

WHO WILL GO?

A famous preacher visited a Nursing home that had some patients with Alzheimer's in it. He went around and greeted the people who were very glad to see him. He walked up to one lady and asked, "Do you know who I am?" She said, "No Dear, but if you go to the Front Desk, they can tell you."

Let me ask you a question today, do you know who you are? What I mean by that is, do you understand who you are in Christ? Today we are continuing in our series Made for Mission. We have asked the questions "why do we go" and "where do we go." Today I want to ask another basic question, 'Who will go?' What are the qualities of the people that Jesus wants to send?

Matthew 9:35-38 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Before we discuss this passage let me speak to those of you who are brand new to this whole Church and Jesus thing. As you're trying to figure this out I think it's important to understand that Jesus is inviting us into a Chicken Pot Pie relationship not TV Dinner one. You know in a TV dinner the food comes in their own compartments. So you could devour the steak but completely avoid the broccoli because it's from the devil. In the same way we can easily break our lives into their own distinct compartments. You've got one titled family, one titled work, one titled friends one for spiritual beliefs.

In this image you could have strong spiritual beliefs that come out on Sundays but they really don't mix naturally with the other parts of your life. The problem is that Jesus is not just interested in your spiritual life, He is interested in your life. With Chicken Pot Pie all of the food is fixed in so there is no picking and choosing. The broccoli, chicken and carrots are all in every bite whether you like it or not. The same is true with our walk with God. He wants our relationship with Him to touch every part of our lives and for us to get rid of the compartments.

When Joshua and I went to Lebanon we went through Istanbul airport and I ate at Carl's Jr, a burger place. They had a catchy slogan, "If it doesn't get all over the place, it doesn't belong in your face." The same could be said for us and our relationships with God. "If it doesn't get all over the place, it doesn't belong in your faith."

John 13:1-4 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. 2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. 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; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

If you are going to go and do what Jesus did, you have to know the same three things about yourself that Jesus knew.

1. Jesus knew WHERE He was – it was time

Notice again what the first few verses that we just read say;

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Notice what it says. It describes WHEN it was - just before the Passover Feast. It describes WHAT is happening - the meal is being served and Judas had gone out to betray Him. Understanding all these things, Jesus knew that it was time to act. Jesus understood the time.

1 Chr 12: 23 These are the numbers of the men armed for battle who came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the LORD had said: ... 32 men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do

It says in this passage that the men of Issachar understood the times. This means that they understood that it was a new day and that God was moving in a different way than he had in the past. The context of this passage is that in 1 Chr 10 King Saul had died in battle along with his son Jonathan. For many years Saul had been king but a growing movement had begun which recognized that God had appointed David king. The men of Issachar saw that God had selected a new king and they aligned themselves with David. They understood what was happening and acted accordingly.

Jesus understood where He was. He knew that the time had come to act. He had a plan. The men of Issachar knew what was happening around them. They understood what God was doing and they too had a plan. Do you? Do you know what God is doing in your life? Do you have a plan? Are you hearing what God is saying to you and are you obeying His call on your life?

When I was a student at the University of Guelph I had come home for a weekend to visit my family. We were living in Thornhill at the time. I was watching television, but there was nothing really on that was interesting. I saw a book that was lying out that my mother had just received from a conference she had been at. It was a book by a missionary named Helen Roseveare entitled *Give me this Mountain*. I began to read about her life and ministry. She was a doctor in the Congo when the civil war broke out. She and other missionaries were captured and tortured because they were white. At one point she knew that the soldiers were coming to beat her and rape her and she cried out to God for help. God replied by asking her a question. He said "Helen, can I trust you with this experience, that you will not curse me because of what you are about to endure? Will you trust me with this experience, even if I never tell you why?"

As I read the book I felt like God was asking me the question "How about you Steve, do you trust me?" I said yes Lord. "If I asked you to become a missionary and endure hardships, would you go?" I had to think about that for a while. Finally after a lot of prayer I said 'Yes.' Then I heard God say to me, "OK then, I want you to go." This was not what I was expecting to hear. I had other plans. I thought my life was heading in a certain way, but I understood that God was calling me in a different direction. It was a new day, a new direction, a new calling.

How about you? I God told you to go, would you?

2. Jesus knew WHO He was – His past, present and future

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.

Read that again. Jesus knew that he had come from God (past), he knew that God had placed all things under His power (present) and He knew that He was returning to God (future). Jesus knew who He was. Past, present and future. He was secure in who He was. Are you?

A few months ago when we were going through the Daring Faith series I said that an understanding of who God created us to be determines our self esteem or worth. When we understand how valuable we are in God's eyes, it shapes our self image. That means who we see ourselves as in the present. People who struggle with self image are people who do not understand who God created them to be. An accurate picture of our own value forms our self ideal. That means the person we are becoming. Who do you want to be 5 or 10 years from now? When we understand who God created us to be it forms our understanding of what we need to be doing and the person that we are becoming.

People who know who they are understand their own strengths and weaknesses. They do not get defensive when people point out their weaknesses because they know them already and they are confident in their strengths. They know who they are.

In this story, the disciples are sitting around the table waiting for a meal. In sandals, your feet would pick up the dirt and dust as you went along. Usually, when you entered a house there would be a servant who would wash the feet of the people who entered, kind of like taking your shoes off before entering a house today. This does not seem to have happened, perhaps because no one in this group was confident enough in who they were to actually do this important aspect of hospitality. They were talking about who would sit on the left and right of Jesus in glory, not who would do the menial job of a servant. Perhaps they felt that to do so was beneath them.

Peter did not understand this truth. He was insecure in who he was.

John 13:6-11 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 No, said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 Then, Lord, Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

Notice how Peter bounces between two extremes. The first is that He does not want Jesus to touch him. Peter felt that it was beneath Jesus to be doing what He was doing and he was uncomfortable with the fact that his master was doing what he knew he should have been doing. Remember how Peter, after the miraculous catch of fish when he was first called to be a disciple, responded;

Luke 5:8-9 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken

None of us are worthy of God's love. All of us have blown it. We have done what we should not have done and left undone what we know we should have done. None of us deserve to be saved. That is grace. We get what we do not deserve. Notice how Jesus responded to Peter's objection, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." Ouch. Jesus is saying that unless you allow me to touch you, your dirt remains. As believers we are called to bring our lives and lay them at Jesus feet. The good, the bad and the ugly.

We are to bring our brokenness and our pain and all the hidden ugly pieces of our lives and give them to Jesus, for only then can He take them and wash them and make us clean.

After hearing this, Peter says “Ok Lord, I am all in. If we are going to do this, then let’s do it right. Don’t wash just my feet Lord, but give me the works. Every part of me from head to toe.” Again, Jesus had to reign him in. A person who has received salvation does not need to run to the alter every time they make a mistake. They need to be secure in the love of God.

Who am I? A sinner saved by grace. I know that God created me because He loves me and that I have value because of who He created me to be. I know that because of the fall and my own actions that I was born a fallen creature in a fallen world. However, Jesus died on the cross to restore me and save me. I know that I stand complete in Him and, even though I still blow it, that God loves me so I keep bringing my brokenness to Him. I know that one day I will die and go to be with Jesus forever.

That is who I am, and that is who you are. Live like it.

On April 26 2006 a Taylor University van carrying 9 students was hit by a truck. Five of the students died in the crash, including a blonde girl who was identified as Whitney Cerak. A funeral was held for Whitney with over 1400 people in attendance. She was buried in a family plot at the cemetery. Meanwhile, the survivors of the crash were recovering at a nearby hospital. One survivor was another blonde girl identified as Laura VanRyn. For several weeks her family had kept a vigil by her bedside. She had serious head wounds and was unable to communicate. Finally, after 5 weeks in the hospital she spoke, and everyone realized they had mad a mistake. The girl in the hospital with the bandaged head was not Laura, it was Whitney. She had survived, it was Laura that had died in the accident.

3. Jesus knew WHAT He was – a servant

John 13:4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

What Jesus did here in washing the disciples feet was and act of humility. It was something that was reserved for servants. In doing this, Jesus was teaching us what the life of faith means. Notice then what He says;

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. 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus came to serve. He came to give His life for others.

Mark 10:42-45 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

When Wycliffe translator Doug Meland and his wife moved into a village of Brazil's tribal people, he was referred to simply as "the white man". The term was by no means complimentary, since other white men had exploited them, burned their homes, and robbed them of their lands. But after the Melands learned the local language and began to help the people with medicine and in other ways, they began calling Doug "the respectable white man." When the Melands began adopting the customs of the people, they gave them greater acceptance and spoke of Doug as "the white Indian." Then one day, as Doug was washing the dirty, blood caked foot of an injured boy, he overheard a bystander say to another: "Whoever heard of a white man washing an Indian's foot before? Certainly this man is from God!" From that day on, whenever Doug would go into a tribal home, it would be announced: "Here comes the man God sent us." It was not until they saw him serve that they understood who he really was.

As believers in Christ, God has called us to serve. He has gifted us to bless others.

Graduates from Lincoln Christian University during commencement receive a diploma and a towel. The diploma marks the completion of an educational milestone; the towel signifies a lifetime of service to which the graduates commit. The education the diploma signifies equips the graduates to lead. The towel, however, represents an even more important qualification for biblical leadership. Without Christ-like humility no one can lead in a biblical manner.

Years ago there was a large group of European pastors that came to a conference that was being led by the great evangelist D. L. Moody. The first night the pastors put their shoes outside their rooms to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. However, this was America and there were no hall servants. Walking the dormitory halls that night, Moody saw the shoes and determined not to embarrass his European brothers. He mentioned the need to some ministerial students who were there, but was met with only silence or pious excuses. So Moody returned to the dorm, gathered up the shoes, and, alone in his room began to clean and polish the shoes.

When the foreign visitors opened their doors the next morning, their shoes were shined. They next night a friend saw what Moody was doing and offered to help. The next night others offered to help as well, never telling anyone of what they were doing. One commentator on the life of Moody once wrote "Perhaps this episode is a vital insight into why God used D. L. Moody as He did. He was a man with a servant's heart and that was the basis of his true greatness."

There was an old British show back in the 70s and 80s called Are You Being Served? It was set in a very old-fashioned department store and dealt with the working life of the people who worked there. The title comes from the fact that whenever a customer came into the store they were asked, "Are you being served?"

That should never be what you hear as you enter the church. When it comes to faith the question is not "Are you being served?" but "Are you serving?" We are not customers come to have all our desires met. We are workers come to meet the needs of others.

It is fitting that we talk about this today, since we celebrate Memorial day and also communion. We remember today how so many soldiers have given their lives for us to give us freedom. We remember also at this table this morning the price that Jesus paid for our freedom.

The war is still going on, and so many are still lost. Who will be willing to go and set them free?