

THREADS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, LESSON 9: HUMBLE ACTS

“I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you.” (John 13:15, NIV)

ONE OF THE BIGGEST MISTAKES WE CAN MAKE WHEN CONSIDERING JESUS is to suggest that he came only as a good example. Something along these lines: *We may not lift up our athletes as role models, but someone like Jesus? He can certainly show us the way!*

Jesus came for so much more than that. He came to do what we could not. He came to die, to shed his blood in perfect atonement for our sins. You can follow that example if you want, but it won't have the same effect. It's too late for you to be a sinless offering.

Which sets us up for a second big mistake. This is thinking that since we cannot live up to Jesus' example, we don't need to try. If in a saving sense, all our good works are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), why clean them up at all? Let's just do what we will and Jesus can clean up the mess in the end.

Here's the flaw in that logic: we're not called to go around making messes.

The account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet is remarkable for several reasons. For instance, in the exchange between Jesus and Peter, we note the importance of doing things the way Jesus would do them (even to a T), rather than coming up with our own good idea—no matter how eager we are in doing it.

But let's focus on the two other big matters today, for they help us in our study of righteousness. First, Jesus demonstrated “the full extent of his love.” Second, that love was rendered through the most humble of tasks.

When we call a respected friend or leader “humble,” we normally mean they are not self-promoting. They lack smugness. And they may also demonstrate a listening interest in others over and above telling their own stories. All these are recognizable features of the noteworthy character trait we call humility. But when Jesus modeled a humble rendering of his “full love,” he did it in service. He took action. He got on his hands and knees and washed dirty feet.

Jesus did come to set an example. But that example was what we might call a “low standard.” Get down. Get dirty. Serve. This is the mode our Lord taught us.

Opening questions Where have you seen humble service performed in a way that it struck you as beautiful? What keeps you from helping others in “low” ways?

READING John 13:1-17, Matthew 23:1-12, Luke 14:7-14

The feet of the served

In reading the account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, what goes through your mind regarding the way the disciples (other than Peter) must have perceived this act? How easy do you think it was for them to “do as he had done for them”?

The pride of the Pharisees

In what ways were the Pharisees lifting themselves up? How did Jesus call his disciples to a different approach to greatness?

Around the table

How does Jesus' parable in Luke 14 secure today's theme in your mind? How might you lift up someone else today?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2014 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today's study at <http://youtu.be/piQzGMIE-jI>