

8 A Serving Boy

(John 13:1-14)

It was the last thing that I wanted to happen, but , but it was just one of those days. The instructions were simple enough. My master told me himself. "A group of Galileans have booked the upper room, you Joseph and Benjamin will prepare the room. See that all is ready for their meal and serve them as they arrive."

It was simple enough, I'd done it so many times before. I turned up at two and began to get things ready. I like to do things properly so every inch of that room was swept and the table was scrubbed cleaner than clean.

I enjoy this work and I hardly noticed as time passed. It was only as a shaft of sunlight began to slide silently across the room that I realised that time was getting on. But where was Benjamin? I ran down the stairs and looked up and down the street, he was not to be seen.

Suddenly though, out of the setting sun, came women carrying baskets and trays piled high with food and skins bulging with wine.

"Hey Joseph" came the shout, "you looking for us, this is what has been ordered." And with that I was back in the room setting table, arranging wine cups, unpacking bread and food fit for a king's banquet!

You see, I didn't really forget, I was just so busy, what with being all on my own and all that. The table was hardly finished when three red faced men came bounding up the stairs talking loudly, and hot on their heels two more, and then three others. The noise of their conversation, the many things still to do, meant that ... that Well yes I suppose you're right, I forgot.

Five more men arrived and as they began to recline at table I filled wine cups and offered them the sweetest olives.

I hardly noticed him at first. I was busy at the other end of the table, pouring more wine, fetching more bread, and with all the noise But it was only as I looked up that I remembered. I would have run, I would have But I could do nothing, nothing but stare.

He already had his outer garment off, and he was taking the towel, my towel, and just as I should have done, he was wrapping it around his waist. I stared and as I watched all the sound around him seemed to fade away. Mouths moved aimlessly and silently, heads nodded and hands waved, but but there was

nothing, not a sound. No sound but the dribbling of water as he poured it into the bowl. This was my job, the servants job, this was. ..was not.... not his job.

He moved, carrying the bowl as if he had done it a thousand times before and as he knelt down by the feet of one of his friends he looked, he looked at me. What should I have expected? A look of anger for a job not done? a look of disgust at the demeaning task at hand? A look that sought to scold? But what I saw was a look, a look that I knew, a look that I have seen a thousand and more times before. It was the look of the servant, the look of one who accepts his service, the look of one who knows that it is his place to serve, the look of one for whom service is as natural as waking up or lying down.

And his look released me, suddenly my body freed from that bewildered and frightened grasp. He continued to wash and dry each of their feet, a silence descended upon the room as he whispered conversation with each in turn.

I filled the cup of blessing and replenished the bread of thanksgiving, and watched.

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