

Soul Business - Service

Introduction:

Though foot washing was commonplace in Jewish first-century Greco-Roman culture and used for various purposes such as religious cleansing, daily cleansing, or as an act of hospitality as someone enters a home, ancient sources show that it was a lowly and degrading task with social implications. In that time, washing feet would be considered beneath those with "higher" status, and if someone in a subservient role like a child, wife, or student washed their "master's" feet, it was an act of extreme devotion. According to some Jewish sources, the task of foot washing was so menial that it was reserved for Gentiles. It was a task even beneath Jewish slaves. Even so, in this passage, Jesus takes off his outer robe, puts himself physically in a humble posture, and washes feet. Jesus sets an example here of humble service, not placing himself above those he is leading and teaching but taking the posture of servant and slave. This teaching is echoed in other places within the Gospels as well where Jesus says, "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master" (Matt. 10:24; cf. Luke 6:40; John 15:20). Meaning that if our Lord, Teacher, and Savior is not above washing the feet of his disciples, it should not be beneath us to wash the feet of our neighbors. This section foreshadows the sacrifice that Jesus will make on the cross and points us to how we should sacrificially love and serve one another without regard for perceived status as Jesus has served us.

Read Your Bible

- Galatians 5:13-14
- John 13:12-14

Apply God's Word to Your Life:

1. Have you ever worked in any service industry? What does it look like to love your neighbor in this context?
2. Talk about a time when someone did something unexpected for you.
3. What are some things we wear or carry that would tell other people about our social status?
4. Have you ever had your feet washed either in a religious ceremony or a salon-style pedicure? Describe your experience.
5. Jesus removed his outer garment before washing the disciples' feet. Why is this important?
6. What are some things that may hold us back from loving and serving like Jesus?
7. What is one intentional way you can love and serve your neighbor this week?

Reflecting on the text:

1. What have you learned about God?
2. What have you learned about the world?
3. What have you learned about yourself?

Pray

Heavenly Father, We give you thanks and praise for the example set by Your Son, Jesus. That he would love us enough to take on the posture of a humble servant so that we would know how to love one another. Lord, help us to see ways that we can love and serve our neighbors as you have loved and served us. When we serve others, may it be for Your glory and so that others would know we are Christians by how we love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.