

“SERVING TO SAVE”

Sermon Text: John 13:1-17

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

Beloved of God,

Our present world is drowning in a cesspool of selfishness and pride.

In hopes of generating ever-increasing profits for themselves, the manufacturers of the world invest in multi-million dollar advertising campaigns designed to appeal to the basest attributes of men and women.

Vanity, selfishness, pride and the promotion of the “me-first” service to self for the so-called “proper development of self-esteem” do naught but reinforce the natural inclination of the human heart towards evil.

We are encouraged; indeed, subliminally “prodded” by advertisers on television, on the internet, and on the printed page, to turn our focus away from acts of charity towards our fellow man, inward towards *self* gratification. We are told we should indulge ourselves by purchasing their products, because after all, “*you're worth it!*”

Given such messages to hearts already bound over to sin, it is of little wonder crime is on the increase in both urban and rural areas of our nation.

In increasing numbers, people have become so self-centered they not only turn their backs on those who are suffering pain of body and spirit, but they are often times more than willing to inflict pain and suffering in order to obtain the object of their desire. There are those who will even commit murder to achieve their self-serving goals.

Sadly, society pauses but only briefly to express passing wonder why a ten-year-old boy would viciously murder a classmate in order that he might possess a pair of the newest model of basketball shoes.

And still the words, "You're worth it!" ring in our ears.

Then there are the best-selling authors hoping to peddle their ideas to a public that grows ever more materialistic. We see them make grand appearances on the television talk-show circuit, urging us to throw away the Bible-based moral standards of a generation gone by and become motivated by "*self-love*" and "*service to self*" in all that we do.

These too, in open rebellion against Scripture, are willing servants of the Devil and with their slick words and fair sounding speech, deceive the hearts of the simple and reinforce the inclination of the human heart towards evil.

Even but a brief perusal of afternoon television talk shows proffers up society's most renowned doctors of psychology and sociology legitimizing what was once considered immoral behavior.

Is it any wonder then that open homosexuality, (that which Scripture calls "*an abomination*" in Leviticus 18:22), the scourge of sexually transmitted disease, broken homes, fatherless children and alcohol and drug abuse have reached epidemic proportions as a people bent solely on fulfillment of self, seek mindless immediate gratification of every evil lust of the flesh?

Of such "learned philosophy" St. Paul warns in First Timothy 6:20,21:

"...keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith..."

What is a Christian to do in a world where faithful adherence to God's Holy Word is decried as politically incorrect, "*hate-speech*" and even "*bigoted*", while at the same time even the most extreme liberalism in doctrine and promiscuity in life is approved and praised as desirable?

What shall be our attitude and course in life, as a people who have put off the Old Man of Sin and been born anew in Christ, having shared in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

Let us look to the Rock of our Salvation, Jesus Christ and let us strive to be ever more like Him.

Let us "*Serve to Save*".

Here on earth, the whole life of the God-man Christ Jesus was devoted to the service of mankind.

In Luke 19:10, Jesus Himself declares His purpose on earth in these words:

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And again in John 10:10, Jesus reveals to all mankind His mission among the children of men, when He says,

"... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Think of it! God, the Creator, The Almighty Lord of the Universe, humbled Himself and being born of a woman, born under the Law, willingly took upon Himself servanthood, to live a sinless life in our stead.

Yes, He who was completely without sin subjected Himself to the harsh rigors of an earthly life. Jesus knew first-hand the vile temptations of the Devil just, as we have been tempted, and yet He overcame those temptations.

And more, Jesus suffered both physical and spiritual torture and ultimately a most horrible death, a death reserved for the worst of criminals, all so that He might *serve* you and me, who were enemies of God, lost in Sin and spiritual death, condemned to spend an eternity in hell on account of our depravity.

Such undeserved love He has for us!

For on that wretched Cross of Calvary, Jesus willingly took upon Himself OUR sins and freely shed His life's blood in order to give to us His righteousness, that we might be able to boldly stand before the Heavenly Father without so much as a trace of the corruption and rot of our sin.

Dear Ones, in humbling Himself unto an earthly life and unto death, even the death of the cross, Jesus served us in love.

Yes, and even as He served His disciples by washing their feet, He was also serving you and me. For this simple act of love was a small part of His life of perfectly fulfilling the Law in our place, something no sinful man could do.

So then, with Christ as our one True Substitute, God the Father sees us clothed, not in the filthy rags of our sinful pride and self-serving arrogance, but in the pure white robe of the humble love and righteousness of His dear Son, Jesus Christ.

In serving His disciples by washing their feet, Jesus also gives to us an example.

Not that we should wash each other's feet, as though in doing so we might gain heaven. Rather, the example is given to us as a standard of the level of service we ought to emulate, striving to serve the Christian good of one another in willing and self-sacrificing love, even as Christ, our Lord and Master ministers unto us.

Through the Law, He serves us by making us aware of our shortcomings, so we know we dare not trust in our own works or any imagined merit or worthiness on our part for our salvation.

But He does not leave off serving us there, for then we would surely despair of life itself!

No, Jesus continues to serve us by giving to us the sweet Gospel message of the Free Gift of the forgiveness of all our sins, in the Word and in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

And not only that, but He strengthens and preserves us both in our daily battle against the pride and selfishness of our Old Adam and in the sure hope of everlasting life in the glories of Heaven which await all who receive Him in faith.

So, as Christ our Lord has served us, let us serve one another in love.

Though we cannot atone for any one's sin, ("*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him*" Psalm 49:7) yet we can bring others to Christ, through His Word and so *serve to save* them.

Though we cannot reach the perfection of our Lord and Master in this life, we can strive to follow the path of humility and Christian love laid out for us in our sermon text.

Therefore, let us pray that our Heavenly Father would remove from us all pride and selfishness and in their place, give us true humbleness of heart and willingness of mind to *serve to save* to Christ.

And furthermore, may all that witness our service glorify God, wholeheartedly desire the forgiveness of their sins and receive Christ as the Redeemer of their souls and the Lord of their lives.

Let us *Serve to Save*, because our Lord Jesus, who served *and continues* to serve us in love, asks it of us. Out of sincere hearts, thankful for our undeserved salvation and in love for Him, let us honor His request.

Whether it be preaching from a pulpit, teaching Sunday School, reading daily devotionals, teaching our children about Jesus, witnessing to our co-workers and our friends and neighbors, or otherwise actively participating in the mission work of the Church, let us follow Christ's example and *Serve to Save*.

For in such humble loving service to others, we serve our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

*"Let us ever walk with Jesus,
Follow His example pure,
Flee the world, which would deceive us
And to sin our souls allure.
Ever in His footsteps treading,
Body here, yet soul above,
Full of faith and hope and love,
Let us do the Father's bidding,
Faithful, Lord, abide with me;
Savior, lead, I follow Thee."
(TLH 409 v.1)*

And now may the Peace of God, which surpasseth all human understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.