Friday, June 30 – Did He Really Say That?

BOTTOM LINE: The wrong approach kills the message even if the message is right.

He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. John 13:4-5

Jesus was the most important person in the room. No one disputed that. He was the rabbi, the one they had left everything to follow. Everything except their egos, that is. Those seem to be pretty well intact and attached. They had argued over who was the greatest and who would have prime positions in His kingdom. They had criticized the differences they saw in each other, and chased away children whose parents wanted a simple blessing from Jesus. They had inclinations to misuse their power and authority as Christ-followers, even asking Jesus if it would be all right with Him if they called fire down from heaven to blister their critics. Whew. They were so much like us.

Of course Jesus corrected them. Of course His gentle but forceful words told them of a better way. But Jesus never spoke anything He didn't exemplify with His life. On this last night He would spend with His friends before He proved His purpose and His love through His death and resurrection, He chose to address the greatest lack in their lives by SHOWING one last time how it was to be. Ordinary custom was for a servant, the lowliest present, to wash the dusty feet of the travelers who had come to visit. But this night they were in a rented room. There were no servants. So, they all sat around and waited. Imagine the unspoken thoughts and judgments in each mind as they considered who should take on this undesirable and humbling task of service?

Jesus did the unthinkable. He got up from the dinner table, took off His robe, and wrapped a towel around His waist like a common slave. He took the pitcher of water that had been ready for the task, poured it into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet. They were momentarily speechless. Then they began to protest—He couldn't take a servant's role and do this unthinkable service for them! But He insisted, and carefully washed and dried each man's feet. Then He asked if they understood what this meant. He explained that humble service, putting others' needs above your own, is the language of authentic love. He reminded them they had chosen to serve Him and that servants are never greater than their masters. They must do for others what He had done for them. He said the messenger would never be more important than the message, so every messenger must make any personal sacrifice and service to make sure the message is heard and understood.

• Do YOU understand? Did he really just say that? Yes. He did. Let anyone who has ears to hear, hear, and obey.

• How can the church serve those outside its circle? How can I bring the mindset of a servant more clearly to my interactions with others, especially outside the family of faith?

• What would taking off my robe and picking up a towel mean for me?