

Who Am I? – according to Jesus

On Sunday we looked at another dramatic encounter with Jesus, this time involving his disciples at the Last Supper.

1. Warm-up Question: Jeff began Sunday’s sermon by asking, “How do you see yourself?” He joked about how we (or our pets) might see ourselves when we look in the mirror. Jeff said his cat GG probably sees herself as lion when she looks in the mirror. If you looked in the mirror and saw an animal staring back at you, what animal would that be?
2. In John chapter 13, Jesus invites us to embrace a core identity that seems profoundly counterintuitive. Let’s tackle the passage verse by verse. Read John 13:1-15 as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Verse 1 says, “Having loved his own who were in the world, Jesus loved them to the end.” That statement is particularly poignant because it includes Judas. When Jesus celebrated the first communion at the Last Supper, he included Judas, even though Jesus knew what Judas was about to do. This makes it particularly poignant when Jesus said, “This is my body which will be broken for you,” instead of saying, “This is my body which will be broken for most of you.” What is the significance of Jesus including even Judas in the first communion?
 - b. In the movie (and play) “Raisin in the Sun,” Lena scolds her daughter for disavowing her wayward brother Walter who had deeply disappointed her. “I thought I taught you to love him?” Lena says. Her daughter responds, “Love him? There’s nothing left to love.” Lena replies, “There’s always something left to love.” How does Lena’s statement sit with you? What does she mean? Do you think she’s right?
 - c. As we talk about how Jesus loved Judas to the end, and what Lena said about there always being something left to love, who in your life comes to mind? What does it mean for you to love them to the end?
3. Verse 2 says, “The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas . . . to betray Jesus.” So here was Jesus doing the right thing, living with love, walking in the center of God’s will, yet something terrible is about to happen to him. Just another reminder that even when we’re living right where God wants us to be, life is full of opposition.
 - a. Jeff said, “There is something that hasn’t happened yet that you don’t even know about that’s going to try to knock you on your butt. It may happen this week or three years from now or ten.” How does that statement make you feel?
 - b. Why do bad things happen to good people?

4. Verse 3 says, “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table. . . .” This verse reminds us that Jesus was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the most exalted being in the cosmos. Yet none of the disciples were tending to Jesus’ needs in his darkest hour, not even so much as offering to wash his feet. Instead, the disciples were completely preoccupied with themselves and their own stress and their own fear about what might happen in Jerusalem. What problem or challenge are you facing right now that could become so consuming, it might take your focus away from loving and serving God?

5. Verse 4 says, “Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet.” Foot washing was important in the ancient world because lots of animals traversed the streets and left steamy pungent gifts behind them. When you walked the roads in sandals, your feet got disgustingly filthy no matter how careful you were. Responsibility for foot washing traditionally fell to the lowest person on the totem pole.
 - a. Suppose Oprah put on an apron and said, “I’m going to prepare and serve your meal tonight.” Or Selena Gomez said, “I’m going to mow your yard.” Or Barack Obama said, “I’m going to clean your toilets.” How would you feel? What would you do?
 - b. By washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus was turning the world upside down, and in the process challenging us to embrace service as our core identity. Jesus said, “I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” Suppose someone were to ask you, “What does it mean to live with a servant’s heart?” How would you explain it to them?
 - c. What does it mean for you to be a servant in your home?
 - d. What does it mean for you to be a servant in your workplace?
 - e. Jeff said that the key question a servant asks in any situation is, “How can I be most helpful?” Does that mean we must always do what somebody else wants us to do? If not, what does it mean to be a servant to someone who’s acting irresponsible?
 - f. At first blush, cultivating a servant’s attitude sounds like a prescription for deprivation in life. But Jesus disagrees. He said, “Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” Luke 6:38. Can you think of a situation where you adopted a servant’s attitude, poured yourself into a situation, and ended up getting back far more than you gave? Tell us about it.

- g. Suppose you were to look in a mirror and see yourself staring back at you in the form of a servant. What would that look like? What does it look like for you to live with a servant's heart in your present life context? Are you prepared to embrace that?

John 13:1-8 and 12-15

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.

And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, Jesus said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.