



## The Gospel: Luke 3:7-18

**John answered them all, 'I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.**

Here is a strange picture of worship – and John the Baptist wants us to get it right.

It looks like two cowboys ready to kill each other.

But it isn't – it's Jesus and John the Baptist and they're wondering who is going to help the other pull off their boots.

Have you ever worn boots like that – they're hard to get off - if much easier if someone helps you.

It's a tense situation.

John looks at Jesus and says – “I am not worthy to pull your off your boots.”

I believe - one of the most precious statements in Scripture.

Here it is – John the Baptist says: ...one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

Sandals – Boots same thing.

When I ask people what this is all about, they say well Jesus is so holy and pure - John is saying he is not good enough, not worthy to touch Jesus boots.

But doesn't that go against everything Jesus is.

He is Immanuel, he is with us.

He's born in a stable; he's human; he's one of us.

He came to walk and talk – people flocked to him.

I don't think getting close to Jesus is the problem.

John is saying a whole lot more: Jesus, I am not worthy to pull your off your boots.

Do you remember when Jesus said this:

The greatest among you will be your servant (Matt 23:11)

Or “the greatest is the least”.

You see Jesus measures greatness in terms of servitude – the most least, the most lowly and humble servant – the higher in ranking they are in the servant world.

It's a bit like in Sri Lanka – we stayed in Colombo for over a month when we adopted Samuel.

We got to observe the daily life on the street where we were staying. The beggars and outcastes live a pretty miserable life.

But they have worked out this thing that being the least is the greatest. Or let me put it another way – when you're beggar you're better off being the poorest, most maimed, deformed beggar of all of them because you get more sympathy and more money.

So the top beggars were the worst physically.

We saw one guy who had no arms and no legs.

He sat in small 4 wheeled trailer.

All the beggars around him would fight to look after him - to "have" him for the day.

They knew that when they pulled him around begging they would make more money than if they didn't 'have' him.

They would share their money and food with the man with no arms and legs.

He was the least of all the beggars – but he was the greatest – the richest, the most sort after.

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John the Baptist is no fool.

It was John the Baptist who looked at Jesus his cousin in the eye and said – look everyone here is my cousin!

No! He said- behold the lamb of God – he knew the destiny of Jesus.

"Look people here is the one who is going to be slaughtered like a lamb".

Today he looks Jesus in the eye and says, Jesus you are the servant of servants, I am nothing compared to you, I am unworthy, you are the least of the least, Jesus you must pull my boots off.

This grates, doesn't it?

Like I have said many times before – our favourite table grace has the poorest theology you can imagine – we shouldn't even say it – but it's the only one we know.

Couldn't we learn a new one.

*Come Lord Jesus be our guest and let this food to us be blessed.*

Come on Jesus let me serve you – be my guest.

Sit down, let me pour you a drink – let me take your boots off.

Can you see the problem.

Surely it should be: Come Lord Jesus be our host.

In other words, Jesus come into our house and serve us.

Surely that would honour Jesus very firm statement: *I have come to serve and not be served and give my life for many.*

This grates. It seems so arrogant – Jesus, you serve me!

Jesus please pull my boot off!

It's only arrogant to us because we never go to this space.

It's Jesus will and mission and heart's desire to serve us.

We are left with one word – which we struggle with so much – “submit!”

Where there is no submission there is no possibility of being served.

Wives submit to your husbands – the most abused text in scripture – perhaps.

It's not about wives and husbands – it's about Jesus the groom and the church, you and me, the bride.

It's about us submitting to him so that he can serve us – true headship.

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You know it says the wise men brought their gifts and worshipped Jesus.

They didn't - they *proskeneoed* Jesus.

“*pro*” approached Jesus “*Keneo*” to Kiss.

They laid on their faces and kissed the ground.

*Proskeneo* – the word prostrate comes from that.

They prostrated themselves on the ground.

The ultimate position of submission.

They submitted themselves to Jesus authority and to Jesus serving them.

Our bible say they “worshipped” Jesus.

Did you know that most times you see the word worship in your scriptures the Greek word underneath is *proskeneo*.

John the Baptist teaches us that true worship is to submit to Jesus' authority – to come under his teaching and feeding.

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Mary and busy Martha. Mary what?

She sat – a position of submission and listened to Jesus.

Martha complained.

Jesus said: Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her.

Wives submit to your husbands – church submit to your servant Jesus the head.

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As Jesus serves us – he whispers in our ear – don't serve me back – I don't want to be served – if you love me serve your neighbour, serve the hungry, the lonely.

We have so many members who would love a visit – serve them Jesus says.

There are so many people connected in some way to us – serve them Jesus says – don't serve me – serve them.

John the Baptist is calling us to be served so we can serve.

John the Baptist must have been an unusual man – camel hair clothes and an old leather belt, eating grasshoppers.

He says unusual things.

“See my cousin there – I'm not worthy to pull his boots off”.

What a special man leading us to know Jesus is the servant of servants – nobody ups Jesus and takes Jesus boots off – nobody is worthy of that.

When John the Baptist talks listen carefully – it's always deep and it's not always what it seems.

Let's pray: **Come Lord Jesus be our host, and let this food to us be blessed. Amen.**