

July 3rd, 2022  
Not By Your Power [John 13]

Thank you for the introduction Brandon, and thank you **all** for allowing me behind your pulpit for a Sunday.

For the Christian and non Christian alike, each pulpit is designed to expose God's truth and activity for a specific people, in a specific location and time...

**And** the pulpit is designed to help us as a congregation and you as an individual respond to God's truth and activity in your lives.

I am honored to be entrusted with this task today. And because trust is built through getting to know one another, I will share a little bit about myself...

I'm originally from California, and so is my **wife**, Codi. We've been **married** for 14 years now, and we have **three kids**, Noah Louise, our oldest, Esther our middle child, and Benjamin our third.

Codi and I have been in the mission field for almost ten years, first as high risk foster care live-in house parents in Las Vegas, Nevada. And then God opened the door for us to join Wycliffe Bible Translators.

We lived overseas in Papua New Guinea for a couple years as missionary support staff, and when Codi became pregnant with Benjamin, our third child, we came back to the states in case we needed first world medical intervention.

I was accepted into a seminary program while back in the states, to get a master's degree in spiritual formation and soul care. While we tried to get back to Papua New Guinea, God closed those door, which saddened our hearts,

but then He quickly opened the door for me to take on an associate pastor role at Living the Word church in Bethel. And we've lived here for 18 months.

My wife Codi is still involved in missionary support. The Lord allowed us to buy a home in Batavia with three extra bedrooms which we've made available for missionary and pastor hospitality.

Codi brought several brochures that are located... if you want more information.

Okay, there's my shameless plug :-) onto the sermon...

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I would like to spend our time today **on the HOW**. HOW does God unfold His plans? By what means, by what power, does God accomplish his plans?

We know some things about God's plans...

1. We know that God's plans are unstoppable,
2. We know His plans are to redeem and restore this broken world,
3. We know that He has called His children to participate, giving us responsibilities and orders to spread the good news

And so our time today will focus on THE HOW. How will God accomplish His plans? How is God's great redemption plan to get done?

But first, let us look at our own stories. How did God win YOU over to himself?

What is it about Jesus that is attractive?

What makes you want to be around Jesus?

Is it because He is the almighty, all powerful, the Old Test. God in the flesh?

- *That's a hard one*, since we spend a great deal of time being scared of God, kind of like we are instinctively scared of the principal's office.
- We resonate with Adam and Eve in the garden when they hide from God because they are afraid. We fear what we can't control.

Are we attracted to Jesus because he is powerful? Calming the sea, feeding thousands, healing lepers, casting out demons right and left?

- *This one is tricky...* cuz we're tempted to treat Jesus like a genie, hoping he can help us out or heal our ailments.
- We are tempted to try to use Jesus as a vending machine to get his blessing for our agenda, hoping to **get Jesus on board** with our plans.

If you are a Christian, how did Jesus win you over?

- Were you won over by compelling arguments and debates?
- Were you won over by the sophistication and elegance of Christian theology?
- Were you won over by the testimony of a family member or a friend?
- Maybe you have been a Christian for as long as you remember and you're just used to the whole Christian thing? It's become a ritual.

But these are important questions, because:

IF God's movement cannot be resisted, and

IF you've got responsibilities entrusted to you within the God's kingdom,

Then **HOW ARE YOU GOING TO DO IT?**

If God's train is moving on the tracks and you are part of the crew, HOW does this train keep on rolling?

What kind of fuel is required to propel and sustain God's kingdom?

Up on the screen is Ephesians 2:1-5. Follow along with me, and look for the turning point, or the power source, that God uses to call us to himself.

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,  
 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.  
 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.  
 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,  
 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Did you catch that?

Look at verse 4 again: but because of his great **LOVE** for us...

What is the power that God uses to draw you and me to himself?

It's **LOVE! underserved, unearned, unfairly given, un-take-away-able LOVE.**

AND, the same power that draws us to God is the same power that propels the movement of God's kingdom. It's the same power source: this sticky, enduring, faithful love. The kind of love that keeps a 50 year marriage going strong.

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Years ago... Noah, my oldest, was about 2 years old and I was trying to make a video of her saying hello to my brother Ryan.

It was morning and she was eating cheerios in a little kid bowl with a kid spoon that still looked too big for her hands.

Noah was forming words quite well and she had talked about uncle Ryan and how she missed him and all that.

One morning I got my phone out and hit the record button. I was trying to get her to say what she had said a million times before.

Well, Noah wasn't having any of it. I kept pushing and poking her, and it soon turned into a battle of stubbornness.

My persistence paid off however, and after a dozen times of me pestering her to say hi to her uncle, she finally gave in and said it.

I won. My will proved stronger than hers. I was victorious, sort of.

At best, she learned to persevere for the greater good of humanity and decency, despite her desires.

At worst, I bullied my kid into performing for the camera.

Did I win any dad points? No. I relied upon my own willpower and fortitude to accomplish the task. It became more about me winning the battle.

Was the video a good idea, or at least good natured? Yes. But the way I went about it did not draw me closer to my daughter. Because I wanted to make this stupid video,

I treated my daughter like a thing to get a performance out of.

I considered the video more valuable than my relationship with my daughter.

I tell you this story because there are two kinds of ways, or powers we have at our disposal within the kingdom of God. One works against the grain, and works with the grain.

We can try to advance the Kingdom of God by our own strength, like I forced Noah to perform for the camera, but we will be working against the grain.

...Or...

We can go with the grain of the kingdom of God by allowing Jesus to first love us and tend us and fill us to overflowing.

And then we can use our strength **with** God to direct that overflow of love to advance His kingdom.

*\*\*\*Going with the grain of God's movement of love is only found in relationship with Jesus Christ... we've got to spend a large amount of time with Jesus, talk with Jesus as you talk with yourself, read His words to You, there's no other way. ---*

Turn with me to the gospel of John chapter 13 as Jesus spends his last moments of time he has left demonstrating this great love to his disciples.

We will walk through two scenes with Jesus and Peter:

v. 1-11 where Jesus washes his disciples' feet,

And v. 33-38 Jesus corrects Peter on the nature of the power of love.

**1** It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Jesus loved them to the uttermost end. Knowing that his crucifixion was just around the corner, the most painful, gruesome, torturous experience a man could suffer, Jesus thinks of how he might love his friends one last time.

Jesus knew that it was only a matter of hours before he would be glorified by his heavenly Father on the cross,

This could have been a time for great pride, but instead it became a moment of great humility. Yes, Jesus loved his people to the end.

**2** The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. **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; **4** so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. **5** 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

John chapter 13 is the beginning of the end for Jesus's earthly ministry.

This footwashing sets the stage for Jesus to become the servant for all mankind on the cross. He takes upon his shoulders first the hand towel, and then the sins of all mankind.

Washing the disciples' feet also echoes back to the shepherd's role as caretaker for his sheep. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

This kind of love is exactly what Jesus came to demonstrate. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus came to wash their feet... AND go to the cross. it's what he had to do, in order to show everyone who God is really like.

**6** 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 with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." **11** For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

I like Peter. I can relate to him because he blurts out whatever is on his heart before he realizes what he said.

It's hard for us to wrap our brains around this kind of love, but we feel better about ourselves because Peter is arguing with Jesus, just like we would.

The God of the universe stoops down to take care of and clean the most basic, earthly, plain, unappealing parts of our bodies—our feet.

This is Jesus, laying the groundwork for Peter [and for us] to begin understanding what the cross is really about...

What did the disciples do to earn this kind of love? If we had read from Luke's account, we would've found that, "A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest." How embarrassing!

Truth be told, the disciples, me, you—no one can do enough or act correctly enough or be religious or moral enough to earn this kind of love.

No one can meet God somewhere in the middle, or help God out by their strength or willpower. There is no way we can earn favor with God.

The more we stare and sit with the gospel, the more offensive its truth really becomes—because you can't help God out, not even a little bit.

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*[For the sake of time, we're skipping over verses 12-32. I beg you, please later on today with your family or by yourself, read these out loud, actually read all of chapter 13 out loud slowly.]*

Let's jump down to verses 33-38 and we'll track along with Peter again...

**33** “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

Jesus is overwhelmed that he has to leave his disciples behind. He has been with them only a short while, and now he has to leave them.

They were taught so little, they understood so little, grasped so little of what their wonderful master was doing right in front of them.

I think what makes this separation bearable for Jesus is that He will send them his Holy Spirit.

They will not be left alone, they will not be cast off, they will not be forgotten. Jesus's Holy Spirit will fully attach to their spirit and continue the work.

**34** “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Now we come to the New Commandment. But, for the people of God, this is not a new command—they have heard this command before. In fact, if you wanted, you could flip to **Leviticus** 19 and find the verse that sums up the entire book

Leviticus 19:18 reads, Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, **but love your neighbor as yourself**. I am the Lord.

What is new about Jesus's new command is how specific and deep the kind of love is that Jesus is demonstrating.

"You are to love one another, **the way I have loved you**."

Jesus knew this new command would be difficult for them to process, which is why he gave them a concrete example to remember—he washed their feet.

They are to copy their life according to Jesus's life, and love one another.

Jesus knows that his way of life is a hard act to follow, it goes against all of our natural tendencies: our tendencies...

- to take control and be in charge of our own lives,
- to use our own power and strength to accomplish our goals,
- to remain at the center of our own lives.

No wonder Jesus chose to wash their feet. To wash someone's feet, you have to take on the mindset of a slave.

- You have to physically humble your body to stoop low,
- you have to humble your heart and face your own pride
- you have to humble your mind to not make this person out to be an enemy,
- You have to resist the temptation to make yourself out to be the victim.

**36** Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." **37** Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." **38** Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

Once again, he and Jesus banter back and forth, with Peter blustering away saying whatever comes into his head.

It's funny, Peter doesn't realize what he just said. "Where are you going!? I want to follow you! I *want* to follow you! I will lay down my life for you..."



“Will you really, Peter?” replies Jesus, and we can see his soft, sad smile as he says it. “Is it really *you* that’s going to lay down *your* life for *me*?”

“Have you forgotten Peter?” Jesus continues, “that the Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep? Actually Peter, I hate to say it, but what *you* are about to do is something rather different...”

We love Peter b/c he’s like me and you. We love him because he tries to take over for Jesus. “Stand back Jesus, I’ve got this one, I’ll take the bullet for you.”

And we love Jesus because he is so gentle with Peter, so loving, even with the suffering of the cross casting its shadow over what is to shortly come.

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So, what do we do in the face of such great love? This world changing love is barreling forward, fueling God’s kingdom, and it cannot be resisted.

And for some crazy reason, we each have a role entrusted to us, we have a part to play in God’s movement. And so the choice is before us...

We can try to advance the Kingdom of God by our own strength, but we will be working against the grain, we will be stuck arguing with Jesus, and just like Peter, we will try to take over, pushing Jesus’ love to the sidelines...

...Or...

We can go with the grain of the kingdom of God by allowing Jesus to first love us, to tend us, to heal us, and fill us to overflowing.

But this kind of love is found **ONLY** in a relationship with Jesus.

I encourage you to spend time with Jesus this week, pursuing Him. Sit at his feet and let him tend your heart and mind and spirit.

So many times we pray for God to act in our lives, to take care of us and to heal our lives. And so often God’s movement goes unnoticed in our lives because He has moved to a place within our hearts that we are not interested in Him tending.

Where are you Lord? We cry out. Fix my job, my spouse, my kids, fix this nation.

But, I invite you to spend time this week in prayer, ask God what He wants to do for you. This is a risky prayer, mind you. You don't know where you'll find Him.

Oftentimes, He camps out in painful places, painful memories, painful relationships. He often camps out at places in your soul that we've hidden from everyone including ourselves.

And like a gentleman, Jesus is patiently waiting for you to work with Him as He works on you. He loves you, remember, you are the apple of his eye. You are precious to Him, and He knows you by name. **Would you pray with me?**