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## **Give Me The Heart Of A Servant**

**JOHN 13:1-17**

### **Introduction**

1. There is a hymn which we have sometimes sung — it is titled "*Make Me A Servant.*"

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2. Here are the words:

Make me a servant Lord, make me like you  
For you are a servant, make me one, too.  
Make me a servant, do what you must do  
To make me a servant, make me like you.

To love my brother, to serve like you do.  
I humble my spirit, I bow before you.  
And through my service, I'll be just like you.  
So make me a servant, make me like you.

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Open my hands Lord and teach me to share  
Open my heart Lord and teach me to care,  
For service to others is service to you.  
Make me a servant, make me like you.

3. To open our hands and share, to open our hearts and care is what it means to be a servant.
4. When we serve others, we are rendering service to our Lord.
5. In our text today, Jesus provides us with an object lesson, one which reveals the heart of a servant at work.
6. I want us to take time today, out of the three weeks which have preceded today and the many weeks to follow in order to focus our minds upon Jesus' own personal example and the lesson which He taught.

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## **I. The Upper Room**

### **A. THE EVENT**

1. Feast of Passover (v. 1; Matthew 26:19; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:8)
2. Jesus is in an upper room in Jerusalem with His disciples.
3. Peter and John (Luke 22:8) have made the preparations necessary for Jesus and His disciples to “eat the Passover.”
4. A few hours from now, Jesus will be betrayed by Judas.
5. Within 24 hours, He will be lying in a tomb provided by Joseph of Arimathea.

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### **B. THE THINGS WHICH JESUS KNEW**

1. John reveals to us certain things which Jesus knew that no one else around the table knew that evening.
2. He knew . . .
  - a. “that His hour had come” (v. 1).
  - b. “that he would depart out of this world to the Father” (v. 1).
  - c. that “the devil [had] already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot [the desire] to betray Him” (v. 2).
  - d. “that the Father had given all things into His hands” (v. 3).
  - e. “that He had come forth from God and was going back to God” (v. 3).

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### **C. THE THINGS WHICH JESUS DID**

1. He “got up from supper” (v. 4).
2. He “laid aside His garments” (v. 4).
3. He wrapped a towel around His waist (v. 4).

4. He “poured water into a basin” (v. 5).
5. He “began to wash the disciples’ feet and . . . wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (v. 5).
6. At what point did the disciples begin to take notice of what Jesus was doing?
  - a. The point at which He took off His outer garment?
  - b. Perhaps the point at which He wrapped a towel around His waist and poured water into a basin?
  - c. Certainly, when He knelt at the feet of the first disciple.

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## **II. The God of the Towel**

### **A. OUR LORD WASHED FEET**

1. According to Luke’s account, a dispute arose that evening about which one of the twelve “was regarded to be the greatest” (Luke 22:24).
2. It was most likely after this dispute, or perhaps even in the midst of it that Jesus prepared Himself to wash their feet and began to do so.
3. None of them would have expected Jesus to wash their feet.
  - a. The slaves in the house were assigned such tasks.
  - b. If there were no slaves, the disciples of Rabbis were supposed to carry out such personal service for their masters.
  - c. Never, would they have thought of One whom they considered to be “the Son of the living God” stooping to wash their feet.
  - d. Jesus did what none of them were prepared or apparently willing to do, He washed their feet.
  - c. Some people think they are too important to perform such humble tasks, but this was not the case with Jesus.

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### **B. WE MUST BE WASHED BY HIM**

1. When Jesus came to Peter, Peter asked Him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” (v. 6).
2. Jesus told him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand” (v. 7).
3. Some time before this, in Capernaum, Peter had declared Jesus to be “the Holy One of God” (John 6:69).
4. In Caesarea Philippi, He said that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:18).
5. Now, to see the Messiah on His knees washing dirty feet was more than He could accept.
6. He said to Jesus, “Never shall You wash my feet!” (v. 8).
7. Jesus then responded to Him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part in Me” (v. 8).
8. Our washing is a necessary part of our conversion, if we are to have any part of Jesus:
  - a. Jesus told Nicodemus, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).
  - b. He told His disciples, shortly before His ascension back to His Father, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).
  - c. In Ephesians 5:26, Paul wrote that Jesus desire is to sanctify His church, “having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”
  - d. In Titus 3:5, he said that God saved us “by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”
9. Today, if you and I are to have any part in Him, we must allow Him to wash us in the waters of baptism, even as the early Christians did.

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### III. People of the Towel

#### A. "DO YOU KNOW WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU?" (v. 12)

1. Having carried out His object lesson, Jesus now took the time to explain its meaning.
2. His disciples referred to Jesus as both "Teacher and Lord," two titles which He accepted.
3. He then added, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (v. 14).
4. One of our brethren, Jim McGuigan, in his book *"The God of the Towel,"* understands Jesus to be saying, Peter,  

"What you see is what you get. This is the kind of Messiah I am, and if you reject the spirit you are seeing here and want none of it, so be it. If you don't want this, you don't want me; for this is what I *am*, not just what I *do*." <sup>1</sup>
5. If you and I are to follow Jesus and imitate Him, we too must seek to be like Him.

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#### B. "I GAVE YOU AN EXAMPLE THAT YOU ALSO SHOULD DO AS I DID TO YOU" (v. 15).

1. This passage is about how we treat other people.
2. Notice what He said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him" (v. 16).
3. In the beginning of this gospel, John tells us that Jesus is "the Word" who was "with God" in the beginning and who "was God" (John 1:1).
4. He adds that "all things came into being through Him" (v. 3).

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<sup>1</sup> McGuigan, Jim. *The God of the Towel*, (Howard Publishing, West Monroe, LA, 1998), p. 132.

5. He is the One of whom the disciples acknowledged, “even the winds and the sea obey Him” (Matthew 8:27).
6. In Colossians 1:16-17, the apostle Paul states, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”
7. Yet, He humbled Himself and performed menial service for others.
8. He calls us to do the same.

## **Conclusion**

1. Regardless of our position in life, God calls all of us to be servants.

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2. There is another hymn, a prayer we sometimes sing, that I would like to direct your thoughts to this morning.

Give me the heart of a servant,  
Tender and faithful and true.  
Fill me with love then use me, O Lord,  
So that the world can see You.

3. Do you have the heart of a servant this morning?
4. Perhaps you are someone today who believes that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
5. If so, why not finish what you have started by allowing His to wash away your sins through baptism so that you can start again as a “new creation” in Christ?