

Imagine with me that it is the night that Jesus was betrayed. He and his disciples are in the Upper Room where the Passover was to be celebrated. Somebody had to take on the servant's role, because their feet had to be washed before eating. Nobody moved. The one who moved would be the doormat, the fool, the loser. The servant would give up his claim to rule over the others.

Finally, someone did move. Jesus took a towel and a bowl, knelt down, and began washing their feet one by one. He did the job of a slave. And, so there could be no doubt about why he was doing this, he told them, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

How well are you following Jesus' example? A couple sits in a counselor's office, arms folded, looking away from each other, saying nothing, because they know someone has to speak. Someone has to give in, and giving in means failure, admission of guilt, humiliation, and losing.

Does any of that sound familiar? What are the ways that we lack humility and look to control the action? You and I may think that our little manipulations here and there are no big deal, but they betray a much deeper problem in our hearts—the problem of being self-serving.

Jesus calls you not just to think about His action of humble service, but to be like Him in every area of your life. But think of the power plays we engage in every day: as parent over child, spouse to spouse, single person with our friends. Think of the people you work with that you try to control in little ways. Think of how we try to massage events so we can have it our way in the things that we plan. Do we really want to serve—or be served?

Seeing how far we fall short of being like Jesus, we need to change direction; to return to the Lord in sincerity, saying, “Be merciful to me, a sinner.”

It is time for renewal. It is time for a whole new orientation of your heart. Today, Jesus the Servant bends down to wash you clean from sin. Jesus entered into slavery to set you free! He gave up his rights so that you would be elevated. This is the way that Jesus saved you. It is the way of Christ, and it is the way of the Christian.

What does that mean? It means that in your relationships, Jesus is calling you to serve others in love, gladly doing what is best for them not out of duty or obligation, but willingly! It means that if you are married, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, not keeping score but forgiving each other from the heart and moving on together. Members of St. Mark, it means, by the Holy Spirit's power, making your church a community of care, a place where selfishness does not rule the day; a place where people actually serve each other with the love of Jesus.

Servanthood means imitating a God who kneels down to serve; a God who loves even to death on a cross.

The power for this renewal will come to you again and again through Jesus, as you search His Word in daily devotions; as you reflect on what baptism brought to you; and as He gives Himself

to you at His Table. That is precisely why our worship is often described as "The Divine Service"—the Divine Servant Jesus comes to serve us with His priceless gifts.

It is no coincidence that Jesus washed feet, said, "I'm setting an example for you," and then took his disciples to the Table where He said over the Passover elements, "This is my body and blood, given and shed for you." He showed them what to do and where to get the power to do it. It's really quite extraordinary. Jesus **served** them himself—he acted as the household slave, doing the most menial task—and, Jesus served them **Himself**—at the festival table He gave them what He said was His own body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins. What we call a Christian life then, is a matter of how you respond to being served by God.

It really is true; when you approach the altar for the Lord's Supper, it is Jesus who bends down to serve you—to touch, forgive, strengthen and encourage you. Presidents don't do this. CEO's don't do this. Billionaire executives don't do this. Only King Jesus comes with bowl and towel and bread and wine, and we must let Him. The One who deserves all the glory and honor and acclaim comes to serve, and when He does, we can never be the same.

A well-dressed woman from Europe was on safari in Africa. One day she visited a leper colony. There she saw a nurse bending in the dust, tending to a person covered in sores. The heat was intense; the flies were buzzing as she filled his infected wounds. The well-to-do woman was so taken aback by this scene of suffering that words slipped out, "Why, I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world!" Without looking up from her work, the nurse replied, "Neither would I."

Here at Jesus' table, receive the life-changing love of the King who serves. He still serves us Himself. Because He does, you and I can know the joy of a self-giving life.