

Leaving a Legacy

John 13:1-11

Intro

The Epcot Center in Disney World has a feature that when you first walk in, you will find giant slabs of huge black granite. There is a big sign that says: "Leave Your Legacy". For a certain fee they will take a photo of you and chemically transfer it onto the granite rock, so that for all of time your picture will be on this granite stone. Thousands of people have put their tiny picture on these big granite stones.

Why do we do that? Because, down deep inside, everybody wants to leave a legacy, and everybody wants to feel like their life counts, that their life matters, and that we've left our mark while we pass through this life.

What do you want to be remembered for? What is it that you want to leave behind when you pass from this life to the next?

A legacy is defined as:

- (1) Money or property bequeathed to another by will or
- (2) Something handed down from an ancestor or a predecessor.

Legacies are rare and they are special gifts passed from one person to another, from one generation to the next. As Christians we should seek to leave a lasting legacy not just of money and property but something that counts for a long time and for eternity.

The Problem

In our day we live in an age of a moral vacuum. It seems like character doesn't count. To put it candidly, you can sleep around and still be a good brain surgeon. You can cheat on your mate and have little trouble continuing to practice law. Apparently, it is no problem to stay in politics and plagiarize. You can be a successful salesperson and cheat on your income tax.

Many Christians have allowed this attitude to influence their lives. The perception is that you can do these things and still be a good person or Christian. But the reality is you cannot do those things as a Christian and continue enjoying the Lord's blessing.

Reputation and Character

We put a great amount of value on reputation but there is a vast difference between reputation and character.

- Reputation is what you are supposed to be; Character is what you are.
 - Reputation is what you have when you come to a new community; Character is what you have when you go away.
 - Reputation is made in a moment; Character is built in a lifetime.
 - Reputation grows like a mushroom; Character grows like an oak.
 - Your reputation is learned in an hour; your character does not come to light for a year.
 - A single newspaper report gives your reputation; a life of toil gives you your character.
 - Reputation makes you rich or makes you poor; Character makes you happy or makes you miserable.
 - Reputation is what people say about you on your tombstone; Character is what angels say about you before the throne of God.
 - Your reputation is what people think you are. Your character is what God knows you to be.
- (Source: William Hershey Davis, Leadership Development International, Dec. 2012)

It's your character that will impact generations to come.

Dr. James Dobson sometime ago wrote that there are three things that really matter in your life.

1. Who did you love?
2. Who loved you?
3. What did you do for Christ?

Context of John 13:1-18

In John chapter 13, John the apostle takes us right into the heart of Jesus. Here in this upper room we see the heart of Christ's character. In this passage Jesus leaves a wonderful legacy for His followers.

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

What would you do if you knew you were going to die in about 12 hours? Would you want to be alone in prayer? Record some final thoughts? Would you spend time with those you loved? What would you want to emphasize?

Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and so he took off his cloak put a towel around His waist and washed the dirty feet of His disciples. Who's going to waste time on that when the end is so near? Why? Because Jesus wanted to show them how important it is to humbly serve one another.

It was a normal cultural practice to wash ones feet – after a long day, traveling on dusty dirty roads – one needed to wash their feet.

This menial task of washing another's feet in the 1st century was never done by the master of the house nor by one's peers but by a household servant. Often the servant would have been a Gentile. But it appears here that there is no servant, the room has been hired or borrowed and all the preparations had already been made by Peter and John (Luke 22:12).

Why didn't they continue serving? Maybe they thought they had done enough and it was the turn of others – but no one was stepping forward. Then in John 13:4 Jesus got up from the meal and began to wash the feet of his disciples. You can understand Peter looking at Jesus confused, perplexed, as he saw his master taking the role of a servant – washing his friend's feet and then preparing to wash his own feet. No wonder Peter sounds surprised as he cries out, "no way!"

Jesus' love for His disciples is manifest in this passage. His love has no limits - a love which could not be quenched even by a traitor's kiss. Jesus had accepted the responsibility for his disciples and was obliged to instruct and protect them. (John 17:6-12).

In this passage Christ bares His inmost soul to His disciples.

Christ begins with a deed, not a word, but a deed that expressed more eloquently than words ever could.

In the foot-washing, Jesus demonstrated the heart of his character in a single act.

The Symbolism

Verse 4

- He got up from the meal. - He got up from His throne.
- He laid aside His garments. - He divested Himself of His robes of majesty and glory.
- He wrapped Himself with a towel - He wrapped Himself with the towel of our humanity.

Verse 5

- He poured water into a basin and washed the disciples' feet. He was soon to pour His blood into the basin of the cross to cleanse our sinful hearts.

*This was no theatrical display, nor a pretentious act of humility. Christ was not an ostentatious person. Christ had the servant spirit and attitude. He did it because He delighted in doing it and to set an example.

The disciples were mystified by Jesus' act of foot washing.

Many believed the Messiah was to come like a King, not as a servant.

In Mark 10:45 Jesus said of himself, "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*"

Philippians 2:3-8 tells us that we should, "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...*"

He humbled himself why? In order to demonstrate His love as verse 1 says He now showed them the "*full extent of His love.*" Jesus by His actions showed us that nothing indicates love more clearly than humble service to others.

Who is your Judas?

The Scripture here notes both before and after the description of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet that of all people Judas was there. Judas, having decided already that he would betray the Lord, was among them and received the humble demonstration of Christ's love.

Lest we think that somehow our love and service to others should end at the church door, or that we have no responsibility to love and serve those who don't reciprocate our efforts, Jesus washed the feet of Judas too.

We Need to be Servants

John 13:12-17 "*When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."*

Jesus says, "If I your teacher, your Lord, found it necessary to serve you, then you should serve others." In fact, to serve is what it means to lead. We cannot call ourselves followers of Christ and be unwilling to serve in humble ways. That doesn't mean that we don't have individual gifts and places of service, but each of us should be willing to humble ourselves, to demonstrate our love for those we serve.

As I've been studying this message I was thinking of ways to drive the point home. I was thinking that perhaps we could wash each others feet. But the problem with that is the only thing people would remember would be the washed feet. Foot washing may lose its significance because, people don't really need it done, they have running water and showers at their homes.

You see foot washing isn't about foot washing, it's about serving others at personal sacrifice, and humbling ourselves. It's somebody watching the children on a Wednesday night so that some couples can attend the Bible Seminars. It's people showing up early when they see there's been snowfall so they can clear the sidewalks at the church. It's listening to a neighbour who needs to talk when you don't have time to listen. It's about volunteering to help with Sunday School or the children's program. It's about giving a helping hand when fixing needs to be done for an elderly person. It's giving of ourselves.

Conclusion

Do you want to leave a legacy? Do you want your life to count, that your life matters, that you've left your mark while you pass through this life.

What do you want to be remembered for? What is it that you want to leave behind when you pass from this life to the next?

Remember the three questions by Dr. Dobson:

1. WHO DID YOU LOVE?
2. WHO LOVED YOU?
3. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR CHRIST?

Every believer needs to look at the impact of how they are living and what they will leave behind when they pass from this life to the next.

Charles Spurgeon, *"A good Character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you. So carve your name on hearts and not on marble."*