

## Mindset for Ministry

John 13:1-17

*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.*

<sup>2</sup> *During supper, when the devil had already put it 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 had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.*

<sup>5</sup> *Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."*

<sup>9</sup> *Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."*

<sup>12</sup> *When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*

<sup>16</sup> *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.