

What Does It Mean to Be Healthy?

This morning I would like to begin with a question. How many of you take vitamins? Or some other herbal supplements to your diet? We Americans have become a nation obsessed with bodily health. Every major news program has a health watch section reporting new findings in our national obsession with fat. We really are quite concerned with fat – both eating fat and being fat. I will bet half of you know your cholesterol numbers. We may not know what you gave to charity last year within \$2000-3000, but we do know your cholesterol numbers down to the nearest point.

Next time you go to the magazine rack, just survey the number of publications designed to promote health. Health & Fitness, Healthy Living, Eating Healthy, Healthy Eating... Honestly, you would think America was a struggling Third World nation whose citizens were radically unhealthy or malnourished. Here we are, the best-fed, most exhorted nation in history regarding healthy habits, healthy lifestyles and healthy eating. Every single hospital and medical clinic has a wellness center and promotes healthy living programs. Health clubs are springing up all over the place. Health foods are a multi-billion dollar industry. There is an abundance of personal trainers for us if we can't get motivated to work out on our own.

In fact, it wouldn't be too far off to say that our concern with bodily health has become America's national religion. It is the one thing all Americans can agree upon. If you want to promote a cause in the US, all you need to do is somehow link your cause with bodily health and you have a winner.

Just this week, I was interested to see in the Dispatch an editorial, which the writer very astutely said that morals in the US have collapsed into a concern about bodily health. Think about this with me. Why should teens in America not have sex before marriage? Because it is immoral? Is that what school says? Because it is an offense against our Holy God who commands us to reserve this intimate act to the safe bounds of life-long commitment? Is that what we hear? Because it will diminish your capacity to love?

The overriding message regarding why teens shouldn't have sex before marriage is because it is unhealthy. You could get a disease. And so in health education we discuss sexuality not as a moral or a religious issue, or even a relational issue. We discuss sexuality as an issue of health. Not sex and life-long love, or sex as a gift of God, but safe sex and unsafe sex. It's just like food or exercise – a health issue.

Now, I will tell you something. In the history of the world, I challenge you to find any culture at any time that viewed sex merely as a subset of physical health.

Or think about our national crusade against smoking, which I firmly agree with. Why has it caught on so big? Why is anti-smoking the only issue in America that liberals and conservatives agree upon? Because it taps into our national religion, our concern with bodily health. Liberals and conservatives can't agree on anything else, but we are united in this one area that smoking is evil. In fact, to be a smoker these days is to be considered positively immoral.

“Oh, sure, she is faithful to her husband and she is a great mom and a very honest person and serves in her church. But ooh, she smokes!”

In America now, she is practically immoral, someone to be avoided. On the other hand – “Although he uses drugs and is vulgar and conceited and has slept with 400 women and is living with his girlfriend, he's a famous pro athlete and a role model for millions.

In fact, he is used to sell products for dozens of multinational corporations – our kind of guy”

Today, what I would like to do is present to you a very different view of health than simply bodily health. I want to talk about inner health – having a healthy soul. See I believe that Jesus Christ is the proto-type, God’s ultimate model of what a healthy person looks like. You know in our national obsession with health, the fact is, friends, we don’t really know what a healthy inner life looks like. If you were really well, what would you be like?

I can tell you that if you were really well, you would be more than a non-smoker or simply have acceptable cholesterol numbers. If you were really healthy and well, you would live life the way Jesus did. My sermon title is simply, “What Does It Mean To Be Healthy”? Let’s look at John 13.

“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’

Jesus replied, ‘You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’

‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet.’

Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part of me.’

‘Then, Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well.’

Jesus answered, 'A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me 'Teacher', and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.'"

John 13:1 says, "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew his time had come to leave the world and go to the Father."

The book of John is profoundly concerned with the hour, or the time, of the crucifixion. It was the moment that Jesus had prepared for for 33 years. And the moment had come. We talk about Olympic athletes preparing for years for the one performance that will gain them the gold medal. Musicians, likewise, train countless hours for the moment of their debut at Carnegie Hall. But no one was ever as well trained or well prepared for their moment as Jesus was at the hour of His death. For He had trained for 33 years and through tens of thousands of choices to obey the Father.

Every day you are faced with dozens of choices regarding whether you are going to exert self will or whether you will obey God regarding the prompting that God is putting in your heart. Will you say that nasty thing or will you withhold your gossip and suppress it? Will you take the second look, or will you turn away from lust? Will you serve when it is inconvenient, do what takes time out of your busy schedule, or will you be selfish and self-

indulgent? Will you lash out in anger or exercise self-control? We are faced with dozens of choices every day regarding going our own way or going God's way.

And Jesus' life was no different. The reason He was able to say at this hour as He faced the cross, "Not my will, but your will, Father, be done" – the reason Jesus could willingly go to the cross was because tens of thousands of times before He had said the same thing to God. In little and big temptations, whenever there was a crossroads decision to be made, He had said repeatedly for 33 years, "Your will be done, Father." Never was a person better prepared for their moment than Jesus was as He approached the cross that He was going to hang on. Let me ask you a personal question. Have you allowed yourself to be trained for your big test – everyone faces "exam day." The discovery of a tumor; the illness or accidental death of a loved one; the shattering of a relationship; unfair accusations; old age. Have you prepared for exam day by saying yes to God and no to self thousands of times before? That's a mark of a healthy soul.

The text goes on to say, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." Some translations put it, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the end." And either of the translations are acceptable. They are translating the Greek word "teles" which could mean love to the fullest extent or love to the end.

What does it mean to be healthy? Healthy people know that they are loved. We have a completely messed up view of love in America. In the US right now, love is almost entirely defined as romance or even worse as erotic feelings for another person. When people speak about loving their fiancée or loving their girlfriend or boyfriend, what they almost always mean is that at this particular moment in time, they are overwhelmed by passionate feelings

that are created by the attractiveness, at least in their eyes, of their beloved. Love is to be overwhelmed by passionate feelings, which are created by the attractiveness of the beloved.

It is no wonder that with this definition of being overwhelmed by passion, we love poorly and are loved poorly. We truly have a South Pacific view of love. Some of you are old enough to remember the show South Pacific. But there was a song in it that went,

“Some enchanted evening,
You will see a stranger
Across a crowded room,
And somehow you’ll know...”

Somehow you’ll know – is that not the theme of most romantic movies? At the beginning of the movie you see the hero, this great looking guy, walk into a crowded party, or walking on a crowded street. And there is the heroine, the gorgeous starlet, maybe 50 yards away. And despite the fact that there are literally thousands of people between them, their eyes meet for a moment. And like the words of South Pacific, somehow you know. The rest of the movie concerns how they have to escape their existing romantic entanglements and deal with all their fears of a new relationship. They quit jobs and move across the country in order for them to lock lips at the end and fulfill what you somehow knew would happen when they first saw each other across a crowded room.

Love is passion and feelings created by the attractiveness of the beloved.

Now, tell me friends, what does our American view of love do to relationships and do to our country? Well, of course, if love is passionate feelings then our relationships become very unstable. In the words of the Righteous Brothers,

“You never close your eyes anymore
When I kiss your lips.

There's no tenderness like before

On your fingertips."

Means that we have lost that loving feeling and we have lost love. So, the only sensible thing to do is to move on to someone else who gives us that lovin' feeling.

You know, as a general rule, marriage experts tell us that passionate feeling decline by about 80% in the first two years of marriage. Some of you want to cry out, "Not true! Say it ain't so, Joel!" But generally it is so. And that doesn't mean that older married couples don't have passionate feelings. I still have passionate feelings for my wife, Marlene, of 22 years. In some ways as I look at the way I love her now, I wonder if I really loved her when we first got married because I so much more deeply appreciate her. And I am so much more deeply committed to her and to her well being. But I don't, and she certainly doesn't, walk around feeling passionate feelings every moment.

So, this view of love makes relationships very unstable. And those who adopt it, like those in Hollywood have the most unstable relationships. They are married and divorced within six months because there is someone else who gives them a loving feeling.

But, you know, it would be bad enough if our corrupted view of love simply made our marriages unstable. But our corrupted view of love also damages our ability to have a healthy relationship with God. If love means overwhelming feelings of passion based on the attractiveness of the beloved, then how much love can you believe in from God when you feel really unattractive? When you feel really ugly inside because you lost your cool again with your kids. Because you realize that you have been supremely selfish toward someone you should be kind to. If love means overwhelming feelings of passion based on your attractiveness, how much love from God do you believe in when you feel really ugly?

Let me suggest a very different view of love, one that people with healthy inner lives have. People with healthy inner lives understand what real love is. The Greek word is “agapao” and the noun is agape. The word agape appears throughout the New Testament and it simply means value-creating love. It is not love based on attractiveness, it is love that creates attractiveness. It is not based on the value of the beloved; it is love that makes the beloved valuable. In fact, the more you experience agape love, the more attractive, the more beautiful you become. Healthy people are those who have experienced the value of creating love, the beautifying attractiveness making love of Jesus.

Think about this with me for a moment. Jesus was about to go to the cross. And around him were twelve men gathered at the Passover dinner who were about to betray him, who would show disloyalty, who were fighting with each other, who were lazy, who couldn’t and wouldn’t pray, who were proud. Lots of ugly traits. What made these eleven men such great moral examples, people you would want to emulate? What made them so healthy, strong inside and loyal and not wavering and humble? They experienced the agape love of Jesus and that beautified them. That changed them and gave them value.

See, it says here that Jesus was about to show them the full extent of His love. What does that mean? It means that Jesus loved them at their lowest points. Not when they were good and strong, but when they were weak and ugly. See, with our romantic views of love, we think that surely Jesus must get sick and tired of us when we are so ugly inside. He must get fed up with us. He must want to move on to someone more interesting, who has greater potential than us. Jesus’ love is value-creating love. Jesus’ love is love to the end, it never fails. It never quits.

Is it no wonder why so many of you are so bruised? Is the only experience of love you have ever had is loved that quit? Outside the church people are searching for someone who

won't disappoint them. Boyfriends, girlfriends, husbands, wives are unfaithful. We go through divorces and separations and breakups. What happened? Love failed. It failed.

And in the church people come to church and think, "Ah, now, I will meet that person or group whose love will never disappoint." I will tell you something. If you stick around here long enough, we will disappoint you. I will disappoint you. The church will disappoint you. Because we are not capable of giving you what you really need, which is an experience of agape love, value creating love, love that doesn't care how ugly you are. Love that makes you beautiful.

Healthy people are people who have basked in the love of God, who regularly go before the Lord and say, "Oh, Lord, I am ugly and low inside. Let me know your love again. Give me that love that never fails. I will believe in your love as I let my mind soak in your written word. Let me know the full extent of your love."

Now, Judas was the proto-type of an unhealthy person. Verse 2 says, "The evening meal was being served [that is the Passover meal which we call the Last Supper] and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus."

Judas is the proto-type of the unhealthy person, who has all of the advantages, all of the privileges, all of the trappings, all the right connections, and all the gifts. He traveled in the right circles. Judas was really a physically attractive person. Maybe instead of being one these sneaky, shifty kind of guys the way people picture Judas, maybe he was really Mr. Great Personality. The guy who always told the great jokes. The guy who really knew how to win friends and influence people. When Jesus said, "One of you is going to betray me" and none of them looked around and said, "We know it is Judas because he is Mr. Shifty-Eyed." Maybe Judas was the last guy you would ever suspect. Maybe he had all the outward stuff, but inwardly he was profoundly corrupt and his soul was eaten by moral cancer

because he didn't know the love of Jesus. And maybe he didn't know who he was before God.

See, people who have healthy souls know who they are. Verse 3, "Jesus knew the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God." Jesus knew, with a full and reassuring knowledge, who he was and where he was going.

In this sermon series, I am talking about a church that works. And as I mentioned to you a few weeks ago, one of the concerns that we had as a pastoral staff was the recognition that a significant portion of our church was not involved in meaningful service here in our church family. Something perhaps on the order of 55% of you are not meaningfully serving in the family. And another 45% are, many of whom are tired.

Now, one of my concerns is that as we talk about service and finding our ministry niche, we would serve out of health. That is why I am doing this talk. Sometimes people serve in order to meet their own needs for personal identity. The service is really not unto you, but to meet my own needs. To bolster my own flagging sense of self-esteem. Because we need approval; because we need acceptance. And so you see people in this nervous driven anxious sort of servanthood which they are clearly displaying to the world and are radically overstressed and radically overburdened. There is a very different kind of service that comes from a core identity in which we serve out of who we are before God, and not in order to gain who we are before God. See, before it says in v. 4 that Jesus got up from the meal, removed his outer clothes and began to wash his disciples' feet.

Some years ago a fellow interviewed me who was working on his doctorate in ministry in seminary. He was interviewing pastors of growing churches and he asked me why are many churches in America not growing? I said that I didn't know and that I knew other people

were faithful and that other people prayed more than I do. I know there are lots and lots of gifted people. He said, well, if you could put your finger on the human factor, what you see wrong in various churches, what would it be? I said, “Well, I guess if I could point to one thing that I see wrong in so many leaders, it is that many leaders and pastors don’t know who they are. They don’t know what they are for. And as a result are constantly trying to be what they are not. So they are constantly shifting programs and changing the structure of the church because they don’t really know who they are. They don’t have a firm identity in Christ.”

How do you gain a healthy identity so that you are secure and are not constantly, anxiously trying to get everyone’s approval? How do you minister or serve out of health?

Charles Cooley who is a very famous sociologist once said that your self-concept is based on what you think the most important person in your life thinks of you. Your self-concept is based on what you think the most important person or people in your life think of you.

Jewish mothers are taken to task a lot for their tendency to use guilt to motivate and their tendency to complain. But I will tell you one thing that Jewish mothers do very well. By and large, they communicate that their kids are radically valuable in their eyes.

I just got together this Wednesday evening with my Jewish mom. We had dinner together with my stepfather and aunt. Over the course of the dinner, I kid you not, my mother must have said two or three dozen times, looking at me and grabbing my face, “Isn’t he something? Don’t you just love him? At the end of the evening, it would have been comical if it didn’t feel so good. Our self-concept comes from what the most important person in our life thinks of us.

So, here is the question, friend. Who will be, for you, your most important person? Jesus' most important person was the Father. He knew whatever anyone else said about Him, whatever other religious leaders said about Him, whatever His disciples in their rising and falling faith said about Him, whatever governmental officials said about Him, He knew who He was because His most important person was God the Father.

Who is your most important person, the one who shapes your feelings about who you are? Your boyfriend or girlfriend? Your ex-spouse? Your mother-in-law? Every time you say, "So and so makes me feel awful about myself" you are saying that they are your most important person, not Jesus.

Who is your most important person? To say you believe in Jesus means more than you just believe that Jesus was born of a Virgin or that He died on a cross for your sins, or even that He was raised from the dead. To say that you believe in Jesus and mean it, means that Jesus has become your most important person and what He says about you controls the way you think of yourself. And I believe Jesus in this way is like a Jewish mom who is squeezing your face and saying, "Isn't she something? Isn't she beautiful? Look at my daughter, have you ever met someone so smart?"

"Oh, he is so precious."

"Oh, he is so valuable."

Just look at Ephesians 1 and see what God calls you.

Fred Craddock, who is a professor at a seminary, was talking about this whole issue of realizing what Christ says about us and its life-changing power, said he was on vacation with his family in Tennessee when an old man who looked like he needed a shave and a new suit came up and pulled up a chair at the restaurant. He said, "How ya' doin'? Are you havin' a

good time? Are you on vacation?” This seminary professor responded fairly formally and said, “Yes, we are on vacation.”

The old man said, “What do you do for a living?”

Professor Craddock, wanting to get rid of him, put him off and said, “I am a professor of homiletics.”

The old man said, “Oh, so you are a preacher, huh? Let me tell you a preacher story. [Everyone has a preacher story.]

Professor Craddock groaned inside. He was going to hear the preacher story. This guy was physically sitting at the table. He said, “I was born an illegitimate child. I never knew who my father was and that was hard on me. The boys at school had names for me that I can’t repeat. When I walked down the main street of our little town, I used to feel people staring at me and I constantly felt like they were asking, ‘I wonder who that little boy’s father was?’ I spent a lot of time as a boy by myself. I didn’t have many friends. One day a new preacher came to town and everyone talked about how good he was. I never went to church before, but I decided to go and hear him preach. He was a good preacher, so I kept going back and listening to him. Nearly every time I would try to leave early so that I wouldn’t have to talk to anyone because I was embarrassed by my past and where I was from. One day I was caught up listening to the message and I forgot to leave. When I got up to leave, I was caught in the aisle by the crowd. I felt this hand come down on my shoulder. It was the preacher. He said, ‘What’s your name, boy? Whose son are you?’

The old man said, “I just shook when he asked that question whose son are you? But before I could say anything, he said ‘I know who you are. I know your family. There is a distinct resemblance there. You are a son of God, that’s who you are. You are a son of God.’

He said, “Friend, that changed my life.” The old man got up to leave. Fred Craddock was sitting there cocking his head when a waitress came up and said, “Do you know who that old man was?” The professor said, “No.” She said, “Well, that is Ben Hooper. He is the Governor of our State.”

Healthy people know who they are. And healthy people know what they are for. What their purpose is. They have a clear sense of destiny. Verse 3, “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.”

You know, so much of modern therapy is a search through your past and dealing with all the issues of the way you were raised and untangling all the mess of your home life. Sometimes we need to do that. But I will tell you from a biblical perspective, the most important thing for a person is not what their past is, but what their future is. It is not where you come from that is so important, it is where you are going, what your destiny is. I will tell you, I have seen profound changes in people who were really broken folks and confused about life and had terrible pasts, horrific hair-raising stories of terrible relationships and abuse and drugs and promiscuity and all the rest, who have become healthy – not perfect, but healthy not as a result of untangling their tangled past, but suddenly being infused with a purpose for living, a sense of destiny. A fresh set of goals. A feeling of, “Ahh, now I know what I am for. I can make a contribution. I can make a difference. I can count. I am not just a taker, I can give.”

You know, we are doing classes here through the fall and we will continue to run them on a quarterly basis in the future. We are doing classes called, “Discovering Your Ministry” which are really designed to help you figure out what you are for, what your destiny is. We may never here be able to, as a church, untangle your past. It may be hopelessly knotted up.

But I think we can help you find your future. I think we can help you set healthy goals. I think we can help you to discover where you really can be useful. I really want that for you. I am going to urge you, if you haven't signed up for this "Discovering Your Ministry" class, please sign up. It will take four hours of your time this fall. Sign up for it.

As I said, Jesus is the proto-type of a man with a healthy soul. He knew hH was loved. He knew who He was. He knew what mission He was called to accomplish. He had a sense of destiny.

And so in v. 4, it says that He served. "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

In the Middle East people used to wear sandals. And after traveling over dusty roads, it was customary to provide people with water to wash their feet from the dust and dirt of the road. And it was a servant's job, a menial job, to wash the feet of houseguests. I can imagine the scene of them reclining on couches. It was the Passover meal. They are reclining toward the center. The table would be in the center. They are all leaning on their elbows. Their feet are out away from the table. And no one has taken that humble role of a servant in meeting this need. None of the disciples had. And so Jesus breaking social convention, because He was the Master, the Teacher, - He was the one who should have been served, sees no one else doing it and so He takes off His outer garments and wraps himself in a towel. He begins to wash the disciples' feet.

And you know there is a lovely parallel between what we are witnessing in this text in John 13 and what we read in Philippians 2:6-11. Because here in the text it says that Jesus

rose from the table and laid aside his outer garments. In Philippians 2 it says that Jesus emptied himself. Or some translations say that he laid aside his divine attributes. Here it says that he took a towel and wrapped it around himself. He put water in a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, which is a task assigned to servants or slaves. In Phil. 2 it says that he took the form of a slave being born in human likeness, in the likeness of human beings and being found in human form, he humbled himself.

Then here, when Jesus finishes, in v. 12 it says, "He put on his clothes and returned to his place." So he sat down back at the table where he formerly was. And in Philippians 2 it says, "Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name above every name." He was returned to his former place in heaven.

Finally, in v. 13 it says, "You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am." In Philippians 2 we are told that "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

I don't know if this incident inspired that wonderful hymn of Philippians 2 or not. But the movement is definitely the same. The movement toward servanthood. Healthy people see themselves as servants. See, health comes from other-centeredness. This is a message that Americans really don't get.

Robert Bellah, who is a sociologist, wrote a book a number of years ago called *Habits of the Heart*. In it he said that the habit of the American heart is profoundly me-centered – my needs, my wants. Like *What About Bob* the movie. I need; I need; I need. That is the way we are as Americans. What about me? I need. I need. I need. Bellah said this me-centeredness, this focus on ourselves has made our hearts sick. Me-centeredness, our consumer mindset, "What's in it for me?" has created a soul-sickness.

Well, I tell you healthy people are always others-centered. The habit of mind, the habit of the heart is to go into situations saying, “What are your needs?” not “What are my needs?” What are your needs, wife, husband, children, roommate, coworker and church?

We begin by being loved by Jesus. Being secured by Him. But you know, Jesus saved us for a purpose. If you have received the love of Christ, if you have been secured by Him, it was so that you could be a person who would accomplish great things in His name. Christianity is more than believing the right things. Satan believes the right things. Satan believes that Jesus was born of a Virgin. He believes in the deity of Christ. Satan doesn’t love Jesus and he doesn’t meet the needs of others. Jesus wants to work through you. He wants to make you a healthy person by allowing and empowering you to serve others. You will never be healthy until you become a servant, because the bottom line, friends, you and I have never met a healthy person that was self-consumed. People who have healthy hearts are others-centered.

What does that mean for us?

Well, at home, when the baby cries, other-centeredness means that you don’t roll over and pretend you’re sleeping. When there’s a pot in the sink and it’s going to take scrubbing, you say yes to the pot and no to the phone or TV.

We must, if we are part of a church family, pitch in and serve the family. In the same way that in your home, if you have children, everyone ought to pitch in even if their primary job is outside the home, everyone ought to pitch in and help the family. So everyone here in the church is called to pitch in on some level to help our church family. Yes, you might be primarily serving out there doing a bible study at your job or working in coaching little league baseball or working with a United Way agency. But the family has needs also. And so it is appropriate for you to give at least a portion of time in caring for the needs of our

church family—in ushering, in teaching kids, in volunteering to do landscaping, leading a group, doing some marital counseling for a couple struggling, something of family business. This program we're running called "A Church that Works" will help you to find a place to serve consistent with your gifts.

But as a church we must never allow our service to be entirely consumed by our own church. There is a story of a fellow who goes on tour of a power plant, an enormous power plant. He asked the guide at the end of the tour, "I didn't notice any wires running from the power plant toward town. Are all your wires underground?" And the tour guide said, "There are no wires." So the fellow said, "How do you get the power to the community?" The guide said, "We don't. All the power produced by this plant is consumed by running the plant."

There are a lot of churches like that. Where every bit of service and energy is just consumed by running the church. We want you out there caring for the needs of the poor. We want you involved in the ministry we have to the poor or the ministry that we have to prisoners, or the ministry that we have to people with AIDS, or to single moms. Some of you might be interested in having a backyard bible study on your block. Maybe your home is a home where lots of kids gather from the neighborhood. Our Children's Pastor can help you do a weekly backyard bible class through the year. You can gather kids together. Lots of mothers would like their kids away from them and learning bible. We don't want to use up all the power here, we want to get it out to the community.

Last point, people with healthy souls know they need cleansing. "He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'"

In the original, the you is very emphatic and followed immediately by my, so it reads, "Lord, do you my feet wash?" And the contrast between you and me – you being who you

are as Lord; and me being my feet. It just shocked Peter. It blew his mind that his Lord would stoop down.

Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.' There is a double negative there. No, never wash my feet.

Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you will have no part of me.'

'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well.'

Jesus answered, 'A person who has a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.'

Why this foot washing? What was going on with Jesus? He's not saying, "In Modern America, let's institutionalize this and get into foot washing." Rather, in v. 15 he says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." Not do what I have done, but as I have done.

Certainly, Jesus is modeling for us humility and service. The way Jesus taught was to model behavior that he wanted us to imitate. One of the things that God wants us to imitate that will make us healthy is humility. There is nothing that so offends God as somebody who is above serving.

"Well, you don't understand. I am a very important lawyer, physician, politician or corporate executive."

"I am not going to fold bulletins and hand them out."

"I am too important to set up chairs"

I am too important to teach 6-year olds, or to pray for a sick person. There is nothing that offends God so much as our looking down on another person or believing that we are above serving. God hates pride. And He Himself is a God who stoops down to wash our

feet. We worship a humble God. He is unlike any great person we know. Great people we know take service; our God serves.

But you know, pride is not just manifested by our refusal to serve. As Peter so clearly demonstrates here, pride can be demonstrated by our refusal to receive service. In fact, many people are more than willing to help others, but are too proud, like Peter, to receive help themselves. Have we not all met elderly people who will virtually martyr themselves, exhaust themselves in painting their home or mowing their grass or doing heavy lifting around the house or heavy cleaning. And when you say, "Please, let me help you," they say, "Oh no, no, no" and refuse to receive help. It is pride. The same pride that God hates when it stands above other people and refuses to reach down and help others is the pride that God hates when we will not be dependent on anyone else or be helped by anyone else.

In many marriages, some wives and, too often, husbands refuse to go in for counseling when the marriage is breaking down and they need help. Pride. I can't admit to anyone else that we are not doing well. That we need help.

It is pride that has children spinning out of control for years without a parent red-flagging it and saying, "We need help. We have to go in for counseling. We need to go to our kinship or women's group leader and say that we are not doing well as parents or that my kid is failing."

Peter was a man who couldn't receive. That is pride. And Jesus is modeling humility for us. And he is not also illustrating humility and service, but he is prefiguring the cross by his washing. There is a deeper spiritual meaning here.

See, when Jesus says in v. 10, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean" he is talking about, to use a theological word, I believe he is speaking of our "justification." When a person turns to Christ and repents of their sins,

trusting in the death and resurrection of Christ as that which saves, that person instantly is justified. That means they are cleansed before God. It is as if their whole body has had a bath. A once for all action that cleanses them before God – justification.

But as we walk through the world like that Middle Easterner who gets dust on their feet, as we walk through life we get defiled. We get dirtied. We get dirtied by our own choices. We get dirtied by the defiling environment that we are in. We get dirtied by what we listen to and look at. And so daily we have to have our souls washed. That, to use a theological term, is sanctification. Justification, that one time bath, delivers us from the penalty for our sins. Sanctification, that daily washing and cleansing as we repeatedly ask forgiveness for sins that arise, cleanses us from the power and pollution of sins. Justification cleanses us from the penalty. Sanctification from the power.

In justification we are passive. We receive salvation. In sanctification we are active. We fight and strain and make use of the means of grace in order to get ourselves clean. Justification is a declaration. It is God's judicial decree, in which he before the bar of justice declares us to be right in his sight. Sanctification is experiential. It is when God actually is making you right. It is not just a decree over your life, such as a verdict. God changes you and makes you well. He doesn't just declare you to be healthy, he makes you healthy.

In justification we are talking about what Christ did for us. In sanctification it is what Christ does in us. Justification is an instantaneous thing. The moment we believe, a pardon from God we receive. Sanctification is a lifetime process of God repeatedly cleansing us and making us healthy. Healthy people know that they need cleansing.

Friends, health is more than your cholesterol count. In fact, health is more than a concern for your body. Healthy people have healthy souls. Inside of them, they are well. Healthy people know they are loved. Healthy people know who they are. Healthy people

know what they are for. Healthy people know that they are servants. Healthy people know that they need cleansing.

Let's pray.