

November 1, 2015

What Would Jesus Do?

As we noted last week, we began this study with the assumption that as followers of Jesus we are seeking to become more and more like him in our lives. Thus, by studying the way Jesus spoke and acted in different situations and when dealing with different issues we can come to understand how we ought to speak and act in order to reflect him more and more. In considering how Jesus interacted with the poor and with sinners we have seen, I hope, that Jesus was moved by deep compassion to be extraordinarily merciful to those struggling in sin and poverty.

Of course, to really understand Jesus we must, I think, ask ourselves how he was able to be so compassionate and so merciful to those around him. Jesus himself said very little about his motivation but demonstrated it constantly. In Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus teaches his disciples about motivation. He says, ***"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."***

Our Lord was able to be so compassionate to those in need and so merciful to those in sin because ultimately he had humbled himself to become a servant. The Apostle Paul described this process in his letter to the believers in Philippi. There he writes, ***"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"***

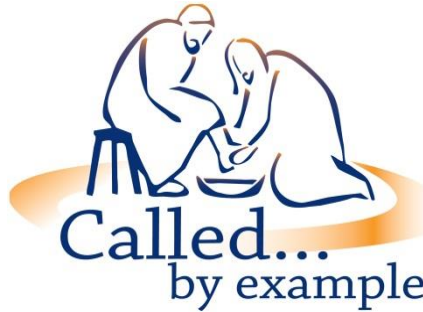
The key to understanding how Jesus spoke and acted in so many situations is, I believe, to understand that he had chosen above all to be a servant. Through his humility Jesus was able to be present with those who struggled with sin and poverty. He was able to see their need and he was moved to be responsive to those needs because he had first emptied himself.

I know that this is a struggle for me. I find that I am, more often than not, driven by my own interests especially when I am confronted with sin and poverty in others. I think all of us struggle with these characteristics that the Apostle calls selfish ambition and vain conceit. I know that I am a self-serving person at heart. It is easy for me to focus on what I want and what I need even at the expense of those I love the most.

I also understand that I am often driven by a hugely inflated view of my own importance. This vain conceit makes me believe that those who shop in my stores and drive on my streets and live in my neighborhood should by all means be aware of my every need and provide for it.

Jesus overcame our human tendency to be selfishly ambitious and vainly conceited by choosing to empty himself and by choosing to become a servant. He wants us to do the same; willingly becoming less so that we can serve more.

On the night of his this lesson again by washing them, *"Do you understand You call me 'Teacher' and that is what I am. Now Teacher have washed your one another's feet. I you should do as I have*



betrayal the Master taught the feet of the twelve. He told *what I have done for you? 'Lord', and rightly so, for that I, your Lord and feet, you also should wash have set you an example that done for you."* (John 13:13-17)