



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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John 13:14 *“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”*

The heart of a servant. That's what Jesus was demonstrating here in our passage today. Folks miss this when they see nothing more than washing feet. Some churches want to have a foot washing service. Why? Jesus isn't showing us what needs to be done in church today. We don't have dirty feet like the people back then did. Few roads were paved. They were mostly located in major cities. The roadways around most villages were dirt. People walked. They didn't wear socks and shoes as we do. They didn't go from clean houses to cars to offices and stores that are cleaned on a regular basis. Our feet don't get dirty like the feet did in Jesus' day. Washing feet isn't the point here. It's serving. Of all people, Jesus should have had His feet washed by the apostles, not the other way around. People should have honored Him, opened doors for Him, and done great things for Him. Instead, it was Jesus who showed the apostles how to serve.

Washing feet isn't an honorable job. It isn't something that one aspired to do in life. In many places, where there were servants, it would be the servant that did the foot washing. Putting a dirty foot on your lap and washing and drying it wasn't something that many today would like to do. It would make some squeamish. Others would be disgusted by the whole process. Jesus washed the feet of the apostles, including Judas and including Peter. The feet that belonged to betrayers and deniers.

The lesson being taught here is service. Don't be too big to help others. Don't think some things are beneath your pay scale to do. Don't forget to be a servant. Most servants didn't get paid. Those that did, didn't get paid much. The role of the servant is to help others.

This is something that is desperately missing in our times. Folks that will do things because it's the right thing to do. Why pick up trash in the parking lot? I didn't put it there. Are there people who get paid to do that? So we walk right on by. Why put the grocery cart back in the stall or take it back to the store entrance? Aren't there paid people to do that? So just leave it in the middle of the parking lot. Why pick up a song book that is on the pew or floor of the church building? I didn't put it there. Aren't there custodians to do that? Too good, we've become to do the little things. This is why we are witnessing a smaller and smaller group that volunteers at schools, organizations, and churches. Why should I have trumped the spirit of being a servant.

Teachers are needed for the kids classes at church. It's the same folks who do it over and over. They are tired. They need a break. But no one else will do it. A work day is planned down at the church house to clean up the grounds. It's the same few who show up each time. Others could, but won't. Servants are busy too. Servants have things to do. Servants only have the weekend off as well. Why is it that the servants volunteer and others don't? It has to do with our lesson today.

There are disciples who have caught the spirit of Jesus. They understand full well what Jesus did and how He gave up so we could become. He was made poor that we might be rich. Servants must juggle their schedules. They must make sacrifices. Mostly, they say "No," to themselves, so they can help others. It's the servants who make food for hurting families. It's the servants that sit with a family in the surgery waiting room. It's the servants that go out of their way to make sure things are the best that they can be. We would all miss the great things done in our lives if there wasn't the spirit of servants.

Our times do not produce many servants. We like to be served. We want others to do things for us. Kids today grow up with little responsibilities. They demand to be happy all the time. The word "chores" isn't in the vocabulary of most homes. So a generation is being produced that wants service but is not willing to be a servant. If the trend doesn't change, no one will do anything because it's the right thing to do. They will do it if they are paid, praised and promoted for it.

How do we get the spirit of a servant? It starts in the home. It is taught and illustrated by parents who are servants. It is taught through a study of the Scriptures. It is preached about. It is taught in classes. It is encouraged by inviting others to help out. Team teach. Team clean. Team volunteer. Non-servant parents generally do not raise kids that will be servants. It starts with mom and dad. Get down to the church house and clean it. Teach classes. Pick up trash around the neighborhood. Do things for others. From that, include the kids. You may have to drag them. As boys get bigger, bring them along when you are helping someone move. Include them in projects. Take them to the funeral home. Take them to the nursing home. When they say, "I don't want to," remind them that it's the right thing to do. Don't take excuses. Don't let them off easy. Expect them to do things around the house. Now, if you are always seen sitting in your chair, barking out orders, expect resistance. They will begin to wonder why do we have to and you don't. Do things with them. Work hard together. Then rest and play hard together. Help them to have open eyes to see things. Most will do things if told. Be the ones who do things without being told.

In some churches, deacons are lazy. That is a major contradiction. The word "deacon" means a servant. How can you have lazy servants? That doesn't work.

Jesus washed those dirty toes that belonged to the apostles. Do you think you could have done that? Do you think you would if He told you? The heart of a servant...that's what is at stake. That's what is needed today.

Roger Shouse