Christians and the Vaccine – Part II

During our spirited and very good discussion on Christians and the vaccine we gravitated toward Jesus’ statement in Matthew 22:39 that “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” We also discussed Paul’s statement in I Corinthian 8 regarding eating of meats. Paul wrote, “but take care that this right of yours [eating of meats] does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak…Therefore if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.” (I Corinthians 8:9, 13).

We also discussed, and landed on the theme that we should do nothing, as it relates to a personal decision on vaccination, that threatens unity between brothers and sisters in Christ.

To continue the theme, let’s consider one account from John 13, an account from the life of Abraham Lincoln, and a quote from C.S. Lewis.

John 13:1-20

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2**During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, **3**Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, **4**rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. **5**Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. **6**He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” **7**Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” **8**Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” **9**Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” **10**Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3A1-20&version=ESV#fen-ESV-26629a)] but is completely clean. And you[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3A1-20&version=ESV#fen-ESV-26629b)] are clean, but not every one of you.” **11**For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

**12**When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? **13**You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. **14**If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **15**For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. **16**Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3A1-20&version=ESV#fen-ESV-26635c)] is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17**If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. **18**I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3A1-20&version=ESV#fen-ESV-26637d)] ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ **19**I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. **20**Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

David Brooks wrote a book entitled “*The Second Mountain*, The Quest for a Moral Life.” In it he discusses various aspects of character he believes to be essential to a moral life. He recounted this story about Abraham Lincoln.

“One day in November 1861, he [Lincoln] paid a call to the home of General George McClellan, hoping to press him, in person, to take the fight to the Confederacy more aggressively. When Lincoln arrived, McClellan was not at home, so Lincoln told the butler that he, Secretary of State William Seward, and an aide, John Hay, would wait in the parlor. An hour later, McClellan arrived home and walked past the room where the president was waiting. Lincoln waited another thirty minutes. The butler returned to say that McClellan had decided to retire for the night and would see Lincoln some other time. McClellan was playing power games with Lincoln.

Hay was incensed. Who has the gall to treat the president of the United States with such disrespect? Lincoln, however, we unruffled. ‘Better at this time,’ he told Seward and Hay, ‘not to be making points of etiquette and personal dignity.’ This wasn’t about him. His pride was not at stake. He would be willing to wait forever if he could find a general who would fight for the Union. By this point Lincoln had given himself away. The cause was the center of his life. His ultimate appeal was to something outside, not inside.”

Brooks also quotes C.S. Lewis who said, “*The load, or weight, or burdens of my neighbor’s glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken*.”

**For discussion, consider how attitudes toward the vaccine could affect relationship with brethren. And, is that an opportunity to be a “light of the world?” (Matthew 5:14-16).**