

Message Notes August 9th, 2020
Beautiful Outlaw: Encountering the True Personality of Jesus
Week 9: The Humility of Jesus (John 13:1-17; Phil. 2:5-8)

• **Dirty Jobs**

- Who is the most important and powerful person you can think of? Someone, maybe, you look up to and admire, someone with a lot of influence in the world. Imagine that person coming to be a guest in your home. This person comes to your house and proceeds to start cleaning your dirty dishes and dirty laundry for you. How would you react? You'd probably be appalled, you'd be insistent—you could never let them do this! But this influential, powerful person just looks at you and says, "No, I want to do this for you, let me serve you." Would that be crazy, or what?
 - As wild as this hypothetical scenario would be, it just scratches the surface of what Jesus did for his disciples as he washed their feet in that upper room. I really cannot think of any contemporary comparison that would help us understand just how ridiculously Jesus obliterated the social expectations here. I don't think we can fully fathom what this would have felt like for his disciples, living in the time and culture they did. It's a truly awe-inspiring moment. A holy moment of *scandalous grace*.
- Last week, we noted how there are some comparisons between the politically and socially charged climate of Jesus' day and our day. But, as you know, there are also really big differences between our culture and that culture.
 - Jesus lived in what historians and anthropologists refer to as an honor and shame based society. (There are still cultures like this in the world today: if you've ever heard the term, "honor killings," in parts of the Middle East, it comes from an honor-shame culture.) They place a lot of emphasis on social pecking order and public status; it is a highly communal culture rather than our individualistic culture.
 - Some of the most powerful motivations in a society like this are attaining honor, avoiding shame, and fulfilling your place in the community.
- This is Jesus' last supper with his disciples; he's getting ready to face the cross. It's absolutely *stunning* that the Son of God incarnate and the King of all kings takes the role of a *slave* to do the messy job of cleaning filthy feet. These feet were like *next-level* dirty: the guys wore opened-toed shoes and walked dirt roads that were covered in the droppings of all kinds of creatures and beasts of burden. They stepped in some serious *stuff* as they walked from town to town.
 - So this job of washing feet was reserved for the lowest of slaves. Do you remember the show, "Dirty Jobs," with Mike Rowe? This was a *dirty job* if ever there was one! There was no honor in it. Jesus chose to do this for his friends, as a prophetic sign and an example. In this moment he demonstrated the full extent of his love and glory. And it blew their minds.
 - It's a testament to how much Jesus has influenced history that today, we can look at a story like this and say, "Wow, that is such a beautiful and noble thing to do." In Jesus' day, there was nothing noble about it: they had no category, no paradigm for this. It wasn't until after his death and resurrection and the spread of the Christian movement that subsequent generations began to see *humility* as a virtue. Seriously, there are books about this—humility was not seen as a *virtue* in Western Civilization until Christ. Jesus is amazing! Such a worthy King.

• **Love Humbles You**

- Here's something I've learned: the greater the love, the greater the humility. Think about the people you love most. Is there anything you wouldn't do for them? Think of all the examples in the love you have for your family. Think about how *marriage* humbles you. Think about how *parenting* humbles you. Can I get an amen from anyone?
 - How about caring for your parents as they age? That's a humbling experience. I remember when my grandma first started to get dementia. As things were declining and my parents had to start looking for full-time care for her, I remember our last vacation together, where grandma started to lose some functionality in the bathroom.

- I can still see my mom having to go into the rest stop bathrooms as we were driving to our destination, because grandma was having accidents. *And it wasn't a number one...* It's saddening, yes, but it's also kind of humorous! I mean, can you imagine the day when you'll get to give your kids some payback for all they put you through?! (Life has a funny way of coming around full circle doesn't it?) Do you see the connection between love and humility?
- How about the humility it takes to love an enemy? To swallow that burning desire for retribution and say, "I forgive you. I bless you anyway. I wish you the best, I pray for your good." Saying a prayer of blessing for the person who cuts you off or insults your kids feels like swallowing a glass of lava. It's excruciatingly humbling!
- Love will take you down the road of humility more than any other thing, that's why it's so hard. It will lead you to do things you would *never* do unless compelled by love. Love is about the *other*. Love is the opposite of self-serving, self-centeredness. Holy, Godly Love means desiring and seeking the highest good of an *other*. Love and humility naturally go hand in hand. True love *requires* humility and true humility *requires* love.
- **Jesus is Humble**
 - So, back to *Jesus*: Jesus is dynamic. This whole Beautiful Outlaw series has attempted to help us break him out of the religious boxes we create that domesticate and dampen his true personality. We've tried to recover so many treasures of Jesus' life revealed in the Gospels:
 - Jesus is playful, Jesus is fierce, Jesus is human, Jesus is generous, Jesus is free, Jesus is cunning and brilliant. Jesus is the kind of captivating personality you just want to be around. And along with all of these incredible traits, Jesus is *humble*.
 - Many of the great people we exalt, who leave the biggest marks on history, have everything *but* humility. And those who really do are the exception, not the norm. Think about the tyrants of the world: men throughout history who have claimed greatness and absolute power. They build idols of themselves throughout an empire and contrive elaborate celebrations to try and generate love and obedience from the masses.
 - The new Caesar would triumphantly process into Rome, waving at crowds of people they *paid* to be there, feigning a humble acceptance of a throne they had taken by force. The Pharaohs and other kings of old claimed divine status, demanding to be worshipped. Even today, in countries of dictatorship you can see where leaders setup massive idols, statues, murals to "So and so the Magnificent," with a version of themselves 20 years younger and fitter. These tyrants have massive egos, but their character is anything but great.
 - Jesus is the opposite: he is the greatest *everything*—and yet, the humblest person to ever live. Perfect Love incarnate.
 - This is exactly what Philippians chapter 2 is talking about: *"...have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"*
 - Here's what John Eldredge has to say in this week's chapter—I want to quote this at length, because I think he so powerfully captures the mind-blowing humility of Jesus: *"'Humbled himself'? 'Humility' hardly begins to describe the incarnation. That's like saying it would be humble for you to become a goldfish, to live in the bowl, in a fishy world, trying to help those other fishies become something more like Phoenixes. It boggles the mind. The eternal Son of God, 'Light of Light, Very God of Very God...one substance with the Father,' spent nine months developing in Mary's uterus. Jesus passed through her birth canal. He had to learn to walk. The Word of God had to learn to talk. He who calls the stars by name had to learn the names of everything, just as you did. 'This is a cup. Can you say cup? Cuuup.' Or did you think baby Jesus came into the world with the vocabulary of Dictionary.com? For ages upon ages, his generous hand fed every creature on earth; now it is he that has to be fed, spoon-fed, drooling most of it down his chin like any other toddler. The Son of God doesn't even know how to tie his...sandals..."*

- *Picture seven-year-old Jesus in the shop out back, learning from Joseph how to use a hammer and a saw. He who hung galaxies in such perfect poise, like a hundred billion mobiles, has to be shown how to nail two boards together. I take off my shoes. The humility of this is beyond words.” (Beautiful Outlaw, © 2011 FaithWords Publishing)*
- **Christians are (called to be) Humble**
 - Much of the time when I think I’m being humble, I’m actually just serving myself in a more subtle, manipulative fashion. It’s a painful discovery when you first realize how much pride you really have. False-humility runs rampant in the church, we’ve all done it. The way to grow in humility is not to think about being humble, but to simply learn how to love others like Jesus.
 - Remember what he said to his disciples after washing their feet? As they sat there, still stunned over what their master and Messiah had just done, he told them: “...*Do you understand what I have done for you?...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.*” (John 13:12-15)
 - Jesus modeled the way for us as directly as he could. The mark of discipleship is that we serve and love one another the way Jesus has served and loved us, no exceptions. How are we doing with this today, Church?
 - What do people see when they look at us? How we treat each other. How we relate to each other. How we talk to and talk about each other. How we treat insiders *and* outsiders.
 - I’d like to suggest that much of our American church, in general, has a *humility* issue. When our culture looks at the church, too often they do not see a Christlike posture of washing feet. What if we stopped launching culture wars? What if we stopped trying to conquer culture and simply began by washing feet? Maybe more people would be willing to follow Jesus if they realized the *this* is what Jesus is really like. I’m not talking about being doormats; I’m not saying there isn’t a time for flipping some tables and calling out the truth for what it is; I’m saying it’s time to start being more Christlike starting with his humility.
 - Here’s what C.S. Lewis said about true humility: “*Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call ‘humble’ nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all. If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realize that one is proud...If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed,*” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*).
 - Jesus is the most powerful Person in the universe. And Jesus is the most humble person in the universe. Does that blow your mind? And he is humble, not *in spite* of who he is: he is humble *because* of who he is. He is love. When you watch Jesus, you’re watching love.
 - So, put yourself in that vulnerable and intimate moment in the Upper Room. Picture yourself as one of those disciples, and Jesus is working his way through the room. He—your Lord and Savior and Creator—comes to you as a servant, a towel around his waist, a wash basin in his hands. *Will you let him wash your feet?*
 - What he did for the twelve there, he does for each of us, in the love he poured out at the cross for our salvation. And if you can receive the depth of his love, you will be able to learn how to give his love away. If you can bring yourself to allow him to wash your feet, to do your dirty dishes and dirty laundry—to serve you—then you can learn how to wash others’ feet like him. If you want to learn how to be humble like Jesus, first allow yourself to be *humbled* by the love Jesus has for you.
 - May it become true for us, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.