

As One That Serveth

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"—Matthew 20:28

IN John 13 we have a picture set before us which cannot fail to engage our attention. The scene which commends itself to our thoughtful consideration is the picture of Jesus kneeling to wash Judas' feet.

The picture is one we might like to put away from our mind. In a sense it is difficult for us to contemplate such a thing actually taking place. So we must look for the reasons just why Judas was present at the table that night.

Here we have pictured before us the best and the worst. We have the perfect love of the Lord Jesus, and the hateful bitterness of Judas at the same table. It is indeed difficult for us to envision Jesus kneeling at the feet of his betrayer. To us, it may seem very wrong; so, we could ask the question, why did not Jesus wait until Judas had gone out?

But would our feelings be satisfied even had that been done? We naturally tend to feel that Jesus should not have been kneeling at the feet of his disciples, **if we regard him as highly, and with as deep appreciation and admiration as we should.**

We can understand how Peter must have felt: we can understand why he protested. I am sure had we been there we would have said very much the same as did Peter —

"Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

Yet none of the disciples seem to have realized how great an honour it would have been for them to have washed Jesus' feet. It took a woman to do that and wipe his feet with the hair of her head.

We can understand the feeling of Peter's protest. Though well intentioned, he was misguided. And in a few words Jesus showed him his objection was based on a mistaken view of the true situation. Jesus said:

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

And in due time Peter did understand. Some years later he was inspired to write his 1st Epistle, in which is the exhortation that applies to all —

"Yea, all of you be subject to one another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

The example set by Jesus was not forgotten by Peter, nor by the others. Even though there was jealousy among them at the table as to who should be the greatest, they continued steadfast unto the end.

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BUT Judas, what of him? It seems hard for us to believe that there could exist a man so hardened in evil. He had been in the company of Jesus for over three years; he had witnessed the miracles wrought by Jesus, he had listened to his counsel, but to no avail. He was covetous, and he was a hypocrite; he professed to care for the poor while satisfying his own greed.

Yet with all these faults it seems hardly possible he would betray his Master and sacrifice his own salvation for thirty pieces of silver!

And he betrayed his Master with a KISS! What should have been, and is, a token of affection, branded him a hypocrite. And he had sat with the Master at the table, accepting the sop from Jesus and asking—

"Lord, is it I?"

That evil man! — how much longer would he tarry at the table? Then Jesus said to him:

"That thou doest, do quickly."

The hour of triumph for the forces of evil had come; Judas went out. The beautiful life and the principles shown by Jesus during his ministry were lost on Judas. He went out into the world of darkness where he belonged. Thus, is shown the utter worthlessness of a human being to be a warning for all time.

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AS we consider the matter, we would expect that Jesus would look for comfort from his friends before he went out to his death? But no, his concern was all for them (John 13:1)—

"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

What a wonderful example! His every thought was for their future well-being when he would have left them. He had become as a servant ministering unto them, exemplifying his command that they serve one another.

In this 13th chapter we learn of the thoughts that were in the mind of Jesus, he (v. 3)—

"Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands; and that he was come from God and went to God."

We learn also that he thought of the future, and the glory that awaited him with the Father. Having these thoughts in mind he became as a servant. Again, what an example!

In future years the apostles wrote of these things in their epistles. In Phil 2:7 we have the words of Paul—

"He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . .

"He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

And in Heb. 5:8 we read—

"Though he were a son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

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JOHN is careful to explain the incidents of that night. He says of Jesus—

"He rose from supper, he laid aside his garments, he took a towel and girded himself, he poured water into a basin, then he knelt and washed their feet, and wiped them with the towel."

In our day of widespread superstition, "washing of feet" is done in many places by those of vain conceit. But by doing so, as in their other acts of ritual and mummery, the value of what Jesus did is lost. Jesus did not say as he did at the breaking of bread—

"Do THIS in remembrance of me."

What Jesus said is recorded in 13:15—

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

"I am among you as he that serveth."

And that holds good today as then. We have Jesus' words:

"Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

In our acts of service Jesus will be among us no matter what it is. Jesus did the service to impress the lesson for all who would follow him.

THE GREATEST DEED THAT MAN CAN DO IS SERVE.

Unless we realize that truth, **we have learned little from Christ**. We have Jesus' words, and by his words we must stand or fall.

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THE mind of the natural man is to rule over others, but not to serve. And as the disciples sat at the table, they still had that idea, and made rival claims to pre-eminence. As we read this chapter, we can see that Jesus was to—

"Show them a more excellent way."
—the way of love and sacrifice.

The disciples still had much to learn; and they would learn when the power of the Spirit had been bestowed upon them. But it would be wrong for us to indict them; for being concerned with other things they had failed to quite understand.

One question of the many that were asked shows their knowledge was limited. In John 14:8 Philip said—

"Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

And Jesus answered him—

"Have I been so long with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father?"

What could have been in their minds? Had they expected a vision of blinding glory, thunder and lightning, and the sound of a trumpet as at Sinai?

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."
—a man kneeling in their midst with a basin of water and a towel!

The Father's love manifested: His goodness, His patience, His long forbearance, the Father's kindness to the sinner and the ungodly.

All that they witnessed in their midst. We can see how necessary it was that the service done must be done for all, even Judas. Had Jesus passed Judas by, following generations would have said: It is all right to restrict our acts of kindness just for our friends. But Jesus' example leaves no doubt; the love of Jesus Christ is offered freely to all—

"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

And the love Jesus showed for mankind, reveals to us that we have a duty to one another. But there are few of us who have not experienced the difficulty of fulfilling that duty. When temperaments clash as someone disagrees with the ideas of another, then arguments follow.

In our calmer moments we may examine ourselves trying to find the motive. We may try our best to cast out the beam in our own eye, so that we can see the more clearly.

But how difficult it is to renew the one-time affection we had! No matter how we may review the circumstances, we cannot escape the guilt of having failed to follow the example of Jesus. And we feel we have betrayed the Truth.

We all know that Jesus' example is a difficult one to follow; but there it is for all of us, WITH NO EXCEPTIONS.

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JESUS was at the table for the last time. The cross whereon he was to "pour out his soul unto death" was already casting its shadow upon him. Surely the example he gave us to follow should be the hallmark of true faithfulness!

Can we who have put on the Name of Jesus forget Gethsemane, as our minds envision his awful conflict and agony, when he said—

"Oh, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me . . . Nevertheless, not as I will, but Thy will be done."

Can we forget the awful scene on the Hill of Calvary? Does not that lonely cry of anguish ever ring in our ears—

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

NO, if we are faithful in the Truth we can never forget. We long for and pray to see his face; to see him as he is, in power and great glory.

If the disciples needed to learn a lesson, can our need be less?

"He that is chief shall be as he that doth serve."

And life in the Kingdom will still be a life of service, but then we will not be cumbered with the frailties of the flesh; then we shall experience the glory of having the King of kings in our midst.

But what of today? What of the words of Jesus?

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

Either we are always with Christ, or we shall have no part with him. The words of Jesus must wash us and cleanse us from pride and envy in the members of our human nature flesh.

But if the Word "dwell in us richly," then we shall have a part with him.

May we all have a part in the resurrection to eternal life; and with the multitude of glorified saints, raise our voices in praise to his everlasting Name!

Even—

"Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5). —C.H.T.

Taken from June 1964 Berean
