



October 2, 2005

LIVING BEYOND MYSELF "THE GREAT GAMBLE" John 13.1-17; Ecclesiastes 2.1-11

The Book of John tells us that Jesus is going to have his final meal with his twelve followers. Everything has been arranged. However, they walk into the room, and there is no servant there to wash their feet. It might have been an oversight. We don't know from the text. But we're led to believe that the absence of this foot-washing attendant created some very interesting tension among the followers of Jesus. Jesus uses the moment to teach us a most profound lesson.

"The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

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.'" John 13.2-5, 12-17

I'd like to make a couple of observations from this classic text. Hear them clearly.

First, Jesus unapologetically and with no ambiguity whatsoever calls every one of his followers to acts of kindness and servanthood like foot washing.

Secondly, if you do this kind of stuff, you will be blessed.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes we are given an example of the alternative of **Living Beyond Myself**, and what a picture it paints for us.

*"I thought in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with **pleasure** to find out what is good.' But that also proved to be meaningless. 'Laughter,' I said, 'is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?' I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.*

*I undertook great **projects**: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. **I bought** male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well--the delights of the heart of man. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my **wisdom** stayed with me.*

*I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;
I refused my heart no pleasure.
My heart took delight in all my work,
and this was the reward for all my labor.
Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done
and what I had toiled to achieve,
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
nothing was gained under the sun." Ecclesiastes 2.1-11*

I want to challenge you to reorder your schedule so that you can make it to every single service in this series.

My second challenge is for you to use the Scrolls.

Challenge three is before you leave our sight today, I want you to do a simple act of kindness.

And here's my fourth challenge: Before you go to bed tonight, do another one in the context of your family.