

DOWNWARD MOBILITY



Jesus remains Lord by being a servant. The beloved disciple presents a mind-bending image of God, blowing away all previous conceptions of who the Messiah is and what discipleship is all about. What a scandalous reversal of the world's values! To prefer to be the servant rather than the lord of the household is the path of downward mobility in an upwardly mobile culture. To taunt the idols of prestige, honor, and recognition, to refuse to take oneself seriously or to take seriously others who take themselves seriously, and to freely embrace the servant lifestyle—these are the attitudes that bear the stamp of authentic discipleship.

The stark realism of John's portrait of Christ leaves no room for romanticized idealism or sloppy sentimentality. Servanthood is not an emotion or mood or feeling; it is a decision to live like Jesus. It has nothing to do with what we feel; it has everything to do with what we *do*—humble service. To listen obediently to Jesus—“If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet”—is to hear the heartbeat of the Rabbi John knew and loved.

When being is divorced from doing, pious thoughts become an adequate substitute for washing dirty feet.

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.

JOHN 13:4-5

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