

Mindset for Ministry

John 13:1-17

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¹⁶ *Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

In 1904 the heir to the Borden Dairy Estate, William Borden, graduated from Chicago High School a millionaire. His parents gave him a trip around the world – he became burdened for all the hurting people he saw in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. He made a decision to prepare for the mission field and wrote in his Bible the words, "No Reserve."

When William Borden arrived at Yale University the next year as a freshman his passion for Christ was already kindled. He was disappointed to find the school morally bankrupt and the teaching filled with empty philosophy. So during his first semester, he asked a friend to begin praying with him before breakfast. As a result of his leadership other prayer groups began to spring up. And by his senior year, 1,000 of the 1,300 students were meeting in prayer groups. Many of those young leaders came to the Lord through that movement.

Upon graduation he was offered high paying jobs. But he turned those offers down. While making those decisions he wrote two more words in his Bible, the words "No Retreat."

When he completed his studies at Princeton Seminary he sailed to China as a missionary. On the way he stopped in Egypt to study Arabic – was struck with spinal meningitis and within a month at the age of 25 he died. His friends and family found written in his Bible: "No Reserve, No Retreat" and two more words, "No Regrets."

Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing for you and me to arrive at the end of our earthly journey with those words written in our hearts, "No Reserve, No Retreat, No Regrets"?

How we can enter the ministry God has for us and fulfill His purpose for our lives.

Most of the time, we think of this passage in terms of washing feet – the act of service.

But rather than focus on what Jesus did or even said in these verses – think about His heart.

Consider the heart behind his head and hands.

Before we can consistently follow Jesus' example of serving, we must have our hearts renewed.

That forms the foundation of long-term ministry.

What kind of heart empowers us to serve with joy and not lose our passion for ministry?

What do you need to take the place of a servant and follow the example Jesus gives us here?

Know Who You Are (in God)

If we don't know who we are in God we will spend most of our energy **doing things** to define our identity.

Tragically nothing we can do—no attainment, no honor, no accomplishment, no amount of human recognition can adequately define our identity.

Why? Because your identity is **not** found in what you **do** but in whom you **are**.

Look at Ephesians 1:4-5:

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

Look at Ephesians 2:7-10:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

We don't minister in order to find out who we are – we minister out of who we are.

The first thing you and I need to have as a foundation for effective ministry is a revelation of who we are in God. I am what I am by the grace of God. Out of who I am **in God** I serve you.

There in the upper room, Jesus assumes the most humbling task in that culture – washing feet. Why hadn't one of the disciples done that? We have a clue from Luke 22 because Luke tells us about an argument that arose amongst them as to who would be greatest in the kingdom. I suspect that none of them wanted to assume the position of washing the other's feet because that might have placed that one at the bottom of the pecking order. None of the disciples were secure enough in who they were to embrace the job of a servant.

But Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power.

He was not insecure about his identity: taking the lowly job was not threatening to that identity. When we can only define ourselves by what we do, we will be so busy trying to do something that will put us in a good light that we won't do much service.

But when we are firmly centered on who we are in Christ, we can take the lowly position without worrying about being marked as insignificant.

Verse 3:

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

“Jesus knew” – Knew what?

1. that the Father had put all things under his power
2. and that he had come from God
3. and was returning to God

But think about the way things seemed at that particular time.

From a natural point of view Jesus looked like a failure. He looked like he had nothing.

That's what makes John's comment so significant. Things are not always as they appear.

We may one day be surprised to find the first being last and the last being first.

We may one day find that what we thought was great success was very lacking in God's eyes.

And what we thought was failure, did not come up as short as we thought.

Who can really judge a matter? That's one reason comparisons can be a very unwise.

We are not to compare ourselves with each other – but to hear the Father and obey!

But how can Jesus serve so honorably and graciously in such difficult circumstances? He knew something about himself that others could not see. He knew who he was and what authority the Father had actually given him.

1. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power...

It looked like thirteen helpless men hiding from the wrath and fury of the religious hierarchy and Roman might. But in reality, reclining in that tiny upper room was the power center of the universe. In reality all power in heaven and earth belonged to Jesus.

He was not the helpless victim of some sinister plot to kill him. He was the willing, voluntary Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

During Cold War a Jewish Rabbi in Russia became very discouraged & disillusioned. In his despair one evening he took a long walk in the night. He was so engrossed in his thoughts as he walked that he did not notice that he was walking into an area secured by the Russian authority. As he walked into that forbidden area, a soldier suddenly called out to him, “Who goes there?” The Rabbi was suddenly taken by what the guard had said. He walked up to the guard and asked him, “What did you say?” The guard said, “I asked you, who goes there?”

The Rabbi then asked him, “How much do you make as a soldier here?” Taken back by such a question in those circumstances, the guard asked him why he wanted to know. Then the Rabbi said, “I will pay you that much to ask me that question every morning. You have just given me the answer I have so desperately needed. I was in despair wondering what I could do about the circumstances of my life. But I had forgotten the more important and more basic question that must first be answered, Who am I? Thank you for reminding me what is most important of all.

Jesus knew his authority in God. What else did he know about himself?

2. He knew his commission

He was not acting on his own initiative alone. He was sent by the Father with a specific mission to accomplish. Do you know why you are here? Not just why you are sitting in this building at this time in your life? But like William Borden do you have a sense of mission in your soul? God has a mission for every breathing human being in this building. You will find no greater satisfaction in life than to discover that mission and pursue it with all your heart.

Being sent implies a backing. When you and I are operating in obedience to the Holy Spirit, I want to tell you you’ve got backing that is out of this world. An investor can speak with confidence when he has financial backing. And a child of God can operate with assurance and confidence when he understands how committed God is to His children when they are pursuing His bidding.

Jesus knew he had come from God. One of the great themes in the gospel of John is this sense of mission and commission in Jesus’ life.

Jesus has now sent you and me with the same kind of backing. After his resurrection we will hear Jesus say to his disciples in John 20:21: *Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*

It is when you and I embrace a cause that is worthy of our very best, worth personal sacrifice, worth the investment of our personal time and energy—that we become a true servant. Without that sense of cause and mission anybody will regress to a selfish lifestyle. Prov 29:18 “Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint.” American Standard Version

Sometimes I have to go back and remind myself why I am doing what I do. Why in the world would you give your hard earned money to a church? Why would you volunteer to teach children or lead worship or clean the building? You would only do it if you had a vision of what it means to your Lord.

Matthew 25:40: *And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*

3. Jesus also knew where he was going

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God (verse 3).

I don't think we talk enough about heaven anymore. The cares of life tend to occupy our minds. We can so easily get caught up in the daily activities of life that we forget not only who we are but also where we are going. Soon and very Soon We are Going to See the King. Does that truth grip your heart and fortify your integrity? Does the fact that this life is but a vapor compared to eternity keep problems in perspective?

I think about the possibility of being among that number who one day stand upon the glassy sea of heaven and cast their crown at the feet of Jesus and I'm motivated to do something that makes an eternal difference. After a lengthy discussion of the resurrection, Paul concludes 1 Corinthians 15 with these words:

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

We have many servants of the Lord in this room. But how many have discovered that it is a lot easier to start out being a servant than to continue as a servant? I have found that being a servant gets to be work real fast. If I serve just when I'm excited I won't serve very long. If I don't learn how to nurture as servant's heart, I will get tired of doing things for other people while expecting nothing in return.

But when I think about that great day when I stand before God and give an account for every moment, every idle word, every bit of my life—something rises up in my heart and says, "I want that to be a good day, not a bad day. I don't want to be ashamed when I stand before the Lord who loved me and gave himself for me. I want to put some joy in his heart and hear him say, 'Well done good and faithful servant'."

Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth of something that we all need reminded of—your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Turn to the person next to you and just remind that person of that truth—tell him or her, "Your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

So, Know who you are in God.

Know Who You Are Serving

John 13:1-17

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In verse 1 of our text John makes it very clear that Jesus knew that the time for him to lay down his life for you and me was very near. But in that verse John also makes this comment about Jesus and it is related to this issue of servanthood,

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

"Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."

The first thing to recognize is to know WHO WE ARE IN JESUS.

Now we look at WHO WE ARE SERVING.

Let's make a **DISTINCTION** early on: this **MESSAGE** is for **BELIEVERS**.
We would **NOT EXPECT** to see this **COMMITMENT** from **UN-BELIEVERS**.

TWO OPTIONS:

- **LOVE AND SERVE OTHERS**
- **LOVE AND SERVE GOD – AND OTHERS**

The example of William Borden

OUR FOCUS SHOULD BE HOW WE WOULD LOVE and SERVE GOD NOT OTHERS

John said to him, Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us. But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward (Mark 9:38-41).

WHAT THE DISCIPLES WERE SAYING WAS...

They were doing things that we weren't – SO they must be wrong! (38)

WHEN WE LOVE AND SERVE OTHERS:

- Our **FOCUS** is on their **IMMEDIATE NEEDS** and how **WE** would serve them
- Our **ABILITY** to love and serve is based on our **LIABILITY** (are we having a bad day??)
 - The eternal impact of our love and service is limited
- We (the lover or server) are the **RESOURCE**
 - Paul – I must decrease and He must increase
- We run the danger of **ENABLING, OVER-STEPPING, and QUENCHING – TAKING ACCOUNTABILITY** away from those we're loving and serving

WHEN WE LOVE AND SERVE GOD:

- Our focus is on **GOD** and our **RELATIONSHIP** with **HIM**
- Our ability to love and serve is based on **HIS WILL** for our **LIVES**
 - The eternal impact of our love and service is **UN-limited**
- **HE** is the **RESOURCE**
 - Paul – I must decrease and He must increase
- We **SERVE OTHERS** with the goal of **BRINGING THEM CLOSER TO GOD** – that **INCLUDES** great **ACCOUNTABILITY** for each other **WITH GOD** (not ourselves).

**OUR FOCUS IS ON GOD AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM
NOT
ON OTHER'S IMMEDIATE NEEDS AND HOW TO SERVE THEM**

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Matthew 6:1-4

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

**Our ABILITY to LOVE and SERVE is BASED on HIS WILL for our LIVES
NOT
Our LIABILITIES (are we having a bad day??)**

Acts 17:24-27

The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

²⁶ *From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us.*

**HE is the RESOURCE
NOT
US**

John 3:27-31

To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.

The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-7

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

**We SERVE OTHERS with the goal of BRINGING THEM CLOSER TO GOD:
INCLUDES great ACCOUNTABILITY for each other WITH GOD (not ourselves)
NOT
BY TAKING ACCOUNTABILITY AWAY from THOSE we're LOVING and SERVING
(ENABLING, OVER-STEPPING, and QUENCHING)**

1 Peter 4:8-11

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“Rank is given you to enable you to better serve those above and below you. It is not given for you to practice your idiosyncrasies” (General Bruce C. Clarke, USA, Ret).

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS:

- **WHO – Believers**
- **WHAT – Any form of service: emotional/relational, financial, physical = spiritual**
- **WHERE – Anywhere: every day is a “mission trip”**
- **HOW – The resources God has provided you (remember Matthew 6:33)**
- **WHEN – On God’s timing. We do not get to set that up!**
- **WHY – Whatever we can say, i.e., please God, right thing to do, etc. – it gets down to this: my PERSONAL WALK with GOD!**

LAST WORD from John 13:16

*Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master,
nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.
If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*