

- **\*READ John 13:1-9\*** This story is certainly one of the most memorable of Jesus's time on this earth. The Messiah, the Word, the King, God in the flesh takes off his garments, puts on a towel, and begins to wash the feet of sinful men. What an example! What lessons we can take away! But....notice that this memorable occasion almost didn't happen...notice that this great act of service was rejected by one of those men whom the Son of God sought to serve.
- The ever outspoken Peter questions the actions of his Lord, *"Do you wash my feet?"*, he asked. After Jesus's reply, Peter increases his opposition, *"Never shall You wash my feet!"* As the Lamb of God sought to show His love towards those whom He would soon hang on the cross for, Peter rejects Jesus's act of service. *"Your service is denied"* was the message that Jesus received in return for what He was trying to do.
- How sad of a situation do we see when we read this story in **John 13:1-9**. We see a prime opportunity for Peter to experience service at the hand of the Son of God, yet he rejects it. Like we probably seem to find ourselves doing often with some of the things the disciples did, we shake our heads and think how silly these men could be at times. However, are we really all that different? How often do we deny and reject the kindhearted service of others? Or how often do we deny service to those who are in need? While we might scoff at Peter in this instance, we must recognize there service can just as easily be denied in our lives if we are not careful to keep the devil at bay. This evening we are going to take some time to consider this idea of denying service in our lives. We want to talk about denying service to and from others. Let's talk first about the cause our of denial, what is demanded of us, and why this is something that even matters.

#### I. **Pride can be a major hinderance to our serving and being served by others.**

- A. **Romans 12** is a great chapter that considers how we treat one another as members of God's family.
1. The discussion concerning our being members of this great body begins in **v.4**. Yes, there are many members, but we are all part of one body, and if we are part of this one body then we are also members of one another. Then being members of one another, we ought to be about the busy of serving one another as we go through this life together (**Romans 12:4-13**)
  2. Paul mentions that we are all blessed in different ways and have different gifts in which we can use in service to one another. Regardless of what our gifts are, we are simply to use them in faith to serve one another and in doing so, Paul says, we are serving the Lord. (**Romans 12:7-11**)
  3. When a group of Christians operates in this manner then things are going exactly as God would have them to be going. We could consider **I Corinthians 12** and recognize that this is good because every portion of the body is taken care of when we all pitch in and do our part in serving one another.
- B. However, none of these acts of service towards one another will make place if we are prideful.
1. We began looking in **Romans 12:4**, but we must first consider the first 3 verses that really address what is necessary for us to be able to accomplish these great acts of service.
  2. It begins with recognize that God expects for us to present our bodies as sacrifices to God. We are to be a sacrificial people towards God and in turn that means that we will be a sacrificial people towards one another. (**v.1**)
  3. But this too will only be done if we are willing to do what is mentioned in **v.3**. No person must "think more highly of himself than he ought to think." In other words, we must put away pride from ourselves and recognize exactly who we are. That means that we recognize that none of us are too good or special to serve another person. If Jesus was willing to take a towel to wash the disciples' feet then we can serve others. Also, it means that we recognize that none of us are too good to receive acts of serve from others. None of us have it so perfectly together that we are without the need of serve from others from time to time.

4. So pride can cause us to think that we are too good to serve others, but pride can also cause us to deny service from others. Often that pride is a hindrance because we think that either serving or being served by others is a sign of weakness. Certainly nothing could be farther from the truth because Jesus was willing to serve and accept service from others from time to time. I wouldn't want to claim that my Lord was weak in any way, shape, or form...so if it wasn't weakness that Jesus was showing...then what made it possible for Jesus to behave this way?

## II. Humility is needed so that we will see the needs of others and recognize that we, too, need help from time to time.

- A. What made Jesus so great at serving and receiving service from others was His humility.
  1. We know well from our studies last year that the ultimate act of humility is seen in Jesus coming to this earth, and Paul addresses this very well in **Philippians 2:1-8**. Jesus was willing to humble himself to come to this earth, to live as a lowly man, and to die on a cross so that those who are faithful to Him might be saved. Add this together with His own words of **Mark 10:45** where He says that He came not to be served but to serve.
  2. However, this isn't to mean that Jesus wasn't willing to be served when the time was right. In fact, back in Philippians we recognize that Jesus was actually exalted and given the name that was above all names of Lord and Messiah. As such, He receives those lives of sacrifice that we mentioned just a moment ago. Jesus is the perfect example of the one who is the greatest because He became the ultimate servant. (**Matthew 23:11**)
- B. If we will humble ourselves as Jesus did then we will quickly see the necessity of being willing to serve and be served in this life.
  1. When we humble ourselves to serve and be served by others, we are fulfilling the "Law of Christ" as is mentioned in **Galatians 6:2**. When we serve and allow service, we are bearing one another's burdens. This is what our Lord Jesus expects from us. This is **Romans 12** being lived out in our lives. This is the fulfillment of the song "*How Sweet How Heavenly*" "*When each can feel his brother's sigh and with him bear a part.*" This is what the early church practiced every day. (**Acts 2:41ff**)
  2. When we humble ourselves then we will be willing and able to emulate the awesome example of Jesus in His washing of the Apostles' feet. We won't see any act of service as being demeaning or below us. If anyone was above service it certainly was God, but He left heaven anyways.
  3. Additionally, when we allow others to serve us, we are showing humility to admit that we are not without need. Peter thought that this was just about having clean feet, but What Jesus was doing had to do with so much more. Coffman says it really well when he says this concerning this account of Jesus and Peter. "*Here Jesus spoke of washing in a different sense. Unless Peter should be washed of his false pride and ambition, unless he should share in that ultimate cleansing of the soul that would result from Jesus' sacrifice, thus being truly "washed," he could have no part with Jesus.*" (Coffman, John 13:8)
  4. If we want to have a part of Jesus, then we must humble ourselves as He did to serve and allow ourselves to be served. We all have times of need, and without the service of others we will quickly find ourselves in extremely difficult positions. It certainly highlights the wisdom of God in creating the church to be as it is. Being a part of this body comes with innumerable blessings that we wouldn't experience otherwise, whether we are serving or being served.

### III. When we allow ourselves to serve and be served, we are creating opportunities for all involved to be blessed in tremendous ways.

- A. There is great joy that can be found by those involved in the serving of others.
  - 1. When we have the opportunity to serve another person, there is joy that should fill us. To know that someone was in need and we were able to fulfill that need should cause us to experience a great joy that can't come when we are only focused on ourselves.
  - 2. The "joy" that selfishness brings us is shallow and brief at best. But the joy that comes when we get to see the joy on the face of others is something that will stay with us for a long time to come. Whether it be a great act of service, or something that we might consider to be small or inconsequential. No act of service great or small is without the opportunity to be filled with joy for the opportunity to be a blessing to others. Whether it is something like a card of kind words, a meal, some help around the house, some time sacrificed, or maybe a kidney(!)...all acts of service are good, needed, and can bring joy to so many individuals. This seems to be exactly what Paul was hoping would take place among all disciples, and he knew that it would fill him with immense joy. **(Philippians 2:2)**
- B. However, if we are unwilling to humble ourselves to serve and be served, then we will never see or experience these blessings and this great joy.
  - 1. We probably see it pretty clearly when it comes to our serving of others. If I see a need, have the ability to serve, and yet don't take advantage...I am missing out on the opportunity to put joy in the hearts of another who would be blessed by my actions. That is easy to see, and we understand the need to sacrifice of ourselves in order to be a blessing to others.
  - 2. However, what we might not think about are those times where others might seek to serve us and we reject their offer. What we are doing in this instance is denying them the opportunity to be blessed through their efforts to serve us. Now, I recognize that there very well might be times where we truly are not in need. However, even if that is the case, we ought to at the very least show great appreciation for the fact that this person thought enough of us to offer help in whatever kind it might be.
  - 3. Other times, we might need to be vulnerable and admit that we are in need. Sometimes that is difficult because our pride might not want to allow us to admit that we have a need. Again, I get that. It isn't fun to show what we might perceive as "weakness" or a lacking in some respect, but we must all admit that there will be times in this life where we will be in need of some sort of service from another. It is at these times that we must allow others to serve us and give them the opportunity to experience the joy that we have felt from those times where we have had the opportunity to serve another. Let's not rob ourselves or others of the blessings that come when we work together and serve one another.

Pride can be an absolute killer in so many different ways in our lives, and when it comes to service between ourselves, there is no greater threat. We must all be committed to having a humble mindset that was demonstrated by Jesus and demanded by Paul. May God help each of us to humble ourselves to see the needs of others, and to allow others to serve us in this life. There is hardly a feeling that is more fulfilling and satisfying than bearing the burdens of one another, and may God help us all to enjoy the blessing of that feeling often in this life. Service denied? Not here...not among this family of God's people. **\*PRAYER\***