

## Look and Listen Part 5

We are continuing our series Look and Listen. We are talking about looking to and listening to Jesus, but making sure we are looking to and listening to the right Jesus, to the Jesus that is revealed to us in the Scripture. How do we recognize him? How do we know this is Jesus? Jesus said in John 10 that he was the good shepherd and that “his sheep follow him because they know his voice...they won’t follow a stranger because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” How do we learn to recognize his voice? He is going to speak in ways and in terms that are consistent with his nature that is revealed to us in the Scripture. The greatest in the Kingdom passages we’ve shared the past few Sundays reveal something of his nature. He is as a child, as the least, the last, as the youngest, humble, making of himself no reputation, obedient, as a servant, not breaking a bruised reed or snuffing out a smoldering wick, compassionate, gentle, abounding in mercy and loving kindness. All of these things reveal his nature to us. This is the Jesus we know. So if someone is speaking in his name, do you see and hear his nature reflected in what they are saying, in how they are saying it, in how they are treating others? Learn to recognize the voice of the good shepherd. Jesus said, **“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”** **John 10:11-14** Look and listen to the Jesus of the Scripture. That’s what this series has been about, just to point us to Jesus, to help us recognize him, his voice and his nature. There is a powerful illustration of his nature found in John 13.

**“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.”** **John 13:1** This is the night of his betrayal and John says he now showed them the full extent of his love. How do you show love for someone? By sacrificing yourself on their behalf, by giving without expecting something in return, by serving. Jesus would show them the full extent of his love by laying down his life for them on the cross, but before that, he showed them his love in another fashion, by serving them.

**“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 disciple's feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him." John 13:2-5**

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power. Power? What do you think of when you think of having all the power? "We are going to get some things done now. We have the power so we are going to control things, people, I'm going to see that I get my way." Jesus had all power and what did he do? Jesus knew who he was and that all things were under his power so he got up and served, washing the feet of his disciples. Jesus knew that power was best used to serve and to give, not to force others to serve us or to get. Jesus knew who he was so he didn't have to prove anything. He wasn't concerned that by doing the work of a servant, someone might get the wrong impression about who Jesus really was. What about his image? Washing feet wasn't beneath him. Remember Philippians 2 again, He made himself of no reputation, humbled himself and took upon himself the form of a servant.

Who are we? Do we know who we are? We are children of God. Peter says we are partakers of His divine nature. As such, we are called to be like him, to live in and reflect his nature. We too are to be servants. He has empowered us and that power given to us is so we can serve, so we can point others to Jesus and show them his love. Now that we know who we are as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, who we are called to be, we aren't trying to climb a ladder to fame and power, instead we are wrapping a towel around our waist and looking for opportunities to serve. If we look and listen to Jesus we will learn to serve!

It is a picture that's hard to grasp. Washing the feet of guests in a house was the lowliest job assigned to the lowliest of servants, yet this is what Jesus did for his disciples. Peter is watching and decides this behavior is beneath the dignity of Jesus. **"He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.' 'Then Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!' 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.' For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean."** John 13:6-11

Peter was reluctant to have Jesus wash his feet. I understand that reluctance. Years ago I had my feet washed by someone other than myself. A business man who attended the church at

that time called and asked if he could meet with me. He was President of a bank here in town, older than me, better educated than me at that time, wealthy and very successful. He brought a basin and a towel and said the Lord had directed him to do this. This was obedience for him to wash my feet. It was an act of service but I have to say I was very uncomfortable. There is no sense of pride in having someone wash your feet, instead, it is a very humbling experience. It exposes your own unworthiness. (Besides, feet are just gnarly and weird little nails on there and calluses and they belong inside socks and shoes.) But it is humbling and perhaps Peter felt that and protests, but Jesus says “unless I wash your feet you have no part with me.” Maybe Jesus is saying “unless you are touched by my humility, unless you are humbled by being touched by this ultimate act of servanthood, then you’ll not be able to be a part of my kingdom and my calling.” Gayle Erwin said of this passage, **“Unless we understand the true nature of Jesus and let him be to us what he is to be, we can never fully comprehend him or truly be a part of him. We may be a member of his club or take on much of the right vocabulary, but unless he serves us, we have no part or fellowship with him.” ...Gayle Erwin**

Peter says not my feet only then Lord, wash all of me and Jesus tells him you are already clean, it’s just your feet that need to have the dust of the world washed off. If you have repented of your sins and made Jesus the Savior and Lord of your life, you have been washed clean. You don’t need to get saved every week, but you do need to have the dust washed off of your feet. You’ve been walking around in all the dust and muck of this world, all the language and greed and anger and prejudice and hatred and violence and lust and you name it. It clings to you, like dust on the feet of the disciples, but we come here and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and the prayers, and the reading and studying of God’s word, and the greetings and blessings and fellowship of the saints of God, all of that helps wash our feet and encourage and refresh us so we can go back out into the dust of the world.

**“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 13:12-17**

Do you understand what I have done for you? Jesus asked. I would have to answer “No.” Stop and think about it for a minute. Do you understand all that Jesus has done for you? How he saved you, rescued you, forgave you, cleansed you, made you an heir of God, a child of God, adopted you into his family, made you a partaker of his divine nature, calls you to follow him, the list goes on. No, I don’t understand all he has done for me. And when I try to understand the example he has placed before me, to be a servant, I don’t always understand that either. And I certainly don’t always want to respond as a servant. It goes against our human nature doesn’t it? We don’t want to be the servant, we don’t want to be the least or the last. We want to be served, we want to be the first, we want to be the most important. It’s our human nature and it is in opposition to that new, redeemed spiritual nature. If you go to the Ark Park and listen, I doubt that you hear too many of the children yelling, “Me last, Me Last.” It’s “me first!” Ask the kids, “which of you would like to be the servant today and pick up all the toys?” No thanks Cinderella, let someone else do it. But Jesus models for us a new way of life. He has washed us, served us so we understand a new way of living. He washed our feet and touched us with his humility, his obedience, his other’s centeredness and we are changed by it. The fact is, he has done more than that.

Remember he came to seek and to save the lost. That was us. He found us lost, filthy, in rags, and he loved us. He cleaned us up, not just our feet, but he washed us from head to toe with the washing of his blood and the water and the word. By His Spirit he made us alive again and he brought us to his table and seated us there, like decent people when all we had known was massive indecency, and he called us by a new name, and if that wasn’t enough, if we weren’t overwhelmed already, he then took a basin and a towel and washed our feet. He served us, giving us an example of how to live, how to serve. What amazing love and mercy that touched us and made us whole. John said in the beginning of his gospel, “The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father full of grace and truth.” John 1:14 And now we behold his glory as he washes our feet. No, I don’t understand what he has done nor how he has loved us, but I am forever thankful and grateful. Oh the beauty of Christ, and the beauty of his mercy and grace that draws us to himself.

He tells the disciples and us, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you...Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” This is what he calls us to do. Hold on before you start taking your shoes off. Is he literally calling us to

wash each other's feet? There are churches that do this regularly but let's ask this question. If we aren't all wearing sandals and the roads aren't all dirt roads, then perhaps the need for literal foot washing isn't there. But is there something else we can do to symbolically wash each other's feet? Gayle Erwin asked, "What things make us feel cleaner and more fit for the Master's table? When someone takes the time to listen to me, I feel as if my feet have been washed. When I am complemented, my feet have been washed. When someone shares a joy with me, my feet have been washed. When someone values my ear enough to share a burden or confess, my feet have been washed. There are countless ways to wash feet. We need only to begin to notice where the dirt comes from in our own lives and we can give cleansing to others."

Where can I wash feet? Where can I be a servant? Look around. We always need workers in the nursery. We always need people to help with Team Carbondale. We always need people to host Life groups. We need people to serve and help with Children on Wednesday. Where can you serve and wash feet? It's what he calls us to do.

Maybe someone has had a really difficult week. Your kindness, stopping this morning and taking time to check on them, to offer a prayer, a word of encouragement, you are washing their feet. There are so many ways to serve. So many opportunities to follow Jesus' example, to get up, wrap the towel around us and serve. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. What's stopping us? Let's get busy!

Take a moment and ask the Lord, "Whose feet can I wash today? Where can I best serve? What are you asking of me?" Listen for his answer. You'll recognize his voice. And then do it. That's where you discover his blessing.