

Text: John 13:1-17 (Pew Bible, pg.1066)

Title: “Engage...Suit up for Service”

INTRODUCTION

This morning when I left the house there was a layer of dew all across the city. You know the Bible says that the people of God are like the dew of heaven. And that was certainly true over the past few weeks climaxing with Love Fort Worth this weekend. The projects done by our church members were like a refreshing dew that settled over our city. And you know when the sun hits the dew it glistens, sparkles and shines. Jesus said, “Let others see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Let’s open our Bibles to John 13. It seems that every time they turned around the disciples heard Jesus talking about this ... His urgent call to live on-mission lives ... to engage the world with His love. Even in the last hours of Jesus’ life He drove home this truth to His followers. **READ JOHN 13:1-5.** Join me as we pray together.

The setting is intimate. Close friends ... flickering lamp lights. Jesus and His disciples came into the house off of dirt roads. Wearing open sandals their feet were covered in dirt and grime. Remember as a kid playing outside barefooted, and when you came in your mom sent you straight to the bathroom to wash your filthy feet. Typically the host of the home would have a servant stationed at the door next to large water pots. His duty was to wash the feet of the guests as they came into the house. Only the lowest of slaves would be assigned this unpleasant task of holding and washing the dirty feet of others. However, in some instances, when this kind of slave was not available usually one of those who gathered would take it on themselves to wash the feet of the other guests. In this instance the disciples all moved to the table to begin the meal. Still no one had washed their feet. Maybe they sheepishly looked around waiting for someone else to do the dirty work. Imagine their surprise when Jesus got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing and wrapped a towel around His waist. He was suiting up for service! Jesus took a basin of water and began to move around the room washing the filthy feet of His disciples, drying them off with the towel around his waist.

And after doing all of this (and finding some resistance from the disciples, I might add!) Jesus said... **READ JOHN 13:12-17.**

Here are some things I learn from Jesus about suiting up for service. To suit up for service like Jesus...

1. I’M NOT LOVING IF I’M NOT SERVING.

You cannot separate love and serving.

John 13:1b - Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

Another way to say this is, “He now brought His love to completion.”

John 13:2a - The evening meal was being served...

Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus has been showing merciful, saving, forgiving, healing love to His followers. He “loved His own who were in the world.” Did He love the world? Certainly! But here we get a glimpse into Jesus’ heart for us. Jesus loves His own; and if you belong to Jesus you need to know how much He loves you today.

And now Jesus is about to show the full extent of His love to them ... to bring His love to completion by serving them. You cannot separate love from serving. Love is not complete until it serves. We learn this from God Himself.

1 John 4:9 - This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

Love is shown in service. So we are to follow the Father’s lead:

1 John 3:16 - This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 3:17 - If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

1 John 3:18 - Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

There are times when service takes on an extraordinary, heroic face.

ILLUSTRATION – Perhaps you heard the story this week of the family that was hiking in the Rocky Mountains when there was rock slide that sent 100-ton boulders tumbling down onto the trail. The father, Dwayne Johnson, didn’t have time to protect his whole family, but in the last second he threw his body over his 13-year old daughter Gracie. The rest of the family, including the dad, perished. But rescuers pulled Gracie alive out of the pile of boulders. They said that her father’s heroic last minute effort saved her life.

There are times when service does something heroic. Certainly Jesus was about to do that by dying on the Cross.

Matthew 20:28 - The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Most of the time, however, our love is shown in the simple, everyday things we do to help others in the name of Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION – I heard about a husband who said to his wife, “Honey, I love you. I love you so much I will die for you.” The wife said, “Sweetheart, thank you, but I don’t need you to die for me. I need you to love me enough to just take the trash out sometimes.”

ILLUSTRATION – One of the most amazing stories that came out of Love Fort Worth actually involved a couple of ministries in our church. A few weeks ago a family came to the Mercy Clinic, our free medical clinic, on a Thursday evening. They brought their terminally ill son to get some badly needed medical attention. Medical personnel evaluated the son's needs. A pharmacist made calls to find affordable medication. A compassionate counselor spent time with each member of the family. Clinic volunteers pooled their resources to pay for the medications the son needed. A young physician's assistant knew the needs in that home were great, so she approached her SMBS class. They went to the home and did repair work on the house and in the yard. I saw a photo of it. It looked like ants crawling all over the house and yard serving in the name of Jesus.

I'm not loving if I'm not serving in the little opportunities that present themselves many times a day. But also to suit up for service like Jesus means...

2. I CAN'T BE SELF-ABSORBED.

Now just put yourself in Jesus' sandals for a moment. Think of all that He was facing in that hour.

John 13:1a - 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.

If there was ever a time for Jesus to be self-absorbed it was now. He was about to leave this world and go to the Father; but between here and there stood the Cross where Jesus would endure unspeakable agony and pain. And not just physical pain of the torture of Roman crucifixion ... He would endure great emotional and spiritual agony as your sins and my sins and the sins of the whole world are heaped on Him. And Jesus knew this was just hours away for Him. He could have easily been self-absorbed, but instead He was "others-focused."

ILLUSTRATION – Some of you are thinking well I'm just too old, or I'm just too weak to be much good to anybody. Oh quit it! Last Sunday the senior adult ladies that my wife teaches took breakfast to our college students. Some of the ladies had trouble walking to the student building where the college ministry meets, but they showed up with food.

If anyone had the right to be self-absorbed it was Jesus; but He wasn't. On top of that Jesus was about to be betrayed by one of His closest followers ... Judas.

John 13:2 - The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.

I mean, Judas was sitting right there at the table. Jesus knew this was about to happen. Again, if there was ever a time for Jesus to be self-absorbed, it was now. Not only was He about to face unspeakable pain, but He was about to endure cold-hearted betrayal. You see, Judas allowed Himself to become a tool of Satan in the plot to crucify Jesus. He was a paid killer, a paid assassin. He was given money by the Jewish authorities to hand over Jesus. And later that very night Judas identified Jesus to the arresting soldiers by kissing him on the cheek. The interesting thing is that Jesus knew all of this ... and still washed Judas' feet.

Some of you have been AWOL from service because you've been hurt by someone. Quit sulking and start serving.

Most of us have problems; and some of us have some big problems. We can become so self-absorbed with our problems that we have no time for others. I learn from Jesus that if I'm to suit up for service I can't be self-absorbed.

I learn something else from Jesus about suiting up to serve:

3. NO ONE IS TOO IMPORTANT TO BE A SERVANT.

John 13:3 - Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

Just think about that statement for a moment ... think of all that it tells us about the authority and the reign of King Jesus. This is the Son of God. He knew that after His resurrection He would return to the Father to assume the throne of the Kingdom. He had a name that was above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee would bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord.

If anyone had the prerogative to think, "I'm too important to wash dirty feet," it was Jesus. But He didn't do that.

Now Jesus was always teaching and always coaching. He washed the feet of the disciples because they needed to have their feet washed. And Jesus was not too important to assume the role of the lowly servant to do that. But Jesus had something else in mind. He wanted them to understand something about the life of service that He was saving them for.

John 13:12b - "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them.

John 13:14 - Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

John 13:15 - I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Don't think you're too high to go low ... too important to serve.

John 13:17 - Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

So the blessing is not in knowing these things. The blessing comes when you do them. How many of you know there is great blessing in giving ... that is more blessed to give than to receive? Some of you really *felt* that over the past few weeks, and this weekend.

CONCLUSION

John 13:15 - I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

So through the ages followers of Jesus have suited up and stepped on the field to follow Jesus into a life of selfless service. And that's one of the great blessings of being part of an established church that has been around a long time ... has been engaged in showing the love of Jesus for a long time. We know what a life of service, an on-mission life, looks like. We've seen it lived out before us by many people in our church.

ILLUSTRATION – This week I was thinking of many of these people who are now senior adults. They're still actively serving, but I have to wonder who is going to fill their shoes when they can no longer serve. Who will suit up and go in the game for them. There were scores that I could think of, but for the sake of time this morning let me just mention a few of them. Who will fill the shoes of...

1. REBEKAH NAYLOR - MISSIONARY
2. JOE LENAMON – MEN'S LEADER
3. CAROLYN COGGIN – PASTOR'S WIFE
4. JAMES BASS – PASTOR
5. SALLY LENAMON – SOUL WINNER
6. GLENN HEDGPATH – BOYS WORKER
7. MAYBLEE TERRY – MISSIONARY
8. BILL PEARSON – WORSHIP LEADER
9. JO ANN MORGAN – PASTOR'S ASSISTANT
10. F.B. HUEY – SEMINARY PROFESSOR
11. BARBARA MCCOY – BIBLE TEACHER
12. PERRY CLARK – BENEVOLENCE WORKER
13. NETTIE RAMSEY – WOMEN'S LEADER
14. MYRON JONES – CHRISTIAN PHYSICIAN
15. RHONDA BRANTLEY – PRESCHOOL WORKER
16. HOLMAN LEE – BIBLE TEACHER
17. JUDY STAMEY – CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR
18. BILL RICE – DEACON LEADER
19. BEVERLY LEA – BIBLE TEACHER
20. LARRY WILLCOXON – CHURCH MUSICIAN

Jesus doesn't just call us to a *weekend* of service ... He calls us to a *life* of service.