

June 28, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 13:12-20

1. Do you confess that Jesus is your Teacher and Master?
2. Can anyone tell by the way you live that Jesus is your Savior and Lord?
3. Do you live according to Christ's righteousness which He presented by many examples?
4. What is the connection between receiving the message about Christ and receiving Him?
5. If you have received Christ, what is your standing of acceptance with God the Father?

YOU CALL HIM TEACHER AND MASTER

John 13:12-20

I have a friend who says that statistics never put him under conviction. By that he means that preachers who site surveys and throw out statistics about any number of religious issues really don't impact him spiritually. Be that as it may, here are some new statistics from the latest Pew Research Center survey regarding the decline of Christianity in America.

The estimated number of people in our culture who claim to be Christians has dropped from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% as of last month. More precisely, the number of people who identify

themselves as evangelical Christians (i.e. rather serious Christians) fell by about 1% while the number of people who now refuse to identify themselves by any denominational or Christian category rose from 16% to 23%. Reflecting much of that change is the number of professing Christians who claim to be part of a mainline denomination. That number fell from 18.1% to 14.7%. While this decline is taking place, the number of "non-Christian" religious people grew from 4.7% to 5.9%. I realize that you are not now under conviction, but we ought to be awakened a little bit.

We might wonder why there are fewer and fewer professing Christians in America in these modern days. I believe the answer to be partly due to the fact that more people in our culture are telling the truth. I doubt there ever were 78% of Americans who were true followers of Jesus, and I seriously doubt that anywhere near 70% of Americans today are really Christians. The number might be closer to 2% or 3%.

Why the cynicism? Why the negativity? Jesus taught in this story (as well as many other recorded situations) that people who truly receive Him recognize that He is their Lord and Master and will do as He has done. How many of the 223,300,000 (i.e. 70% of a population of 319 million) who claim to be Christians ever live like Jesus? How many of them even know Jesus? How many of them have read the story of Jesus? How many of them ever pray to Jesus? How many of them ever one time stopped to ask, "What would Jesus do?" Even somewhat accurate answers to those questions force us to admit that not everyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus is a follower.

On the night before wicked men crucified Jesus, He gave a vivid illustration of what humble service looks like by washing the disciples' feet. Then He taught the disciples a very important lesson. He reminded them that He was the Master and that we who call ourselves His servants should follow His example. If we do not, cannot, or are just not interested, it is likely that we have not received Him. If we have not received Jesus, we have not placed faith in God. If we have not placed faith in God, we are no different than the other billions of people who have lived and died without hope.

Be Taught by the Teacher (vv.12-17).

It appears that Jesus asked the disciples an interesting question. Did He ask, “Do you understand that you should wash each others’ feet” (vv.12-14)? According to verse twelve the question came immediately after Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet. *When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place (v.12a)*. All agree that such an action smacked with genuine humility. Jesus had often taught the importance of humility. He taught that the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourning, the merciful people are happy (Mat. 5:2-7). He taught that the last shall be first and the first last (Mat. 19:20). He taught the disciples specifically, *“But whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:26)*. Those were good lessons. What does the humility look like?

Now Jesus has illustrated what that servant attitude looks like by humbling Himself to wash His followers’ feet. *He said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you?” (v.12b)*. Yes, it does appear that Jesus asked if the disciples understood the example. But we might wonder, “What’s to understand?” The obvious fact is that Jesus was their leader and teacher, but He willingly washed their dirty feet. Everyone understood that the Master had just done the work of the servant. Okay, but remember in the process that Jesus applied the very important principle of His work of cleansing.

Consider John’s account of the incident in verses six through ten. (6) *He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” (7) Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” (8) Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” (9) Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” (10) Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you” (John 13:6-10)*.

Jesus literally cleansed twenty-four dirty feet, because he loved the owners of those feet. But that was only illustrative. He was about to provide cleansing for millions of dirty souls because He loves us. Jesus of Nazareth was equal with God, but He humbled Himself, became the Servant of God and provided the means for cleansing sinners from their sins. When Jesus taught the disciples that he who

would be first among them must be servant of all, the next thing He said was, *“Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28)*.

The action was impacting. But the principle of example is the lesson that needs to be understood (vv.13-14). There is no argument that Jesus is the Master. Jesus said to the disciples, *“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am” (v.13)*. Indeed, He is our Teacher. Is that important? The “teacher” in that day was often more than our concept of a teacher in a public school or at piano lessons. This was especially true of Jesus. Everyone recognized that He taught with unique authority. Some perceptive people, like Nicodemus, concluded that Jesus was a teacher come from God (John 3:2). Many people concluded that He taught the way of God truly (Luke 20:21).

But to His followers Jesus is more than another instructor or even a very gifted instructor. The word translated “teacher” (*didaskalos*) can also be translated to mean “master.” In a disciple/master relationship, the follower desires to become just like the master. Therefore, we are not only learning from Jesus but submitting to His commands because He is Master and Teacher.

Furthermore, Jesus pointed out that He is our Lord. This well known Greek word, *kurios*, refers to the ruling one, the authority, and is rightly translated “Master.” Jesus proved that He is master over the elements of nature, sickness, spirit world, and even death. Because He is unequivocally the Master, all who follow Him must be servants. Our chief response as servants is humble submission to the Master’s will.

Many people acknowledge these truths on the surface. They can read and understand the story of Jesus that presents Him as Master. They can repeat words that speak of a Master/servant relationship. But what does the professor’s “doing” reveal?

If Jesus is really our Teacher and Master, we should do what He does. That is what Jesus taught those disciples and us disciples. *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet (v.14)*. Oh! It looks like we have missed a very important command from Jesus because we don’t do foot washing as a church. There are groups of professing Christians who elevate this practice to an ordinance to be observed regularly like

baptism and the Lord's supper. Granted, that would require humility on the part of the washer. So, too, the pope and some high officials of the ecclesiastical church organizations wash the feet of lesser leaders or even the poor to show humility like Jesus' on Maundy Thursday.

Are these groups and these religious leaders obeying Scripture? No, because nowhere does the Scripture give any idea that this is a command to be followed by believers in a later age. It is true that a widow who qualified for church support, according to Paul's instruction to the church, would do this humble duty (1 Tim. 5:10). But washing people's feet was a necessary practice of hospitality in a day of dusty roads and sandals or bare feet. We don't live there. So what did Jesus mean if He didn't mean we are supposed to literally wash each other's feet?

Did you learn from example (vv.15-16)? That is what our Teacher desired to know. Our Teacher gives examples for a reason. He said, "*For I have given you an example*" (v.15a). The foot washing was an example, not a command. There are two key points here that we must not miss. First, Jesus, the Master, performed a humble service for the servants who needed to practice humility like this. Second, Jesus, the Master, came to provide the means for complete, spiritual cleansing. That cleansing from sin is available is the most important message in history. That message is the possession of every follower of Christ. If we follow the example of Christ's humility and provision, we will give our lives to demonstrate and share the message.

This idea fits well with the clear fact that Jesus our Master and Teacher has given many examples. He gave us the example of how to respond to persecution. *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly* (1 Peter 2:23). He gave us the example of how we should think about ourselves. *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men* (Philippians 2:5-7). He gave us the example of how to respond to the Father's will. *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be*

possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39).

Examples demonstrate righteous living. They do not establish the means to righteousness. Jesus gave us examples *that you also should do just as I have done to you* (v.15b). We should do just as our Lord Jesus has done, but not in an effort to be forgiven of sin. True teaching is that *He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit* (Titus 3:5). Paul also wrote, *And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness* (Romans 4:5). We do not follow Jesus' example in order to be redeemed. He paid the only acceptable price to provide redemption.

We follow His example, we do as our Lord has done in order to reflect glory to God. Jesus told us to let the light of our good works be like lights set on a hill. Why? *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16). God the Father is glorified when sinners come to Jesus and are forgiven by grace through faith in Him. *When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him"* (John 13:31). Doing as Christ has done demonstrates God's work of regeneration which makes a sinner a saint. *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness* (Romans 6:13).

The principle exceeds the practice. Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him"* (v.16). Jesus is our Master, we are His servants. The principle He taught is that the Master is greater than the servant. Everyone knows that. Specifically, Jesus is the Christian's master. Real Christians understand that we are the servants.

Because He is our Master, Jesus sends us with His message. As Master this is His prerogative. As servants this is our responsibility. Paul described the situation as us being stewards, managers of God's astonishing message of the gospel. *This is how one should regard us,*

as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

This principle of stewardship applies to all practices in life not just foot washing. Everything we do reflects on Jesus whose message we are managing. Everything we do is on purpose to be able to illustrate Christ's character so that we can have opportunity to tell others about Him. We follow our Master's example in order to create opportunities to tell observers about our Master.

Jesus boiled down the matter of faithfulness in what we do to a simple result. Do you want to be happy (v.17)? If so, we need to know the principles of servant-hood. Jesus said, "*If you know these things...*" (v.17a). That little word *if* implies doubt. The word implies that a servant of Christ ought to understand the principles He taught and exemplified. But the word also indicates that some who claim to be servants of Christ might not know or understand. That would be primarily due to the fact that all who profess to be followers are not. Judas clearly did not grasp the servant/Master principle. True followers of Jesus should know the servant principle.

Doing what you know to be right results in happiness. If you know these things, *blessed are you if you do them (v17)*. We can know that we ought to act like servants but struggle to carry it out. We struggle because human nature, our flesh, is thoroughly like Satan. We struggle against being proud and self-centered. The idea that we are to act like servants is easy enough to understand. But often words are cheap.

When we are in the middle of the servant-hood thing, our flesh will rise up in rebellion and try to convince us that there is a better way to live life. Therefore, since this struggle will always be present because of our natural desires, what hope is there for a person who is unfamiliar with the work and ministry of God the Holy Spirit within our souls?

Receive the Master (vv.18-20).

It is almost shocking for us to be reminded in this context that the Master intentionally chose a traitor (v.18). Why did He do that? The Master knows that everyone in the group isn't going to buy into

the servant-hood thing. Having said that the disciples will be happy if they do the things they know are right, Jesus quickly informed the disciples, "*I am not speaking of all of you*" (v.18a).

On a previous occasion, Jesus had pointed out that not everyone in the group was on board. *Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil" (John 6:70)*. He had just mentioned that not all of them were cleansed from sin (v.10). There are multitudes of people who appear to be part of the group, but following Jesus' example of servant-hood is not on their bucket list. They know in their conscience that something about religion is good and right. They have been taught by sincere parents and grandparents that they ought to be connected to some kind of religious organization. They are pretty sure that good works on occasion will put them in good standing. But to make a sacrifice in order to exalt the name of Christ doesn't compute with people like that.

People like that are satisfied with just enough religion. They do church when it is convenient. They give a bit of an offering if they have some left over after the game or vacation or Christmas. But putting themselves in an uncomfortable situation to talk about the gospel or making a sacrifice to stand for the truth that Christ taught is not going to happen. People like that look "chosen," but they are not.

Again, and still, we wonder why Jesus chose Judas if He knew the guy was a fraud. The Master makes choices based on the authority of the Bible. He assured us, "*I know whom I have chosen*" (v.18b). In divine omniscience, God the Son chose the twelve followers. He invited Judas to follow just like He invited Matthew, Peter, James, John and all the rest of those guys to follow Him.

Jesus specifically chose Judas knowing full well that the man would turn Him over to the rulers who would kill Him. We would not make that choice or offer the invitation. Why did our Master do that? He lived to fulfill the promises of God's Word. *But the Scripture will be fulfilled, "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me"* (v.18c). God the Son came to do God the Father's will. God the Son came to do all that was written about Him in the Old Testament Scripture. After He had been crucified, buried, and risen from the grave, Jesus reminded a couple of the disciples, "*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written*

about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). Because He would do all that the Bible promised, God the Son had to call the very man who would betray Him to come and be part of the inner circle.

So, too, Jesus used the example of Judas to teach that many are called but few being chosen. He taught that lesson in the context of the story of the king who invited many to his son’s wedding feast, but they didn’t comply. They were called but not chosen. One fellow did respond to the invitation. But he showed up not being clothed properly and was promptly thrown out. He was called but not chosen. Jesus’ concluded that lesson from the story by saying, *“For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).* It speaks of those who have tasted the work of the Holy Spirit and then walked away (Hebrews 6:4-8). These are those who go out from us because they are not of us (1 John 2.19).

Furthermore, the Master chose a traitor because He is divinely wise (v.19). He instructed the followers about the future. *“I am telling you this now, before it takes place.”* This statement referred to Judas betraying Jesus to death. Jesus simply forewarned the disciples though it didn’t register with them even when Judas went out to do the dastardly deed.

By foretelling this deed, Jesus proved again that He is equal with God the Father. He told the disciples ahead of time *“that when it does take place you may believe that I am he” (v.19b).* Jesus desired to give the disciples a heads up. More important it was another proof that Jesus knew the future because He is God. How could He have been surprised when a follower He chose betrayed Him? It was through infinite, perfect wisdom that Jesus chose Judas to follow Him.

Judas rejected Jesus because that is what he wanted to do, in spite of the fact that Jesus invited him to follow. Divine wisdom on Jesus’ part chose the devil. Divine wisdom on our part receives the Master (v.20). People cannot reject the messenger and receive the Master. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me” (v.20a).* Jesus was even then preparing His followers so He could send them out with His message. That is His work with each of us who have received Him by faith. Everyone who rejects us who proclaim the message of Jesus Christ also rejects Jesus Christ.

Being a steward of His message is very important.

People cannot reject the Son and receive the Father. Whoever receives Christ’s messenger receives Him, *“and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me” (v.20b).* Any religion that does not present the message that Jesus of Nazareth is equal with God rejects God. Anyone who rejects God has no hope regardless of how favorably they speak of the God they reject or how many works they do in an attempt to make that God happy.

A person calls Jesus Teacher and Master whenever he or she claims to be a Christian. Can anyone tell by the way you live that Jesus is your Savior and Lord? Do you live according to His righteousness which He presented by many examples? If you have truly received the message about Christ, you have received Him. If you have received Christ, you rejoice in your acceptance with God the Father.