



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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HG120: The Last Words Of Jesus
A Pattern Of Love To Follow

John 13:1-17

Home Group Study Notes

10 April 2016 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Are there jobs or responsibilities in church which you consider to be equivalent to foot washing?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG120: The Last Words Of Jesus A Pattern Of Love To Follow

John 13:1-17

Home Group Sermon Notes

10 April 2016 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction

Few incidents in the gospels reveal Jesus character like this one does or show the depths of his love. V1 tells us that Jesus displayed to them the full extent of his love, other versions say *“he loved them to the end.”* A better way to put it would be to say that Jesus showed them the lengths to which his love would go. It was their last supper and very soon the disciples would fully understand who he was, but rather than using this one last time with his disciples to take privileged place as teacher and master he choose to serve his friends and wash their feet. They had seen him hailed as a king as he triumphantly entered Jerusalem on a donkey and they were beginning to realise that he was the true Messiah but he wanted them to know that that there were no limits to his love for them and he was willing to humble himself to the lowliest level because he was in fact the Servant King, the Suffering Servant predicted by Isaiah (42:1-4, 52:13-53:12).

It was just before Passover Feast, the time when Jews remembered and celebrated the Old Covenant that God had made with his people when he delivered them from Egypt. Each year they remembered it and in obedience to God’s command they would eat roast lamb as a memorial and celebration of their deliverance. Timing is everything and as usual God’s timing was perfect because now, again at Passover, he prepared to deliver and redeem all humanity once and for all, this time, through the death of Jesus, the true Lamb of God. Palestine was a hot and dusty place and the people of the day wore open sandals, flimsy things made up of a sole held on by some straps and because there were no nice clean pavements back then, no drainage with underground sewage systems feet could end up a bit messy and smelly so there were always great big pots full of water at the door of houses and it was the job of a lowly foreign servant, not even that of a Hebrew slave, to clean people’s feet on entrance. On this occasion there was no one to do it. The foot washer had not shown up.

One after the other the disciples enter the room and to their disappointment they discover there’s no foot-washer. Each of them think its not their job to wash feet so one by one they take the next best remaining seat next to Jesus, because although they were happy for Jesus to be their Lord and Master they were also keen to establish themselves as second in command so the nearer they sat next to him the better they looked. Luke’s account of the last meal together describes the shameful situation where a dispute arose among the disciples as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest, Luke 22:24.

4: How do you react when you know practical jobs need to be done, e.g. church cleaning, a neighbours garden, etc.

5: Is it possible to serve like Jesus without being taken advantage of?

6: What has this chapter revealed to you about your attitude toward serving?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Do you find it easier to serve or have other people serve you? What does your answer reveal about you?

2: Do you consider yourself to be an ambitious person at work, or socially? How does that impact on your Christian life positively and negatively?

3: We all serve others in many ways. What is it that makes you choose to carry out one act of service over another? Discuss your reasons.

There was obviously competitiveness and ambition among the disciples and even when Jesus was in sight of the cross there were still arguments among them about matters of their own superiority and prestige.

The Humility of Jesus

Perhaps it was the arguments over their position and with a sense of disappointment, that as none of his friends were willing to wash his feet, just before the meal was about to be served Jesus got up, he looked at the filthy feet of the disciples, - the smell was apparent, he took a towel and placed it around himself and did the job none of the others would do. He took the role of the servant and after taking off his outer garment he bent down and washed their feet. Shamed into silence and with only the sound of water dripping and splashing Jesus carefully and deliberately set about washing every foot. Each one had the same care lavished on them as the Lord of Glory crawled on his hands and knees and bent over them cleaning their feet all because none of them was willing to stoop that low to serve him. On the way to becoming the Servant King Jesus became the disciples servant.

Paul says this in Philippians 2:6-11 *“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross!”*

False Humility

When Peter refused to have his feet washed Jesus told him that unless he did he would have no part in him, appalled at the thought he insisted that Jesus wash his head and hands as well. In response to being shamed by Jesus, Peter's pride is hurt, its as if he is saying, *“no I'm not worthy I cant allow you to do this for me,”* but its a false humility, he like the others had been shown up and was unwilling to allow himself to be served. They had all missed the point of this foot washing parable.

As Jesus served them by washing their feet leaving all the dirt and grime on his hands he was giving them an image of what his death would do for their lives. The reason he came was that through his death they would be washed clean and all their sins would be laid on him. If Peter did not allow himself to be washed he could not belong to Jesus. He may have been Jesus friend the past 3 years, chosen by him to be the foundation for the church but Peter would have to willingly accept the service that Christ offered and acknowledge his need of him to forgive him and cleanse him from his sin or else he would have no part of Jesus. It is no good just knowing about Jesus, the devil knows all about Jesus yet chooses not to obey him, we have to know him personally and that means taking the first step and accepting his free gift of grace and forgiveness when we acknowledge our need of him and his Lordship over us. We grow when we put into practice what we see him doing and there is little point in keeping our knowledge of him in our hearts and to ourselves, we need to put it into practice and serve as he did.

Someone once said, *"It is possible to give without loving but impossible to love without giving."* Service is an act of loving. This was what Jesus is communicating so graphically here. We need to surrender our pride to the hands of Christ, as he bends over the bowl and scrubs us clean, that is how our salvation comes. *"If I don't wash you"*, said Jesus, *"you have no part of me."* It is sometimes by accepting the service of others for us that we show a servant's heart. If we only serve, and refuse to be served, it can be a sign of deeply rooted and well-hidden pride. We often find it very hard to accept help from others but humility begins with the readiness to receive not with giving. Being able to serve carries with it the real danger of encouraging an inflated ego as well as condescension in our giving of service. Here, Peter's independent pride was exposed, once he came to his senses he would rather wash the feet of Jesus than let Jesus wash his feet, but then, later Peter would insist, he would rather die for Jesus than let Jesus die for him. Peter had a lot to learn.

Jesus is giving us a picture of what he can do for us on a daily basis because although we know that at the cross he provided for us a once and for all cleansing of our sins past, present and future, things still happen daily to make us dirty. We continue to sin and a barrier can form between us and the Father making it difficult for us to feel we can come into his presence. Our salvation is still secure but our relationship with the Father becomes strained and if left unchecked we can become distant from him and in the long term start to doubt his love and our salvation. Jesus says a daily foot wash is all we need to prevent this from happening, in other words all we need do is come to him daily, admit what's gone wrong, where we have made wrong choices and so on, acknowledge that he has the desire and the power to make us clean again and once we say sorry and receive His forgiveness we are made clean again and we can then once more move on. There is no room for pride here, none of us are worthy, none of us deserve to be forgiven and accepted by God, but there is no other way. We need to humble ourselves before the Humble King.

There is no room either for pride in the service of God, if we do something well for him, then let him have the glory, it belongs to him, not us, our pride can rob God of his praise when we accept people's praise for a job well done. Someone once asked Corrie ten Boom if she had a hard time serving and staying humble. This was what she said: *"When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on the back of a donkey, and everyone was waving palm branches and throwing garments on the road and singing praises, do you think that for one moment it even entered the head of that donkey that any of it was for him?"* She smiled and went on, *"If I can be the donkey on which Jesus Christ rides in His glory, I give Him all the praise and all the honour."* Sometimes we feel that we are too important, (though we'd never admit it), to carry out menial tasks, we're too busy with more important stuff, we need to use our time better and so on, Jesus was never like that, He knew he was Lord yet he chose to perform the most menial duties of a slave and wash feet and do it with such care, love and grace.

A Pattern to follow

As a follower of Christ service is not an option, we can't be too busy or too tired to serve, nor can we always choose how we want to serve either.

Its not a case of wanting to do the best jobs regardless of how long we have been going to church. The reason we serve is because Jesus served us, the reason we serve is because we want to help people, we want to show them Jesus, ultimately we want our service to count for eternity because we want our service to lead people to Jesus. Loving service is no longer an option. The only question is where and how. Jesus shows us that his love is both practical and sacrificial, he has shown us a pattern for us to follow, we are to love even when it is hard to do so and to serve even when we don't want to. Having their feet washed may have been what the disciples needed at that time but we have to show love to others in ways that are practical and helpful to them, serving others because we love Christ is the only way that we will ever convince non Christians that our Jesus is alive and that he loves them.

You may go to the best church which has great facilities, wonderful musicians and good preaching but unless people see the love of Jesus in you they will never be interested in Him. A visit to church will just be another entertaining event and there are many other ways to be entertained without going to church. Love and serving others is the key evangelistic tool we have. CT Studd said, *"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him"*. If like the disciples we call Jesus Lord and Master then we have no option to follow the pattern of love that he has given which is both practical and sacrificial. Sadly though we are weak and we fail him often, and our sacrifices are usually pretty small most of the time, but despite our weaknesses and our failings God stays with us, his love is unconditional, he forgives our mistakes and uses them to mould us into disciples who can do better.

Conclusion

We can read this passage and see it as one that urges us to serve and yes it does but to concentrate on that misses the point because its never about what we can do for Jesus or others, its always about what Jesus has and can do for us. This is all about the King who came down to serve us. In this acted parable of washing clean the disciples feet he shows us the real purpose of his death and gave us a picture of what was going to happen at the cross, Jesus Christ laid aside his majesty and came to serve giving his life as a ransom for many Mk 10:45. He humbled himself and took on the nature of a servant and he was obedient even to death, He is the Servant King and the kind of servants he wants us to be are those who are not interested in their positions or their dignity but are willing to serve humbly wherever and whatever the need is. That is what love does. Its easy to say you love someone and that you feel love for others but love is not primarily a feeling. Love is an attitude that is prepared to put another person's interests first whether that is convenient and easy or not and just as Jesus did, we are to love even when people hurt us, even when they let us down and even when they betray us.

Church Text for 2016

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last."

John 15:16