

Hospitality in Becoming a Servant

Scripture Reading — John 13:1-17

“Now that I . . . 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.” — John 13:14-15

In our culture today, we don’t have an automatic equivalent to Jesus’ instruction to wash one another’s feet. But we can figure out that it’s mainly about showing hospitality and serving one another.

The roads of Palestine were unpaved, and with sandals as the common footwear, people’s feet would get really dirty—sometimes caked with dust and mud. As a result, before you entered someone’s home, a servant would come with a pitcher of water and a towel and wash your feet. It was a customary act of hospitality—like someone offering to hang up your coat and scarf on a cold day as you entered their warm home.

On the night of the last supper, Jesus took the role of a servant as he got up from the meal and began washing his disciple’s feet. In doing this, Jesus was teaching his disciples an important spiritual principle. We come to Jesus with nothing of our own, and we must receive from him and be ministered to by him before we have anything to give. Then, having been served, we go and do the same, sharing with others the fullness that God has poured into our hearts.

In this example, Jesus provided a profound symbol of his call to servanthood. Following him is not about position, power, or prestige. We serve because Christ has served us first.

Prayer

Father, help us to see that your Son, by kneeling at our feet, has done everything for us. Enable us to find joy and fulfillment in serving others as we have been served by you. Amen.

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