why a king would ride on a donkey—12:16

e. and here in the upper room—their questions suggested they were still ill-informed, uncertain, naïve—grasping little of what Jesus taught them

*-they were still unclear as to who Jesus was—and this was alarming!*

-they supposed Jesus was about to storm the Roman garrison and set up a new House of David administration—and this would gain them power and prestige

-and so they were posturing, seeking to establish who is the alpha dog

*-Luke tells us they argued at the dinner table over who would be the greatest*

-and John knew all about this—for he was at the center of it

-Jesus would have to do something striking—something to get this ship on course

-there wasn’t much time

*Illustration—Kaufmann—Bowman, shape up or get out!*

-Jesus did not rebuke—He redirected—*read verses 1-5*

-so what is going on? On the surface, this would not have made much sense

-I’m ready for Jesus to give a *summary of essential theology*

-a mini course in *leadership concepts*

-a brief lecture on what makes for a *radical church*

-a mini summit on *evangelism, discipleship, and missions*

-capped with an inspirational challenge to develop the capacity to *recognize and respond to God’s presence*

-instead—Jesus did what was menial, mundane, and domestic

-an act reserved for the lowest of the lowest—a slave

*-washing feet was the one thing no one else would do[[2]](#endnote-2)*

-but Jesus did—

-He took the hands with which He held all power and authority in the universe and washed the dirtiest parts of their bodies—where dust and dirt and filth and dung and waste collected

-and suddenly things were even more confusing—upside down for these men

-students serve teachers

-followers serve Masters

-no one conscious of shame and honor washes another person’s feet

*-this was an “incomprehensible contradiction”[[3]](#endnote-3)*

-someone speak out!! Peter does—he will have none of this—*read verse 6*

-his words were less a question and more of a challenge—“Lord, *You*, You wash my feet?!”

-Peter is the most complex disciple –He has not grasped things

-this was against protocol—*leaders worth their weight do not submit to small things, the ordinary and trivial tasks*

-CEO’s do not refill the paper towel dispensers

-up and coming kings do not unplug toilets

-let someone else do this—just teach us about leadership, radical self-denial—*talk to us about greatness!!*

-but Jesus is—and Peter is not getting it—*read verses 7-8*

-Peter drew a line in the sand*—‘”You shall not—absolutely not—double negative not—wash my feet!!”*

*-Peter is so Peter—impulsive—but misdirected*

-Jesus must override Peter—teaching him that unless you let Me wash you—you have no part

-which remains true today—if people will not let Jesus do His work of washing

-cleansing lives of their dirt—they can have no part with Him…period!

-it all set up an exam question—one that is still asked today—*read verse 12*

-better—DO YOU KNOW WHAT I HAVE DONE *TO* YOU?

-Jesus wants to know if Peter gets it

-He wants to know if we do—what is it?

*1. HE REDEFINED GREATNESS*

-in this one act—Jesus reversed all human assumptions of importance and rank

-He turned all Greek and Roman codes of morality, and Jewish ways of moving ahead upside down—as well as our own

ILLUSTRATION—Sports Illustrated—“The Dirty Game” tells the not so secret story of how college football programs go from *very bad to very good—very fast—go from good to great—*

1-use money to make pay offs to players—slip money in their hands based upon performance

2-look past academic misconduct—have someone do an athlete’s homework

3-make drugs available—ignore abuse by elite players

4-use sex in recruiting—and promise it continues after signing

*-Jesus modeled a different path to greatness*

-He showed them that God’s kingdom works on inverted principles

“Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant”—Mt 20:26

*-if you want to be the greatest—aim to be the least*

*-if you want to be first—be okay with becoming last*

*-if you want stature—serve people rather than use people*

*2. HE REMOVED ANY EXCUSE THAT MENIAL SERVICE IS BENEATH US—read verses 13-14, 16*

*-no one wanted to get up—it should be the other guy!*

-Jesus instantly took away any justification for this

*-note His logic*—

-if you call Me Teacher and declare Me Lord—AND I AM!

-and if I wash your feet—WHICH I DID!

-then you are under obligation to do the same to one another—WHICH YOU MUST!

-or—

-if everything has been given to Me—all power, authority, possessions, rank, privilege, status—AND IT WAS (verse 3)

-so that *I can claim the highest status in all reality*—WHICH I CAN

-and if I perform the lowest of the lowest tasks—AND I DID

-than—regardless your height—you can do whatever service is required—AND IF YOU ARE TO CHANGE THE WORLD—YOU MUST!

-He reiterates this in *verse 16—*

*-sent ones are no greater than senders*

*-slaves are not greater than masters (and we are slaves)*

*-disciples are not above their teachers (Matt 10:24)*

ILLUSTRATION—putting together bunk beds for a divorced woman—I have a PhD

*-you don’t really need to be doing this—and God said—yes you do!*

*3. HE REMOVED ANY EXCUSE THAT MENIAL SERVICE IS BEYOND US—read verse 15*

-none of us can plead ignorance

He has left us with an example, a pattern, a script—*BE JESUS*

-what does that look like? John has shown us:

A. BE PRESENT

-Jesus bent down to become near—the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14)

-He moved from an upper class neighborhood to the lower class—heaven to earth

-and He promises to always be with us—Matt 28

APPLICATION—the ministry of presence might mean getting up in the middle of the night to sit beside the bed of an older, frail, and frightened friend who is dying

-go abroad where others are unwilling to go to the marginal, the economically deprived

-to simply say—I am here with no other agenda

B. GIVE THINGS UP

-Jesus came not to be served—but to serve—lay aside His divine rights—Mark 10

-He emptied Himself—taking on the form of a servant—Philippians 2

APPLICATION—it might be as simple as giving up our seat, giving up our rights, emptying ourselves of our agenda

-becoming indifferent to anything but the will of God

-giving up our resources when someone lacks the basic necessities

-it may even mean giving up our career—Robert McQuilkin, a seminary/university president shifted to care for his wife Muriel, diagnosed with Alzheimer’s

C. BE HIDDEN

-do what needs to be done without needing to be acknowledged

-Jesus seemed to always escape the limelight

-some of His greatest work was/is the quiet work of prayer

*4. HE REMOVED ANY FEARS THAT BY SERVING WE LOSE OUT IN THE END—read verse 17*

-if you know what I did to you—and if you practice going low

-you are on your way to profound happiness

-really? If we submit to one another’s needs, how is it life will be most satisfying?

a. we will be freed from the world’s games of getting ahead

-caught up trying to establish ourselves in the pecking order

b. spared from calculating, scheming, getting the limelight

c. found the far greater joy of serving rather than using people

CONCLUSION

So one thing from this text that changes for you—write it down

-it might be the service of sharing your spiritual gift at least once a week

-praying for a page in the directory

-praying for our kid’s greatest needs

-volunteering in a way that saves us money

-renouncing all signs of a demanding spirit on campus, in the office, at home

-all for the sake of advancing God’s kingdom

1. Peterson, Christ Plays, 235 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bauckman, Richard, The testimony of the beloved disciple, 192 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Bauckman, 193 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)