

Subject: Jesus – Our Perfect Example

Scripture: John 13:12-17, 31-35

In this chapter we have the best and worst kind of character side by side. We see the worst in Judas and the best in Jesus. Judas is an example none of us must follow. Jesus is the example all of us should follow. Two things stand about Jesus stand out in this chapter, His humility and His love. He gave us an example of humble service and genuine love, and in both cases He told us to follow His example.

Ephesians 5:1 *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.*

We are to be followers (literally, imitators) of God, as dear children acting like God our Father. That begs the question, how can we follow the example of God who is invisible? Jesus is God in human flesh. One of the great blessings of the incarnation is that we have the example of Jesus in human flesh. Remember the four letter slogan a few years ago, WWJD (What would Jesus do?)...we can actually do better than that: WDJD (What did Jesus do).

JESUS IS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF TRUE HUMILITY (vs. 12-17)

Jesus reminded them of His exalted position. He was their Master and Lord, and yet He humbled Himself and washed their feet. This was one of the lowest things He could have done. He set the pattern for His disciples to follow. It is one thing to know the lesson of humility, but it is another thing to actually do it (vs. 17). We find three things here: a lesson, a challenge, and a promise. We should understand this passage in the light of other Scripture:

Luke 22:24-27²⁴ *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*²⁵ *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*²⁶ *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*²⁷ *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

Philippians 2:3-8³ *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*⁴ *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*⁵ *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*⁶ *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*⁷ *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*⁸ *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

1 Peter 2:21 *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

True humility is not natural. We are by nature self-centered and proud. We tend to focus on our wants and feel we are entitled to some things. If anybody should have been self-centered, it was Jesus. If anybody had a right to be proud, it was Jesus. If anybody should have felt entitled, it was Jesus.

How can we know true humility? One sure mark of a humble person is putting others first. William Booth was founder of the Salvation Army. In his later years he was unable to attend

their annual convention, but he sent a message to be read by a spokesman. On the piece of paper was one word he had written by hand: "Others."

Another mark of humility is contentment. Contentment is not like a cousin to humility, but more like a brother. A humble person is content with his resources and his circumstances. Like Paul the humble person can say, **Philippians 4:11** *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

The disciples were self-centered when they should have been focused on others. They wanted position and power when they should have been contented with their circumstances.

JESUS IS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF GENUINE LOVE (vs. 34-35)

Jesus spoke of three things here. He gave us a command, an example, and a sign. This is a command, not an option. We are to love one another as He loved us. The world will know that we are followers of Christ if we love one another. So it is something that is seen and known. 2 Timothy 2:19 says that the Lord knows them that are His. The Lord knows who His people are because He can see the heart and He knows if we have repented of sin and if we really trust in Christ as our Lord and Savior. The world knows if we are His by the love that we show for one another. This means two things: the world is watching and real love is evident for all to see. We love one another as Jesus loves us.

- This is unconditional love

Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* He loved us when we were unlovely and unlovable. **1 John 4:19** *We love him, because he first loved us.* Do we love people who hurt us, or do we only love people who love us in return? **Luke 6:32-35** ³² *For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.* ³³ *And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.* ³⁴ *And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.* ³⁵ *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*

- This is unchangeable love

Jesus loved the disciples to the end (vs. 1). He loved Judas in spite of his betrayal. He loved Peter in spite of his denial. He loved all the disciples in spite of their sin and shortcomings. Look at Peter's question in verse 36 and its connection to verse 33. You have to wonder if Peter even heard what Jesus said in verses 34-35. Genuine love is patient; love is kind; love is forbearing; love is unchangeable. **1 Peter 4:8** *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

*To live above with those we love
Oh, that will be glory;
But to dwell below with those we know
Now that's a different story.*

How do we know if we have true humility and genuine love? A good test is our actions. A better test is our reactions. When someone or something jostles you, what spills out?

APPLYING THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR LIFE

1) Realize the ripple effects of humility and love

Ephesians 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. This affects every relationship in life: husband and wife; parents and children; employers and employees. If we follow Christ's example of humility and love we will bless our family and our church family, but if we lack humility and love we will hurt our family and church family.

Every morning I look at our family picture from David and Emily's wedding last October and pray over my family. That picture is a reminder that my attitudes and actions will affect everyone in that picture. I need to be humble and loving because of the ripple effects.

2) To follow Jesus' example you must focus on Him

Every morning I need to realize who He is and what he does and says. I need to get Him fixed in my heart and mind. Whatever gets your attention will get you. Whoever gets your attention will get you.

3) To be like Christ you need Christ's presence and power

The good news is that every Christian has His presence and power. Having Christ as our example is a blessing, but there's something even better, and that's having the Spirit of Christ in you so you can live by His example. When I watch professional athletes I'm amazed how good they are. I could watch the best golfer and try my best to imitate their swing, but I'm going to fail and get frustrated. But what if that golfer could somehow come inside me and help me play golf? That would make all the difference.