

# The Heart of a Servant

John 13:1-17

October 3, 2004

## Intro

We have now come to the last twelve hours in Jesus' earthly life. Here in these verses Jesus is having that last supper with His disciples.

This is the scene depicted in the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci. Unfortunately, that beautiful painting is not accurate historically. The painting shows the disciples all on one side of the table, and they appear to almost posing for the painting. They would not have been seated, but rather reclining on the floor on their left elbow.

The seating arrangement is very important because where a person sat at the table, spoke of his relative importance and the disciples apparently have a dispute about who is more important than who.

**These are lessons that Jesus desires for us to understand and apply even as He desired the disciples to understand them.**

## **I. A Servant is Not Greater Than His Master**

### A. If Jesus was a servant, shouldn't we also be?

**Vs 16**

- At the last supper Jesus washed His disciple's feet.

- Washing feet was the lowest job of all.
- There was no servant there, so one of them should have volunteered for this customary ritual.
- Jesus embarrasses them by doing this job Himself.

**Matthew 10:24-25, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master."**

### B. Be willing to do the tasks no one wants

- This requires humility.
- Humility is not a weakness, but rather a great strength.

**Illus – In high school I used to work for a restaurant chain called Elmer's Pancake House. The founder was Walt Elmer and I would often hear stories about him washing dishes. He was greatly respected because of this humility.**

- I have come to understand that the more mature a Christian is the more humble he/she is.
- Here again, a servant is not greater than his Master.

**Philippians 2:3-5, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,”**

C. There is power in knowing who you are

- People are often “insecure” and feel compelled to prove who they are.
- Vs 3 – Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands...
- Know who you are in Christ and grow in that knowledge.

**2 Peter 3:17-18, “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,”**

**II. A Servant’s Heart is the Key to a Godly Life.**

A. Who is the greatest in the eyes of God?

**Illus – Muhammad Ali used to shout, “I’m the greatest!”**

**3 John 9, “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.”**

- Luke tells us that after saying that one of them would betray Him, they began to argue over who was the greatest.

**Luke 22:24, “And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.”**

- Jesus then gave us an extremely important lesson...

**Luke 22:26-27, “the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”**

B. Consider the results of not serving

- Judas Iscariot here becomes an example of what happens when someone only looks after himself.
- He was the one who was troubled by the wasteful use of spikenard on Jesus by Mary.

**John 12:6, “Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.”**

**Illus – He was willing to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.**

- In order to rise, he was willing to put others down.

C. To serve is to be blessed of God

- This is another paradox, that to be the greatest is to be the least; and you are blessed when you bless others. It comes back to you.

**Matthew 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”**

**Illus - What would marriage be like if neither was willing to be humble?  
What would church be like if no one was willing to be humble?**

- It fills our hearts with love. A man who is puffed up with himself is not happy.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-5, “love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own,”**

**III. As He Has Done, So We Must Also Do**

A. We must also be an example

- Not just in church, but in every area of our lives.
- Jesus served in every area of His life.

- We need the testimony of those around us.

**3 John 11-12, “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good... Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.”**

**Illus – My secretary, Jo, used to work for one of these great TV evangelists, and she could not bring a very good testimony about him.**

B. Others will act as you act

- Anger begets anger,

**Luke 6:45, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”**

- Let grace also produce grace.

**Colossians 4:6 – “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.”**

**Conclusion**

**Jesus completed the lesson by saying to them even as he says to us, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”**