

Text: John 13:12-20

Title: "Is Jesus really our Teacher and Lord?"

Time: 8/10/2025

Place: NBBC

Introduction: New Boston was founded in 1763, so our town is now 262 years old. One of the contributors to our town's centennial celebration in 1863 was a favorite son named Joseph Goodhue, who had become a Baptist pastor in Cambridge, MA. Pastor Goodhue's part in the celebration included an address about what he believed the home would look like one-hundred years after the celebration, i.e. 1963. Following his optimistic address, a youth choir sang a hopeful Irish ballad anticipating better days called, "A Hundred Years to Come."

Our town's rural school system provided some support for Goodhue's optimism. He spoke fondly of the New Boston school he had grown up in, comparing its personalized simplicity favorably against the impersonal novelties of big-city schools. He reminisced over a custom from his days as a student: "We still have some faint recollections of the not most highly-refined festivity claimed by the pupils on every new year of deposing the dominus from his authority, and taking the reins of government into their own hands for the day, by bolting or barring or smoking him out of the premises, as the case might require" (Cogswell, 167).

Did you notice that Pastor Goodhue says our school once had a dominus? *Dominus* is Latin for *lord*. It is the man in charge. Goodhue uses the term to refer to the Protestant clergyman who provided the students with instruction as their teacher. Evidently, the New Boston school celebrated the new school year by putting the kids in charge for a day. Lacking the dominus for more than a day, however, would

not do. Goodhue understood the axiom: no dominus means no education.

Our public school system has lost the idea that a teacher is also a dominus or a lord. Unfortunately, those in charge of public education 100 years after Goodhue's address have been committed to the idea that it is the children who are their own best lords. Goodhue's doctrine still holds true, however. No dominus still means no education.

In our passage, Jesus is concerned that His disciples do not miss what it means to have Jesus as both their Teacher and their Lord. He has just finished washing the disciples' feet, after which He reclines again at His place at the Passover table, and then He asks these clean-footed men a simple question: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (v. 12). Interestingly, when Jesus asks that question, He uses the perfect tense. His meaning is literally, "I have done this for you, and the results of this that I have done for you ought to last into the future. Do you understand this?"

And so, we must ask ourselves the same question this morning. Do we understand what Jesus has done to these disciples of His by washing their feet? Do we understand what He has done for all of us as His disciples? Have the results of what He has done continued far enough into the future to reach our lives? Or put more directly, we can ask ourselves, "Is Jesus really our Teacher and our Lord?" He certainly deserves our honest answer. I believe the Lord explains what an honest *yes* to His question must be like. An honest *yes* must be built on three important commitments.

I. If Jesus really is our Teacher and Lord, we will follow His example (vv. 12-15).

Illustration: One of our brothers is finishing a course of study today, who is also learning a new job at a firm in his field. Consequently, he has been too busy to golf with Pastor much of late. On the one hand, he has a set of teachers at school, and on the other, he has a set of bosses or lords at the firm. With all these teachers and lords, his life has been filled with many obligations. To have a teacher and a lord is to have a set of obligations.

Application: That is the simple truth the Lord is communicating to His disciples in this paragraph. His point is, "If I am really your Teacher and your Lord, then you have an obligation to do something for Me" (v. 14 – *ye ought also*). One commentator said this about the word *ought*: "The obligation is of a debt incurred" (Westcott, 192). In other words, the humble service that Jesus has rendered to us, as our Teacher and our Lord, obligates us to follow His example and do the same for each other (vv. 14b-15; not just others, but *one another*). If we are unwilling to follow this example, we cannot really say that Jesus is our Teacher and our Lord. If that is really true, this is our obligation.

So how well are we following this example in our care for one another? We New Englanders can be irreversibly independent. We have an ethic of personal responsibility that makes us resist looking to anyone else for help. The other side of that coin, of course, is that we are often not much focused on helping others.

A local church like ours needs to have a distinctive witness of mutual interdependence and one-another service in a place like New Boston. We need to show our neighbors our love for each other. Are we willing to ask ourselves, "What can I do this week to wash the feet of my local church family and friends?" "How can I be of service to them?"

There is one more thing we must understand about foot-washing before we leave this passage. Today, we typically wear socks and shoes, and so none of us will take the time to wash our feet when we get home from church today. Some religions have made this first-century custom a religious ordinance or sacrament, like our practices of baptism and The Lord's Table. In Roman Catholic liturgy, there is Maundy Thursday of the Passion week, in which the clergy wash the feet of one another as a religious observance. *Maundy* comes from the same Latin root as our word for *mandate*, and so Catholicism has seen since the late seventh century a mandate here for this foot washing rite.

As Baptists, we do not find here a mandate to wash each other's feet for two reasons (Carson, 468): (1) "nowhere else in the New Testament, or in the earliest extra-biblical documents of the church, is footwashing treated as an ecclesiastical rite, an ordinance, [or] a sacrament" (unlike baptism and the Lord's Table); and (2) "the heart of Jesus' command is a humility and helpfulness toward brothers and sisters in Christ that may be cruelly parodied by a mere 'rite' of foot-washing that easily masks an unbroken spirit and a haughty heart."

So, to wash a person's feet once a year in a religious rite is not what Jesus expects of us as our Teacher and Lord. He expects us week-in and week-out to care for the needs of one another, both spiritual needs and physical needs. He knows that many of these jobs are going to be the work of humble slaves (see v. 16), but He was the humblest slave of all in His care for us. So again, how are we doing in our care for one another? If Jesus really is our Teacher and Lord, we will follow His example in this one-another ministry.

II. If Jesus really is our Teacher and Lord, we will make His will for our life greater than our own will (vv. 16-17).

Illustration: I received a phone call this past week that was a great blessing to my heart. It was from a brother in the Lord, for whom we have been praying, with news that he had experienced an important renewal in his life recently. I have been concerned for him, because for some time I had not heard back from him after calling or texting. But God loves and chastens His children, and having experienced that love, this brother spoke with great happiness, joy, and hope for the future. His happiness was the happiness of verse 17, “happy are ye if ye do them.”

Application: That joy unspeakable and full of glory is what Jesus wants for us as our Teacher and Lord. The word translated *happy* in verse 17, is the same word translated *blessed* in the Beatitudes. It is the experience of someone under the blessing of God’s grace rather than the woe or curse of God’s judgment or chastening. Because the Lord Jesus is the Christian’s faithful Teacher and Lord, we can only know this blessing if we not only know His will, but also do His will. As the song teaches, “Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

This is what our Teacher and Lord experienced for us. He committed Himself to do His Father’s will faithfully (“Not my will, but thine be done”). He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For this reason, His joy today is unspeakable and full of glory. He is highly exalted and given a name above every name (Phil. 2:9). Luke describes the joy He has obtained: “Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). This joy of our Teacher and Lord is the joy in the presence of angels over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7, 10).

This is the blessedness Jesus wants us to experience as well. We are not greater than Him. Our ideas about how best to

become happy and blessed are not greater than His ideas. The Psalmist promises the repentant, newly obedient child of God, "For his anger endures but for a moment; in His favor is life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). Obedience may involve difficult, lowly service, even suffering, but the joy of our Teacher and Lord will be ours in the morning of eternity, if we determine each day to make His will greater than our own. Will you do that this week?

III. If Jesus really is our Teacher and Lord, we will trust Him in our gospel mission (vv. 18-20).

Illustration: You may remember from our study of Exodus that God called to Moses out of the burning bush to send him back to Egypt to free his countrymen from the bondage of their slavery. This is a great Old Testament picture of redemption and our gospel mission. Moses had a number of excuses why the mission was a bad idea, and one of those was that his countrymen would ask the name of the God who had sent him, and Moses did not know what to tell them. God said to tell them that His name is "I Am."

Application: Jesus again points to a dark side of their Passover meal in verse 18. Seated among them, also with clean feet, was one who was equally chosen to be an original apostle, but who was also a devil (v. 18; see John 6:70). "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). This was Judas's condition, and Jesus knew it. He knows the true condition of our hearts too.

Jesus says this situation fulfilled the spiritual principle David wrote about in Ps. 41:9, where David lamented the betrayal of a friend with whom he often broke bread. The Hebrew word translated *heel* in that Psalm is used for the hoof

of a horse in Gen. 49:17. The picture painted of a friend's betrayal here is that it hits you like the kick of a horse. It is both shockingly surprising and severely damaging.

But Jesus knew His disciples would be able to take that surprising damage and still follow their Teacher and Lord because He was telling them ahead of time that the betrayal would happen. Jesus's ability to tell us ahead of time what is coming encourages us as His disciples to trust Him, even when those we are counting on have let us down. The way passages like Ps. 41:9 fit our own experience provide the strength we need when we go through these trials. Jesus saw this surprising damage coming. He is not surprised.

Perhaps the greatest encouragement of all for Jesus' disciples facing difficult times of abandonment and betrayal is the truth that just like Moses, we New Testament local church members have been sent to free sinners in bondage by the great I Am, who alone can make them free (v. 19).

Jesus encourages His disciples that He is the I Am, the one sending them just like He sent Moses, and so those who receive or reject them do so to Him. And since the Father sent Him, those who receive or reject Him do so to the Father as well. His Great Commission claim is true: "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them" (Matt. 28:19-20). Like Moses, we must put our many excuses aside for this mission the I Am has sent us on.

Conclusion: So, the Lord asks each of us a very important question this morning, as He did those original Twelve: "Am I really your Teacher and Lord?" "Are you following My example of humble service toward your fellow believers?" "Is My will for your life greater to you than your

will?" "Will you trust Me in your gospel mission as one sent to free those in bondage to sin?" What is our honest answer this morning?

Judas is not the only one among the Twelve that evening who were falling short of a *yes* answer to this question of their Teacher and Lord. Not one of them had washed each other's feet. All needed this correction from their Teacher and Lord then, and every one of us here today needs it now.

Let's go to the Lord to repent of all the times Jesus has not really been our Teacher and Lord, all the times we claimed He was while we were doing our own thing for ourselves instead. If we do so, we may be used by Him the way this group of fallible slaves and apostles were used by Him. Jesus promised, "If we know these things, happy are we if we do them."

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*