

Victory of the Lamb – Influencers – Not First, but Last - John 13:1-5

January 15, 2023 – Pastor Ben Sadler

13 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.

²The 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; ⁴so 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.

¹² 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. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

What has been one of the most influential inventions in the last 500 years?

To give you a hint, [Here is a picture of it.](#)

It's the printing press. It is hard to exaggerate the power of the printing press to change society. Up to this point, for thousands of years, humans had been writing one letter or symbol at a time. They would chisel out an idea on stone. Or hand write an idea on papyrus. But that idea could not be multiplied. For others to read it, someone had to handwrite a copy of that message.

But the printing press revolutionized communication. Now for the first-time people had the power to mass produce their message. And this power changed the world. It changed the economy and the new goods and services that were necessary. It changed education. Now common people could have access to literature and ideas. It changed the Church. Now people could read their own Bibles and other types of Biblical Teaching which ended up enabling the Reformation of the Church.

The printing revolution changed the world, and everyone had to adapt to the power of this new technology and what it meant for the world.

I believe we are living during a similar era, where a new piece of technology has been introduced into society and it has revolutionized how we do things. 500 years ago there was a printing revolution. Now we are living during the digital revolution. The combination of the creation of the internet, social media, and smartphones has revolutionized our society. And everyone has had to adapt to the power of this new technology.

Here are at least three ways that the digital revolution has changed our society. It changed...

1. How we consume information.

2. How we **communicate**.

3. How we **create content**.

The digital revolution has changed the way we *consume information*. I've used online learning to get more in depth teaching on the Bible and how to properly install a new ceiling fan in my house without electrocuting myself.

It has changed the way we *communicate*. Once a month, I have a video chat with some classmates from Seminary. One is on Washington state, one is in Michigan, and the others are scattered throughout WI.

It has changed how we *create content*. Every day I teach the Bible through our Bible reading plan and I do YouTube video every day for reading the Bible. And weekly, Annie Buege, Matt Harbach and I record a podcast.

The digital revolution has created powerful tools to consume, connect, and create content in incredibly powerful ways. But like Uncle Ben said to Peter Parker, "*With great power comes great responsibility.*"

You see, this powerful new technology can also be used for evil. Instead of consuming helpful content, we could be consumed by destructive content. I've heard it said that there are only two industries that call their clients "users": drug dealers and social media companies. The worst pandemic in our world is pornography addictions. Cyber-bullying has caused a sharp increase in teen suicide. And many people are no longer have deep friendships or are productive members of society because they are glued to their devices.

Today, we are continuing our sermon series, **Influencers**. This little device in our pockets is a powerful doorway of influence. Through this powerful technology, we are being influenced by life-style gurus and religious leaders. Some will improve our lives and draw us closer to God and other will lead us farther from him. And every time we use this device to communicate or create content, we are influencing others in powerful ways that we really can't even comprehend. And so as we think about this powerful device in our pockets, we want to answer this important question:

What are we going to do with the power we have been given in the digital revolution?

You might be surprised to know that the ancient accounts of Jesus actually give us the answer to this modern question. And so to answer that question we are going to look at our reading from John 13. Before we dive into our text, I want to talk about the context. This is known as the Upper Room discourse. Jesus is celebrating the Passover with his 12 followers for the last time the night before he was going to be crucified.

Now we know something about what was on the mind of the disciples that night. In Luke 22, we hear that there was a dispute among the disciples over which one was the greatest. It seems like the disciples believed that Jesus was about to start an earthly kingdom and the disciples were jockeying for position.

That's what the disciples were thinking about, but John tells us what was on Jesus' mind. We read, **13 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 knew that he was about to die in the most excruciating way possible and return to his heavenly Father.

And what was on his mind was how much he loved his disciples. All he wanted to do was to love them to the end.

Not only was the time short, but Jesus also was soon to be taking up his role as Lord over all. We read, 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...**

Jesus is true God. But when we became man, he humbled himself and he didn't make full use of all his power. Now, he knew that he was going to take up again all of his power, that the Heavenly Father was going to put all things under his power.

So what are you supposed to do when you have all the power in the world?

Here's what Jesus did:

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.

Jesus got up from his spot and started washing the disciples' feet. First of all, we need to know that this was a necessary act in the first century. Just like we wash our hands today, people who had been walking in the dirt in their sandals and are lounging at a meal with their feet in each other's face need to have their feet washed. But usually there would be some kind of servant who would do this world. But in this case, the most powerful person with the greatest authority it washing his disciples' feet.

Maybe I could explain what Jesus was doing this way. Let's say you work for a big company like Northwestern Mutual or Amazon or something like that. And the CEO invites you to a fantasy dinner. You arrive at this expensive restaurant, and you are taken to your table with the other employees. They serve you a top-notch five course meal. And at the end of the meal, the CEO finally makes his appearance. But he is wearing an apron and quietly starts busing all the tables, clearing and cleaning all the dishes. That's what Jesus is doing here at his last meal with this disciples.

Then Jesus goes on to teach what he was doing....

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" Do you get what this was all about? Do you understand? I'm not starting a new ritual. This isn't a new type of baptism. Just look at what I did. Do you understand? Then he went on:

¹³ **"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.**

Jesus was their Rabbi and their master. In that culture, a Rabbi would have some students that would follow him and around and do what he did. And he was their Lord over them. They were not better or greater than him. So if Jesus was willing to wash feet like a servant, so should they.

Then he concluded with these words:

¹⁷ **Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**

They know his teaching. But Jesus didn't want them to just know about his teaching. He said the real blessing is in the carrying out of his teaching. Not just hearing what he said, but doing what he said.

Now we don't have any record in the New Testament or the Early Christian Church that the Apostles would go around washing feet. But we do know that they lived a life of service. And that is what Jesus is talking about.

So what do we see in this text? **The Savior used his authority to serve.**

Jesus had all authority in the whole wide world and he used that authority to take the place of others. He had the power and the ability to do miracles and lead people, but he used his authority to serve. Washing the disciple's feet was just one example. Really his whole life was one of complete service. It was his desire to serve his people that led to his ultimate sacrifice.

Jesus once said, **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** (Mark 10:45)

I don't know about you, but every time I see a person in the military honored at a sporting event or a veteran's day event, I'm moved to tears. I can't believe that someone would put their life on the line to protect, people like me, someone who they have never met.

But then I think about Jesus. He does know who I am. He knows the good and the bad. He knows all the ways I have been distracted and consumed by technology. All the ways I use it selfishly. All the sins we have committed. But he didn't let that stop him. He was moved by his love for us, not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

Now, what does this ancient story about foot washing have to do with how we use our smartphones in the digital age? Well, as we have already mentioned, the phone is a tool that can be used for good or for evil. It can be used to serve our own selfish and sinful desires. Or we could remember Jesus' example and see that when a person has been given power and authority, Jesus wants us to use that power to serve.

I think this helps us answer our opening question:

What are we going to do with the power we have been given in the digital revolution?

Leverage your power in service to others.

In other words, when Jesus said that we are to follow his example of washing feet, he meant that we are to leverage the power that we have in service to others. Jesus took the power and authority he had and leveraged it in service to others. We are to take the power and authority we have and leverage it in service to others.

But how do we do that?

1. Follow godly and wise influencers. Be careful what you are consuming. You are going to become like the people who influence you. It is great to learn from a wide variety of perspectives. But if you follow selfish, self-centered people, you are going to become more self-centered and unable to serve people. If you follow people who ridicule the Christian faith, eventually you will begin to ridicule the Christian faith. But if you follow wise and even godly people, you will become more wise and godly.

2. Make real connections. So much of what is on the internet can be superficial connections at best. And even more often we see that there are destructive and harmful interactions. But what if you used this phone to text a Bible verse to a friend who is struggling? What if you decided to read the Bible together by picking a plan on the YouVersion Bible app. You could use this technology to deepen your connections with the people in the sphere of influence.

3. Create helpful content. Whenever you post on social media or upload a video, you are creating content. What if you found a way to take the best of who you are, the thing that you could do and leverage your gift in service to others? Maybe it is just that word of encouragement.

The following quote is attributed to Martin Luther: **“Printing is the ultimate gift of God and the greatest one.”** It was the printing press that allowed the Gospel of grace to be taught and spread throughout the known world. It was the printing press that allowed Luther’s translation of the Bible to get into the hands of the people. And I think the Lord might be using the digital revolution to do something similar.

It is because of the digital revolution that our church body has over 4 million people in Latin America interested in learning more about the Bible. It is because of the internet that our missionaries can still reach people in the countries that we can no longer enter like communist China and some hostile areas of the Middle East.

We are already using our phones to pay our bills, order our groceries, get directions to our next event. Why not use this powerful technology to further God’s kingdom of the free and fully forgiveness of Jesus Christ. So here is what I think Jesus is teaching us today. Just like Jesus used the power he had in service to others, so you too, leverage the power you have been given in service to others.