

I invite you now, to open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in the Gospel of John, Chapter 13, verses 1-17. This can be found on page \_\_\_\_\_ in your pew Bibles. We continue the "Made for Mission" series today. Scripture reveals why we are on mission with Jesus.

### Our Fathers Word

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

The word of God for the people of God

Even though it was over three years ago, Peter remembered it like it was yesterday. The words barely rose above the noise of the crowd as he heard the whisper all too clear, “come and follow me.” Leaving everything else behind, not knowing what lay ahead, accompanied by a small group of men, took a leap of faith as they began a new life on mission, following Jesus. The feeling that stirred deep in his heart and soul *still remained*, confirming *this* was the best decision he ever made.

Now, after only a few busy years on mission with Jesus, it was difficult to remember what life was like when catching fish was his only duty. Now they had become fishers of men! Their small group of followers had witnessed so much during their discipleship with Christ. The blind was given sight, the lame was made to rise and walk, people rose from the dead! But even more exciting than Jesus and the disciple’s miracles, was experiencing the multitudes of lost souls flocking to and around our Lord. Their expressions of gratitude and love alone made it worth the effort.

Tonight though, something seemed different. There was something different about the mood of their Savior as they gathered in the upper room for their third Passover meal together. Everyone was shocked when Jesus, rather than remaining at his place at the head of the table, got down on his knees equipped with a water basin and a towel, and began to wash our feet!

Serving others and putting their needs first was a consistent theme from Jesus. But *this* they all thought, went a bit too far. Here was the Lord of all, and He was serving US! Peter protested the most, he yelled, “No Lord!” and pulled his feet away.

Jesus responded as he always did, He gave Peter the same tender and loving look of understanding they were all so familiar with. Then as he spoke, once again, his words changed his disciples lives forever. Peter watched in disbelief, as he once again extended his dirty feet, and the creator of the universe washed them.

Welcome to week five in our Made for Mission series. My prayer has been that the message God has been planting in our minds over the past few weeks is settling in, and taking root in your heart. That the urgency and the seriousness of Jesus mission is becoming clear to us all, and you have been encouraged to share with the lost. There is a spiritual war going on out there, and we are all called to the front line, to lay down our lives for others, just as Jesus laid down His life for us.

Like us; who needs God's grace, forgiveness, healing, restoration, and the Salvation of Jesus, there are many others out there experiencing the same need. We are in a hurting world, filled with hurting people, who have no concept of grace and forgiveness. God has plans for us to seek those lost, and bring them into a loving relationship with Him.

In case it hasn't become abundantly clear, lets recap what God has been revealing to us through scripture in this series. We are all called. No matter who we are, where we are on our journey of life, or what we have done, God has called us to live out a purpose, He has planned for our lives. Our mission is Jesus' mission. It's to grow in a loving relationship with God and to introduce Him to others. The urgency of Jesus mission is all too clear. Just look around. We must act now, it's priority number one in our lives. Following Jesus, following His will, putting Him first.

Your message is your life with Jesus. Your message is your personal story, about how God's grace touched *your* life. How God's love changed *you*! How God's goodness intersected *your* life and touched *your* soul. How God's gift of Jesus moved your heart! Where you have met Jesus in your struggles. It's been revealed that our mission field is our life. Where God has placed us, in our everyday lives, with those we live with, work with, play with, and those we meet. Knowing *that*, we must now challenge ourselves with a critical question. Why am I on mission?

It's easy for us to fall for the devil's deception of hopelessness, becoming overwhelmed by the task at hand as we give action to what needs to be done. When we start to fathom the magnitude of what the Church is responsible to do, our tendency is to feel a bit discouraged before we even begin. If we view the church as a *house* of God, a *building* for gathering and worshipping, we are destined to fail, before we even begin our life on mission with Jesus.

Once we begin to understand that the people attending worship – *WE* – are the church, *then* we begin to understand why we are on mission with Jesus. The people are the church, we are called, for *them*. God did not call us to serve a building or some denomination. We are here to lead lives to Jesus. We are here to make disciples of Christ, for the transformation of the world.

We are not here to fill the pews. Once we realize *that*, then we realize that God has given us the privilege to love, to make an impact on lives, *everywhere* we go. Once we make that impact on lives through *engaging* people where they are. Then, and only then, will we experience a revival like none other. As we engage the lost, attendance will grow.

Once upon a time, a long time ago, in a church not too far away, attendance drove engagement. We merely had to open the doors of the church, the people would arrive in droves, and THEN, we would engage them. All of that has changed. There has been a paradigm shift where now, the complete opposite is true. **Engagement drives attendance.** We are now living in a time of post-modern-Christianity, and the church is now back in the evangelistic stage of growth. Simply put, we must get up, follow Jesus and GO out, and engage the lost while we live on a life of mission with Jesus. Once we GO, and engage people out there, attendance will grow.

While we sit waiting in the comfort of our pews, waiting for people to attend, opportunities to engage the lost out there in the world are passing us by, and attendance doesn't change. Why am I on Mission? Sometimes the truth eludes us, but here, look around, the truth is quite evident. We must accept the fact that we live in an ever-changing culture, and we must adapt to that change if we are to make any impact on lives. We must make relationships engaging with today's generation.

I understand how simple it can be to sit here with our brothers and sisters getting encouraged to go out and engage people, but actually pulling that off is no easy task. It's simple, but it's not easy. I understand how we can slide right back into our comfort zone, and rationalize, "can't I just be a regular mom instead of a mom on mission? Is it really necessary for me to see my work place as my mission field? Can't I *just attend* church, like everyone else? My day is long and tough enough, do I really have to force spiritual conversations on complete and total strangers?" Once we stop allowing our relationship with Jesus to be compartmented, and we include Him in all areas, the results we hope for will happen.

Let me illustrate: Let's say for instance that our relationship with Jesus is like having dinner with him. He would like for us to enjoy a pot-pie, not a TV-dinner. Those well-known TV-dinners have those separate compartments. Designed to keep all the foods apart. We can open one compartment and devour our Salisbury-steak and never touch those yucky carrots. In the same way, we break our life into compartments. We have our family area, the friend's area, there's the work area, and the play area, and one for our spiritual beliefs.

In this TV-dinner model of our relationship, you feel a strong desire for sharing Christ while in your church compartment on Sunday, but that doesn't really mix well with the other compartments of your life. The main flaw here, is that Jesus is interested in your whole life, not one compartment.

With the pot-pie on the other hand, everything is blended together beautifully, so there is no picking and choosing. The chicken, peas, carrots, and potatoes are *all* in *each bite* whether you like it or not. The same is true with our relationship with God, there is a unity that occurs when all areas of your life become available to God. His command is for us to love him with **ALL** of our hearts, *all* of our minds, *all* of our souls, *all* of our *life*. Jesus wants to touch every part of our lives in our relationship with Him. We must get rid of the compartments, open up every area to God, and make our whole life accessible to Him.

In today's scripture text, we find Jesus and His disciples enjoying the evening meal. According to the Gospel of Luke (22:24), it was following a dispute as to which of the disciples should be considered the greatest, when Jesus then rose from his seat, disrobed, wrapped a towel around his waist, knelt down, and washed the disciples feet.

Even within sight of the cross, the disciples were still arguing about matters of precedence and prestige. It very well may be that this very argument made the situation which caused Jesus to act as he did. Because their small group had no servants to carry out the duty of washing feet, and because they had gotten themselves into such a state of competitive pride, that not one of them would accept the duty of seeing that the water and towels were there to wash the feet of the company as they came in; so Jesus mends the situation in the most dramatic way.

Jesus once again assumes the duty of a slave. Few incidences in the gospel story so reveal the character of Jesus and so perfectly show his love. He himself did what none of them was prepared to do. Then he said: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

This should really make us stop and think. So often, even in churches, trouble arises because someone doesn't understand his place. Here is the lesson that there is only one kind of greatness, the greatness of service. The world is full of people who are standing on their dignity when they should be kneeling at the feet of their brethren. When we are tempted to think of our dignity, our prestige, our rights, we should remember the picture of the son of God, towel around his waist, kneeling at our feet, setting example that you should do as he has done for you.

He tells us to go do the same for others. As I've poured into you now you pour into others.

Jesus knew that all things had been given into *his* hands, *his* power. He knew that his hour of humiliation was near, but he knew that his hour of glory was also near. Such knowledge might have filled him up with pride; and yet, with the knowledge of the power and the glory that were his, he washed the disciples feet.

At the very moment when he could have had supreme pride, he had supreme humility. Love is always like that. When, for example, a person falls ill, the person who loves him will perform the most menial services and enjoy to do them, because love is like that. Sometimes people feel that they are too distinguished to do the humble things, too important to do some menial task. Jesus was not so. He knew that he was Lord of all, and yet he washed his disciples feet.

Jesus knew that he had come from God, and that he was going to God. He may like us, have had a *contempt for men* and for the *things of this world*. He might well have thought that he was finished with the world for now, for he was on his way to God. However, it was just at that time, when *God was nearest to him* that Jesus went to the depths and the limits of his service to men. Washing the feet of guests was the duty of a slave. The disciples of Rabbis were supposed to provide services for their master's personal service, but *this* would have never been dreamed of. The wonderful thing about Jesus is that his nearness to God, doesn't separate him from men, it drew him nearer than ever to them.

There is no one closer to people than the person who is close to God. There is a legend of St. Francis of Assisi. One day he was riding alone outside the city when he saw a leper, a mass of sores, a horrible sight.

Ordinarily Francis would have recoiled in horror from this hideous wreck of humanity. But something moved inside him; he dismounted from his horse and flung his arms around the leper; and as he embraced him the leper turned into the figure of Jesus. **PAUSE** The nearer we are to suffering humanity, the nearer we are to God.

Jesus knew this also. He was well aware he was about to be betrayed. Such knowledge could have easily turned him to bitterness, anger, and hatred; but it made his heart run out in greater love than ever. The astounding thing was, the more people hurt Jesus, the more Jesus loved them. The easy, or the natural thing for Jesus to do would be to *resent their wrong*, and grow bitter under insult and injury; but Jesus met the greatest injury and supreme disloyalty, with the greatest humility and the supreme love.

We have already seen that in the Gospel of John we have to always be looking for two meanings, the meaning that lies on the surface and that spiritual meaning that lies below the surface. In this story, there is definitely a second meaning. On the surface it's a dramatic and unforgettable lesson in humility. But there is more to it than that. As we take a look at that underlying meaning it will continue to become clearer Why you are on mission.

There is one very difficult passage. Peter refuses to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus tells him that unless he accepts this washing, he will have no part with him. Peter begs, not only his feet then, but his hands and head should be washed. The difficult sentence, and the one with the inner meaning is, "He who has been bathed has need only to have his feet washed."

Beyond a doubt, there is reference to Christian baptism here. The phrase “unless you are washed, you can have no part in me.” Is a way of saying, “Unless you pass through the gate of baptism, you have no part in the church.”

The point is this. It was the custom that before people went to a feast they bathed themselves. When they came to the house of the host, they only needed to have their feet washed. The washing of the feet was a ceremony which preceded entry into the house where they were to be guests. We could call it, “the washing of entry into the house.” Jesus is essentially saying to peter, “It is not the bathing of your body that you require. That you can do for yourself. What you need is the washing which marks entry into the household of the faith.”

This gives us a little extra insight. Peter at first is going to refuse to allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus says that if he does, he will have no part in him. It is as if Jesus said: “Peter, are you going to be too proud to let me do this for you? If you are, you will lose everything.”

In the early Church, and still today, the way in is the way of baptism. Baptism is what we would call the washing of entry. God is allowing you to open that gate for them. You have the supreme duty of a life on mission with Jesus, meeting people where they are, sharing, leading them into a loving relationship with God, making disciples by baptizing them in Jesus name.

The more you serve and sacrifice the more you are with Christ. The more you serve and sacrifice out of an overflowing heart, the more you are like Christ. The deeper you go, the more you get immersed in God’s love. It’s only here that you truly learn that Jesus is enough. If you have Him you have all that you need.

Don't give up on a God who has never given up on you. Satan whispers in our ear—you can't do it. Don't stretch yourself. You'll fail. Don't believe the deception. God pours in His love and strength and encouragement—I still believe in you. I'm not done with you. The best is still to come. You have no idea. Just trust me. One more day. Get back up. I'll be strong in your weakness. I've got this. You're not alone.

The Foundation of Peters Mission flowed from His Identity in Christ and the same must be true for you as well. Who knows—even in your worst moments, you might serve to help others when they feel like they are failing. Keep on Mission.

Let us close with the words of Jesus, “now that you know these things, you will be blessed.”

LET US PRAY        Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your grace and your love that is so engaging  
you sent a messenger to us when we were lost in this world.

A messenger of salvation. Your Son, our Lord Jesus.

Thank you for restoring us to wholeness, to follow you Jesus, to be your disciples,  
living our lives on mission with you, engaging the lost where ever we go.

Father we pray that you will give us your eyes for the lost.

Through your pouring out of the holy spirit into our lives,

    may we be receptive to your calling, in the very moment, to serve others.

Bring multitudes of people to us, everywhere we are, to share our story with,

To serve, and to lead into a loving relationship with you Lord.

So that they may be washed, through baptism, for entry into your house.

May all we do bring you all the glory.

AMEN