

CREATED FOR GREATNESS – Equipped for the Mission

7/9/17- Pastor Randy

John 13:1-17

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. It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will." "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean." After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. 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. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

John 13:34-35

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

The timing of Jesus actions and teaching in this passage is of critical importance. Notice how much emphasis John places on time. We are told

CREATED FOR GREATNESS – Equipped for the Mission

7/9/17- Pastor Randy

Jesus' "hour had come". We are told He loved his disciples "to the end". Jesus knew He *would return to God*. At the end of the chapter, Jesus concluded His words to His disciples by saying, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory" and "I will be with you only a little longer."

Jesus actions and instructions in this chapter were clearly for the purpose of preparing His disciples for His departure...and their mission. Jesus prepared them with a commandment for them to obey and an example for them to follow.

I am going to begin at the end where Jesus gives them a command to follow and then go back through the key words and actions of Jesus that illuminate this command. Jesus concluded with the command to love one another...**as He had loved them**. How had Jesus loved them? In the very first verse John tells us how Jesus loved them. He loved his disciples "to the end".

Now think about that for a moment. Don't rush on by those words: Jesus had loved His disciples "to the end". The phrase "to the end" conveys the idea that Jesus loved them consistently and absolutely. His love was without end and without measure. There was no limit to the duration or depth of Jesus love for them. That is so amazing. That is so comforting. That is our God!!

Aren't you glad that Jesus love didn't last only up until the time the rulers came to arrest him. He could have abandoned his mission. Just prior to his arrest that led to His crucifixion, He prayed to the Father, "If there is another way for me to avoid this suffering, let it be. But if not, I am ready to do your will". What if he abandoned the mission when the first lash hit his back, or when the first spike was driven into his hand? He could have, but He loved us to the end! He loved them and he loved us to the fullest extent by living a life of radical self-denial for their benefit, culminating at the cross.

Now Jesus proceeds to give the disciples an example to follow that goes hand-in-hand with His command to love one another.

CREATED FOR GREATNESS – Equipped for the Mission

7/9/17- Pastor Randy

Notice the way John introduces Jesus actions: *Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything.... So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.*

Jesus assumed the position of a servant. For those of you unfamiliar with the culture of Jesus day, the household servant had the responsibility to wash the feet of those who came into the home. Jesus was placing himself in the lowly position of a household servant. But what did John tell us about Jesus, and what was Jesus thinking as he arose and lowered Himself in the position of a servant to wash their feet? Jesus did this knowing that He had **authority over everything**. Do you hear that?! Jesus has all authority! He is OVER everything! Not under, over!! And as the one who is OVER ALL, Jesus bends down. He knew He had authority...so he got up to bend down to serve.

Jesus did not serve despite being great, Jesus served because He was great!

Peter hadn't come to understand this truth so when Jesus came to Peter to wash his feet, Peter refused profusely. "You will never wash my feet!" I will never let you do something so "beneath you"! Jesus responded, "Peter, if you don't let me wash your feet *"you won't belong to me"*. Those words can be more literally translated, "you have no part (or partnership) with me." Jesus was saying, "Peter, if you reject my service, you are not in sync with me. You are demonstrating that you are still influenced by the world's value system, not mine. You can't be a disciple of mine if you don't get this."

Peter, still not understanding responded, "If allowing you to wash me makes me a part of you, then don't just wash my feet, wash my whole body." There goes Peter again, well intentioned as always, but a little on the slow side. Jesus response was essentially, "Peter, you don't need a bath, only your feet are dirty! This is a sermon illustration. Just sit down and be quiet so I can finish!

CREATED FOR GREATNESS – Equipped for the Mission

7/9/17- Pastor Randy

But then Jesus took the opportunity to communicate that Peter and all the other disciples, except Judas, were in a right relationship with Jesus, and therefore with the Father, because of the genuineness of their faith in Jesus. He communicated this by using the figure of speech, “You are clean.” Even though Jesus had not yet gone to the cross to affect their redemption, the forgiveness of their sins, Jesus was prophetically applying that future “cleansing of their sins” to their lives in the present.

When Jesus finished, after getting delayed by Peter, he said, “Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.”

Here is the example that Jesus intended as an illustration to illuminate his command to His disciples to “love one another, as He has loved you”. Here is what loving one another looks like. It takes the form of humbling ourselves and serving one another regardless of our rank in society. What gives “punch” to Jesus example of serving one another is the fact that He actually is greater than the rest of them. Jesus is turning the conventional definitions of status and service on their head. You are right to recognize I am greater than you, so if serving others is not beneath me, than it better not be beneath you!

Jesus’ disciples, no matter their social status, will view others as people God has called them to serve.

Luke’s account adds some details that John left out. After Jesus predicted one of them would betray him, John relates that he asked Jesus who it was, but Luke, adding to the narrative, tells us that the disciples started discussing with one another who it might be. That discussion, Luke tells us, turned into another debate among the disciples about who was the greatest among them. Two weeks ago, when I began this series, we looked at two other

occurrences where the disciples were arguing with one another over who was the greatest. This now makes three separate occasions. We ought to be careful not to be too quick to show contempt for the ease by which the disciples could be drawn into these disputes. It is more of a revelation of how similar Jesus' disciples were to us than a revelation of how different they were from us.

Worldly status seeking results from an insecurity regarding one's value and significance. The failure to properly derive our sense of value and significance from God leaves us searching to establish it by the subjective standard of one's social status. This always leaves us in the miserable position of comparing ourselves with others and competing with others in order to feel valued and significant.

The Christian's value and significance are defined by two realities in John 13:

1. We are "clean".

That is your status! You don't have to try to achieve a certain status before the world because your value is established and confirmed by "whose you are", not "who you are". People struggle and compete to be known by the world. Am I a "nobody" or am I a "somebody". This universal human struggle creates a desire to distinguish ourselves among others, to be recognized, to be respected, to be praised, to be applauded because those are the signs that we are valuable. God's answer is that you are clean. You have been forgiven of your sin and restored in your relationship with Jesus! Do you want to understand how valuable you are in God's eyes? Consider the extent he went to in order to purchase your redemption. As Peter put it, we were purchased at a price more valuable than silver or gold, the priceless blood of Christ.

2. We are "sent".

Jesus said, "the messenger is not greater than the one who sent him." Right after making that comment Jesus added, "...anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me." Not only has our value been clearly confirmed

CREATED FOR GREATNESS – Equipped for the Mission

7/9/17- Pastor Randy

through the cross, but our significance is communicated through Jesus' commissioning of His disciples. Jesus said, as the Father's representative, those who receive me are receiving the Father. In the same way, those who receive Jesus' disciples – disciples who have been sent by Jesus to represent His interests in the world, carrying His message for the world – are receiving Him. Jesus was saying that we have the mission of "carry" Him to the world. That is a high calling that should infuse all of us with a sense of purpose.

Saved ones and sent ones operate with a servant's heart.

At the beginning of this message I mentioned that Jesus actions and instructions in this chapter were clearly for the purpose of preparing His disciples for His departure...and their mission.

The qualification for being a sent one is you must operate with a servant's heart. Jesus has created us for greatness and called us to greatness, but that means he has created and called us to serve. Until we are equipped with a servant's heart we will not be prepared for our mission. If you hear the phrase created for greatness and imagine a life of privilege, power, position, prestige, possessions, and praise, then you have not heard it as God wants you to hear it. You have misunderstood "greatness". Created for greatness means we were created to be like Jesus who used His authority in order to express His love, a love that He displayed by sacrificial service for the benefit of others. Wherever the church has been effective in converting the unbelieving world to faith in Christ, love, expressed through sacrificial service to others has been a key to its effectiveness.

Here are the attributes of a servant. Pray God will develop these in you by His Spirit. A servant:

1. Is more concerned with assuming his/her responsibilities than claiming his/her rights
2. Initiates service rather than serving only when asked.
3. Serves willingly and not for a reward.

CREATED FOR GREATNESS – Equipped for the Mission

7/9/17- Pastor Randy

4. Is willing to help others advance at his/her own expense.
5. Desires to bring God glory rather than to seek it for him/herself.
6. Is not too proud to serve the “lowly” or perform the “menial” task.