

# The Call to Serve

*John 13:1-17*

- We are taking a break from our study of Mark for the next two weeks, although we are still going to be talking about the great news of Jesus.
- Open your Bibles to **John 13:1-17**.
- We are going to jump way ahead from where we have been in Mark, and we are now looking at the night before Jesus' death.
- He is getting ready to have one last meal with His disciples, and this is definitely the calm before the storm.
- The next 24 hours will be full of pain, heartache, and unimaginable struggles as Jesus heads to the cross.
- As we will see, He knows exactly what is going to happen, which is what makes His actions here all the more remarkable.
- Jesus, in some of his last hours with his disciples, does the unimaginable.
- In doing so, he gives us a powerful example of how we are supposed to obey God.
- It is especially poignant for our church family this morning, because we are giving you an opportunity to put this into practice immediately following the service this morning.
  
- You see, Jesus, in the night before his death, gave us a clear example as he issued the challenge to serve.
- I have loved this passage for a long time because it is such a powerful and unexpected contrast.
- Here's what I want you to see: You are called to follow Jesus' example and serve.

- After the service this morning, we are getting together for lunch.
- At lunch, some of our leaders from some of the places you can serve in this church will be there.
- They will have sign-up sheets for you to put your name down and say, "I am interested in hearing more about what it would mean to serve in this area."
- Hear clearly: you are **not** signing up to immediately go into serving in that area; you are saying, "I think this might be a place where God wants me to plug in."
- So, before you start coming up with excuses about why you can't, let's look at how Jesus served His disciples the night before He was betrayed and would ultimately die in our place.
- Start with me and read **verses 1-5; 12-17**
- Jesus, fully aware of who he was and what was about to transpire, did the lowliest job a person could do, and he did it as an example for us.
- We need to acknowledge from the start that some of the things that were true of Jesus, like his divine foreknowledge, aren't going to be true of us.
- **His example gives us at least five motivations for us to serve:**

## **1) Serve because the time is short. (1)**

- This is at the beginning of what would be Jesus' last evening before his death on the cross.
- Jesus was fully aware that his time was short...that's what the text means when it says, "*...knowing that His hour had come...*"

- He knew he was about to die, and he made a point to serve his disciples up to the very end.

*That's incredibly significant, isn't it? You've probably heard the song, "Live Like You Were Dying" by Tim McGraw.*

*In it, a person has been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, possibly cancer, and in response, he did all kinds of things. He went on adventures, he made amends with those he had hurt, he took time for the things that mattered.*

- Isn't that what people do when they know the time is short? It changes their priorities, and they only do what is important to them.
- So, what did Jesus do when he knew time was short? Gave us a crystal clear example of serving.
- Isn't it interesting how Jesus didn't coast into death? He was actively serving with all the strength God gave Him until the very end.
- He could easily have said, "Okay guys, tomorrow is going to be a busy day, so why don't you guys let me kick back and relax tonight?"
- Instead, he set an example, he taught, he served.
- By the way, don't you love that little side note from John? "*He loved them to the end*".
- Such a beautiful way for John to look back at the sacrifice Jesus made.
- In one way, Jesus was fortunate, because he knew that the time was short.
- This was going to be his last meal with the disciples, and he knew it.

- You and I don't usually have that same awareness, but here's what I can tell you: you have one less day to serve Christ and others today than you did yesterday.
- You and I have no idea how long we have until either we die or until Jesus returns.
  - *As Robert Moffat, a great missionary from years ago said, "We shall have all eternity in which to celebrate our victories, but only swift hour before sunset in which to win them."*
- Regardless of whether we have five minutes or five decades left, our service must have that sense of urgency.
- You know as well as I do that rest is sweetest when it is earned, so why not strive hard in this life with all the strength God supplies and expend yourself fully for His purpose?
- The Bible is clear that those who trust in Christ are promised an eternity of rest in His presence; live with urgency during this short time now and serve Him any way you can.
- **Not only that, but we serve...**

## 2) Serve because the enemy is at work. (2)

- Look back at **verse 2**.
- We won't spend a ton of time here because we talked about it at length last week, but remember that Satan is at work.
- There is someone out there who is actively trying to disrupt and destroy what God is doing in the world.
- In the room with Jesus and the disciples, Satan had already been working in the heart of the disciple who would betray him.
- Remember, we said that Satan has a kingdom and that as Jesus delivered people from that kingdom, they were transferred into God's kingdom:

*For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (Colossians 1:13, NASB95)*

- So, then, you are called to serve God and others as a way of continuing to push back against the schemes of Satan.
- Also, if you notice, Jesus didn't slow down in the face of Satan's opposition.
- Even though he knew that Satan was at work, Jesus kept serving.
- Sometimes, we get so discouraged by the opposition we face when we try to serve God, and it causes us to want to give up.
- In those moments, think back to Jesus' example here...is there anything worse that Satan could do to you than what he did to Jesus?
- He took one of Jesus' own followers, named Judas, and used Judas to get Jesus killed, even though Jesus had never done anything morally wrong...ever.
- I can promise you that you and I will never face the same level of opposition, so we must continue serving Christ in spite of anything the enemy tries to do.
- Serve God fully, then, no matter opposition you face, because Jesus did.
- **Not only that, but we have an incredible promise that echoes some of what Jesus experienced:**

### **3) Serve because God is with you. (3)**

- Jesus washed the disciples' feet with the full awareness that He was God.
- Let that sink in for a moment: the God of the universe, who spoke the entire thing into existence, humbled himself to the

point of picking up nasty, dusty, calloused, wretched feet and washed them with tender care.

- Don't ever think that somehow some position of service is beneath you.
- If Jesus would wash our feet, we should never balk at anything God may call us to do for him.
  
- Jesus was able to serve because he knew exactly who he was in relation to God the Father.
- Do you know who you are in relation to God?
- Here's what makes that so incredible: the God who washed the disciples is with you every moment of every day.

*Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.*

*WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" (Hebrews 13:5-6, NASB95)*

- He will never, ever, ever leave you.
- That means that He is present with you any time He calls you to serve.
- He is your helper, the one who works in you and through you to accomplish His will.
- If He calls you to serve, He stays right with you and does it through you!
  
- **That is closely tied to the next motivation we have for service, which is:**

#### **4) Serve because you belong to Jesus (12-16)**

- As you read back through these verses, you see clearly that Jesus didn't lose his position or his authority when he served.

- He still is our Teacher, our Lord, and the one to whom we submit our lives.
- We serve him because of who he is:
 

*No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (2 Timothy 2:4, NASB95)*
- We serve to honor and obey him, but did you notice how we do that?
- Look back at **verse 14**.
- Here's a principle for you: you can't say you're serving the Lord if you aren't also serving others.
- The Christian life is meant to be lived out in community with other believers, serving them and helping them to grow to love Jesus more.
 

*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4, NASB95)*
- When you think about serving, it is more than coming on a Sunday morning to our worship time.
- It is getting involved in the lives of others, washing their feet by humbly serving their needs.
- **There's one other aspect to touch on quickly this morning:**

## **5) Serve because it is the only way to true happiness. (17)**

- Jesus said that a life of service is a blessed life.

- That word blessed has the idea of “happy”, but in a way that is deeper than “happy because my team is winning” or “happy because my kids are succeeding”.
- That kind of happiness fades; the kind Jesus is talking about doesn’t.
- It’s blessed because it is a life lived in submission to God is a life that is fulfilling the purpose you were made for.
- As you serve God and others, your life becomes a mirror that reflects the nature of Christ to others, challenging them and encouraging them to serve Christ themselves.
  
- One last thing we need to address, quickly: why would we serve God?
- Why should I make him my master in the first place, and why should I follow him into the messy, smelly lives of the people around me?
- Because Jesus’ service didn’t stop with washing their feet...