



Study notes - week 9

A community that serves one another

w/c 3 November 2019

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." (Mother Teresa)

For some, serving others is the most natural thing in the world; for others, it can almost be an alien concept, a sign of weakness. But the reality is summed up nicely in an anonymous business quotation: "*if serving others is below you, leadership is beyond you*"

It is often easy to think of Jesus ministry as one of preaching and miracle-working; but the word he chose to describe it was "serve" (Matthew 20:28).

Read John 13:10-17 & 34

"As I have loved you" – Jesus gave his disciples a very clear mark against which to judge their own efforts. How did Jesus love his disciples? Reflect on his relationship with them as a group and as individuals rather than the love he showed all of us through incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection etc...

In verse 14 it seems likely that Jesus is not (just) looking for physical foot-washing in response to his actions. What sort of things count as foot-washing within our current church community?

Look back at the word 'so' at the start of verse 4 – essentially John is saying that it was because Jesus had complete confidence in his position before God the Father that he chose to take on the role that would have gone to the lowliest servant and wash his disciples feet. How is such self-knowing the key to service? How do we gain such understanding?

Just after our reading here (verse 35) John records Jesus words that "*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*" Why do you think Jesus said that loving each other – rather than others beyond the church – would be the mark that identifies us? How does this passage complement Matthew 25:35-36 where the emphasis seems to be on what we have done for others?

Writing to a wide group of early churches, Peter noted that: "*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*" (1 Peter 4:10) How do we discover our gift; find out what it is we should be doing? When should we say no to helping?

Finally, think of some practical ways in which we could make our love for each other real? Sharing skills, equipment, time.... How would that make a difference?

"Somewhere along the line, we must learn that there is nothing greater than to do something for others."

(Martin Luther King Jr)