

Total Surrender

John 13:1-15

Toward the end of the Civil War the leaders of the Confederacy began talking about terms for peace. ***They were lobbying for a CONDITIONAL surrender.*** In other words, they would bring an end to the war IF certain conditions were met.

By 1865 the end of the war was certain, it was just a question of how long it would take and how much more devastation the south would endure. President Lincoln and General Grant were clear and determined, however, that ***they would accept nothing but full and unconditional surrender.*** In the end, Grant allowed the officers and soldiers to keep their horses, if they owned them – for the sake of their livelihood in farming. And Grant paroled all the officers meaning they would not be executed as long as they did not again take up arms against the Union.

But the terms were clear. It was total surrender or total war. There was no negotiation. C.S. Lewis says it this way:

“Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms... This process of surrender – this movement full speed astern – is what Christians call repentance... It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Of course, it is by letting our OLD SELF DIE that we are able to be reborn. Repentance is the necessary precursor to faith. ***Only when you let go of that old, sinful, self-centered person you were can you take hold of the new creation God wants to make you into.*** We are rebellious soldiers, guilty of treason against the crown. We do not just need a little education, a little moral reform, we must surrender unconditionally and throw ourselves upon the mercies of God. We’ve been going exactly the wrong way and must make a full about face.

Here is our key verse for this week from Luke 14:

“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:33 (NIV)

Jesus calls for total surrender. He does not barter. He does not accept conditions. He does not accept possible disciples with caveats and provisos. If you come to Jesus, you must go ALL IN with Jesus. Unconditional surrender. Look at the context of Luke 14:

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:26-27

Jesus demands total loyalty. You cannot serve both God and money. You cannot maintain your previous family allegiances if they conflict with the teachings of Jesus. He offers you a whole new life, a whole new family – but in order to receive that gift of new life your old life must DIE. “Bear his own cross,” is not a soft, friendly metaphor. It is a picture of DEATH.

To follow after Jesus, ***you pick up the cross that is the instrument of your execution.*** The thing that will die on that cross is YOU – your old life in which YOU were the center, YOU were the Lord, your desires and plans were paramount. That is what must die.

Imagine a child is playing outside and Mom calls him in for a snack. She has a hot, gooey ***cinnamon bun*** right out of the oven, with icing cascading slowly over the side. She sees the little boy on the doorstep and ***his hands are together and filled up with mud.*** In the middle of his muddy hands is a frog he has captured.

Mom is not going to give the boy that hot cinnamon bun until the mud is gone, right? She is not going to plop that beautiful creation into those messy hands to share with the frog. The frog has to go, the hose has to come out, the hands must be washed – all of that before the boy can even come inside much less have the snack.

That's how it is with repentance. When your hands are filled with selfishness and pride and your own desires and plans and dreams – there is no place for Jesus to come in. Only when you willingly lay down everything you are holding and everything you ARE can Jesus wash you clean and come in to live in your heart as your Savior and Lord.

Here is our lesson today in one sentence:

Jesus gave everything for you, so give everything for Him

“Having loved his own... he loved them to the end... If I then, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.” John 13:1,14

Jesus washing his disciples' dirty feet was symbolic of His whole life and ministry. Jesus has done this for each of us. He has washed us clean. He gave everything in order to wash away our sins. The only appropriate response to this kind of love and generosity is to give everything we are to Him. Total surrender. He surrendered everything for us. He gave up His life for us. Let's present ourselves to Him – our bodies, our hearts, our lives – everything – to Him.

First, let's reflect on all that Jesus gave for us, then we will look at our response. Here are three gifts Jesus has provided for us.

Jesus gave everything for you

- He became fully **human** so you could become a child of God

“Jesus, knowing... that he had come from God... laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.” John 13:3-4

These details of the foot washing are not throw away window dressing. This is a symbolic moment. **Jesus is dressing himself as a servant.** He is laying aside his regular clothing and taking on the uniform of a common household slave. The task of washing feet was reserved for the lowest family member or servant in the house. Since there wasn't a servant in the upper room that night, it should have been the youngest of the disciples. But none of them made a move to take that role. So Jesus removed his cloak, put on an apron, and knelt down like a servant.

The task reserved for the lowest household slave is the task Jesus embraced. The exalted King of all Kings knelt down to serve. The Creator of the world took off the cloak of His glory and put on the apron of a human body. The All Sovereign Lord who upholds the universe with the word of His power humbled Himself to the lowest of all places.

Jesus became fully human – embracing our weaknesses and mortality – so we could become children of God. He had to have a human body so He could DIE. The eternal Son of God was as incapable of weakness and death as God the Father. God, in His very nature, is invincible, eternal and omnipotent. That is Jesus' nature. But Jesus infused full humanity into His full divinity so He could experience everything we experience; so He could be tempted in every way as we are and yet resist sin; so He could become our perfect High Priest who could fully sympathize with our weaknesses.

The Son of God became the Son of Man so you could become a child of God! Secondly,

Jesus gave everything for you

- He was covered in sin to cleanse you from sin

“Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean.” John 13:10

At first Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet. But Jesus said, “If I do not wash you, you have no share in me.” So Peter said, “Wash everything then!” And Jesus said, “Slow down there, Tiger – we don't need to see all of that!”

Here is another beautiful gospel picture. When you first came to Jesus, calling on Him to save you, **He gave you a bath**. He washed every part of you. He scrubbed away the filth of your sin. Brother, sister – believer in Jesus – ***YOUR SOUL IS SPOTLESS***. Your heart – the center of your being – is forever holy, pure and righteous. Jesus took your old heart that was filthy and hardened in sin and gave you a new heart. He washed you clean.

But our feet are still dirty. There is still remaining sin in our lives. ***Sin no longer REIGNS over the believer, but sin still REMAINS in the life of the believer.*** And so our merciful Savior continues to wash our feet! He not only forgave us and cleansed us with that first acceptance into His family – He washes us every day and continues to purify us from all unrighteousness! Here is the glorious truth of 2 Corinthians 5 -

Jesus gave everything for you

- He was covered in sin to cleanse you from sin

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Cor. 5:21, NIV

Jesus BECAME SIN for us. He was covered in it. He suffocated under the weight of the sin of mankind – including yours and mine. He became sin to free us from sin. He died in sin to clothe us with His righteousness. This is how we can become the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD – through the sacrifice of Jesus and His ongoing ministry on our behalf to continually cleanse us and make us more like Him!

Jesus gave everything for us. We celebrate the incarnation, the crucifixion and the third gift we reflect on today is the HUMILIATION of Jesus.

Jesus gave everything for you

- He served us Sacrificially so we could serve one another

“I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” John 13:15

The point of this foot washing was not ambiguous. Jesus explicitly stated – “I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, so you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Hear this, brother, sister – YOUR LORD has served you in the most humble, sacrificial and loving way! That is our example and inspiration for how we should love one another.

What does it look like to wash the feet of the saints?

- When you ***find a toilet*** with... issues... it’s an opportunity to wash the FILTH of the saints if not their feet.
- When you ***see trash*** on the property.
- When you have ***someone in your Community Group*** who is a little... challenging... being patient and loving and attentive – even when you would rather blow that person off – is washing the feet of the saints.
- And keep in mind, some people might feel that way about YOU sometimes – so keep serving. Keep loving.
- ***Prayer is a vital way to wash one another’s feet.*** Do you pray regularly for the elders of the church? For the children and teens here at Oakwood? Do you pray for those difficult people in your group? Do you pray for our seniors and widows?

Here is another reason we are a church that is all about small groups. If you aren’t in close relationship with other believers you can’t know their needs in order to serve them. Jesus COMMANDS US to wash each other’s feet. This is not glamorous, gratifying work. This is humbling, difficult, messy service. This is CARRYING A CROSS, not sitting on a couch. ***The couch with extendable feet is not the symbol of Christianity.*** The cross is.

How can you serve the church this week?

Jesus gave EVERYTHING for you, so give everything for Him. We’ve looked at the three gifts described in John 13, now let’s look at three responses.

So give everything for Him

- Let your old self die with the One who died for you

“Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.’” John 13:8

Peter objected to Jesus washing his feet. ***It is humiliating to have someone bathe you.*** They will see how dirty you are. Especially your feet – they will see those weird bumps and shapes on your feet. Have you noticed that people have strange feet?

My wife has perfectly cascading toes. My second toe is half a centimeter longer than my big toe. I consider it a genetic advantage, contributing to my notable speed and agility. My wife

considers it an abnormality. (And those of you playing soccer with me might object to the speed and agility reference – well, it was more true 20 years ago.)

Feet are sensitive things – especially when they are dirty. Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet. But Jesus said **being washed is the condition for being a disciple**. Hear this – if Jesus has not washed you thoroughly then you have no share with him.

To be washed by Jesus means He has to see everything that is there. How could someone bathe you if you kept all of your clothes on? To be washed is to become supremely vulnerable – exposed. The nurse prep'ing you for surgery has to see things, no doubt, she doesn't want to see. But it's necessary to be sure everything is clean; to avoid infections and complications.

How much more is this true with the Lord? “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” We cannot hold back from the Lord. He is THE LORD. He gave everything for you and expects – even demands – that you give EVERYTHING for Him. You must let your old self DIE with the One who died for you.

Yes, this happened the moment you first believed in Jesus. But it also happens every single day. Repentance is a one time thing and it is a daily thing. **We must cultivate a LIFE OF REPENTANCE** – a daily habit of putting to death what belongs to our old, sinful nature and putting on the new self, created in the image of the Savior.

So give everything for Him

- Let your old self die with the One who died for you

“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Romans 8:13

The Biblical instruction is not just to let your old self die, but to **CRUCIFY IT** – to put to death your old, selfish, corrupt nature. Continually nail that thing to the cross. And even though it keeps trying to raise itself from the dead, we must keep killing it every day. As the Puritan John Owen so well said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

What gives us the power and motivation to crucify the desires of our flesh? The One who was crucified to pay for those very desires! Meditate on the One who gave everything for you. Reflect on the cost of your sin. Think of the wounds of the Lord Jesus – the stripes by which you were healed. Think of the lashes of the whip, tearing away His flesh – each of those vicious strokes a penalty for your selfishness, for your pride, for your laziness, for your complacency.

That's our first response – repentance. Let your old self die with Christ. Our second response is faith. Entrust yourself completely to the One who conquered death for you.

So give everything for Him

- Entrust yourself completely to the One who conquered death for you

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.” John 13:13

The disciples knew Jesus as their Rabbi – their teacher. They called him “Lord,” which – in those days – could mean something as simple as “sir,” or could mean something as grand as “Yahweh” –

the covenant God of Israel. **Sometimes we think of Jesus as “Lord” with a small “L.”** He is a boss. He is a good master. He can handle a lot. He has authority and power.

But we don't always think of Him with a big “L” – as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; as the God of the whole universe; as the Creator and Sustainer of all things. But Jesus has the biggest “L” of them all. He is LORD. He reigns over all things. He is not just the crucified Savior – He is the Risen Lord. ***When Jesus walked out of that tomb He proved once and for all*** that He is the fully divine Son of God and that His authority is absolute.

Because He lives, you can trust Jesus completely. Because He conquered death, you can trust Him with your death. Because He rose from the dead you can know for sure that your sin debt has been paid. The resurrection was God the Father's “paid in full” receipt stamp on the crucifixion. It was God's final answer to the problem of sin.

Jesus is supremely trustworthy. And He is the only One who we can trust completely. So trust completely in Him. Entrust yourself FULLY to Him. He gave Himself fully for you. He held nothing back. And He calls us to that same kind of “all in” commitment.

Gregg Dedrick was the president of KFC in 2003. At the age of 44 he had reached the pinnacle of his career in business. For five years he led the company. But he felt his marriage crumbling and his soul wasting away. So Gregg and his wife Shelley agreed that he should step down from that position, even though they had no idea what that meant – or what the future would hold.

Gregg and Shelley prayed and waited for guidance. (It was all very “Experiencing God.”) After several months they started growing impatient. And the Lord gave them one word: worship. Gregg protested in his heart – knowing that in their part of Louisville, KY, there were lots of good healthy churches. Was there really a need for another worship venue?

But this was the only instruction they had, so Gregg and Shelley invited a worship leader they knew to bring his guitar and a few friends – and they had **a little worship gathering** in their basement. As they hosted this little time of worship they witnessed some moving stories of God's grace in the lives of their friends – and in their own marriage. God began to heal them – and the first thing He healed was their understanding of HIM. They began leading other people to experience this same kind of healing.

God is not a slave-driving God, pushing you to waste yourself away in the exhaustion of work. God is the God of peace and rest who calls you to come to Him so He can love you and hold you and heal you.

Eventually the Lord led them to **an old barn** that they renovated and turned into a prayer and worship center. It was just a couple of miles south of the church I led in Louisville, and it became a haven of worship and prayer for me. It's called the Iron Bell and for over 10 years now Gregg and Shelley have been opening the doors for daily, weekly and monthly times of prayer, worship, healing and teaching. They host marriage seminars and prayer times. They help people reconnect with God and discover their unique calling in life.

Gregg had devoted himself to rising in the business world and found that success and career advancement was not worthy of his total trust and devotion. In fact, that success came at a great cost. We think of **child sacrifice** as a barbaric tradition of the ancient past, but for the sake of business and career advancement child sacrifice, and spousal sacrifice are actually quite real and common. The god of money and the god of success demand sacrifices. They call for total devotion. But in the end all they deliver is weariness, frustration and pain.

Jesus alone is worthy of our trust and devotion. He alone gave Himself up for us. He alone rose from the dead, defeating sin and death forever. Money doesn't lift a finger to help you. Success demands more and more and gives less and less. Pleasure entices us with a quick fix but in the end leaves us empty. False gods are everywhere. Idols are more common today than ever.

What are you trusting? Can you honestly say you have entrusted yourself COMPLETELY to Jesus? Are you leaning on Him for everything? Or have you diversified your confidence between Jesus and money and family and friends and success and reputation and health... Do you see the danger?

Jesus is the only One on earth – ever in history and certainly in your life – the only One who gave up everything for you. Let your old self die with Him and entrust your life completely to Him.

What does that look like you ask? It looks like a wholehearted commitment to Jesus' purposes and practices. And He made those VERY EXPLICIT.

So give everything for Him

- Love His **Bride** as He has loved you

"You also ought to wash one another's feet... A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." John 13:15,34-35

When Jesus washed the disciples feet He was making **a profound statement**. He was showing them in one act the essence of His character and love. He was showing them what He was about and what it would mean for them to be His followers.

You cannot follow Jesus without becoming more and more of a SERVANT to others. The way of Jesus is not the way of self-ADVANCEMENT, it is **the way of self-sacrifice**; it is the way of love. And love gives itself away in humble, sacrificial, menial service. Foot washing.

Again, Jesus' direction was not vague or ambiguous. The focus of that love and service is crystal clear: **love one another**. Jesus was creating a new set of family ties. He said, "Next to your allegiance to one another, your old family connections don't matter at all. Jew, Gentile, slave, free, rich, poor, noble family, peasant family. None of that matters. What matters is that you are bound to me and through me you are one with each other. So love one another. This is my commandment. How are you to love one another? In the same way that I have loved you. That is how you must love one another."

This is why I wanted to share **Gregg Deedrick's story**. While Gregg was in the business world they were involved in a large church. But they were on the edges of it – often making excuses for why they couldn't be more involved due to work and family and other obligations. But the Lord

redirected them into a life and ministry that was all about serving His church. Their ministry brings renewal to the hearts of believers, it brings healing to marriages. Their ministry is all about restoring the church through worship, faith-filled prayer and relationship based healing ministry.

That's what it means for them to wash the feet of the saints, to love the Lord as they have been loved. **For me and Kristin, it has been a call to vocational ministry.** We have served in just about every role you can have in church ministry. And we feel this is our calling – to love and serve the body of Christ, first in this local church. I like to say it's my hobby to network and prayerfully seek renewal in the broader church in Tampa Bay. But that is part of my calling to serve the Lord's church.

The body of Christ is not broken up into a million little pieces. There is ONE BODY, with ONE HEAD, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has given us very clear and direct instructions to love one another with His kind of humble, self-sacrificing service.

What does it look like for you?

Jesus gave everything for you.

- He left His throne in glory to become fully human so you could become a child of God.
- He was covered in sin to cleanse you from sin.
- He served us humbly, sacrificially, so we could serve one another.

Because Jesus gave everything for us, He calls us to follow His example and give everything for Him.

- Let your old self die – indeed, crucify it in a daily life of repentance – with the One who died for you.
- Entrust yourself completely to the One who conquered death for you. He is the only One who is worthy of your total trust and devotion.
- And love the Bride of Christ as He has loved you. Devote yourself to washing the feet of the saints by loving and serving one another – first in this church, and then in the broader Christian community.

Let's pray.