

To Serve or Be Served

John 13:1-17; Luke 22:21-30; Mark 14:18-19; Matthew 26:20-25

What is the difference between good and great service?

Ever have a waitress or someone in the service industry treat you like a King or Queen?

Ponder for a moment, what is your heart concerning service? Serving others?

Whom do you serve? Your family? Friends? Any service in God's name? What about serving the bride of Jesus, the church? In what ways are you serving Jesus here at Bethel?

Is your service from the correct heart attitude?

Do you serve so much other places that you have nothing much to offer in other areas? (Last week I got a text from Jack Roscup. He was trying to figure out how he could serve more here at Bethel. He thanked me for serving and helping him.) Really?! Jack wanted to serve more!

The message isn't meant to brow beat anyone. It is meant to challenge our heart attitude about serving. I pray it challenges us to a point it moves us to action.

The primary job of the pastor is to train, equip, encourage the body of believers to do the ministry. In a book I am currently reading the author states, that we are not asking/expecting enough from believers. We are begging, nagging, and pleading for God's people to serve his church and afraid if we push too hard, they will stop coming or giving their money.

It is our responsibility to be in service for each other. Not just a few, but all of us believers.

In today's text we will see that we aren't the only ones that struggle with the idea of serving.

Luke 22:21-22; Mark 14:18; Matthew 26:21: Bomb dropped!

Mark 14:19; Matthew 26:22: began to be sorrowful, "Is it I?"

Luke 22:23; John 13:22: began to question each other

Luke 22:24: "there was also a strife among them, (hmm) which of them should be accounted the greatest." (here lays "the" recurring sinful issue)

Do you see the progression? It started with internal reflection, to external inspection, and concluded with self-elevation.

Common Problem

Turn to Matthew 20:20-28: we read what happened when a mom came to Jesus and asked for preferential treatment for her two sons. When the other ten disciples heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers [because they wanted the top spots] (**Matt. 20:24**)

Jesus gave them his answer, "**whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.**"

Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark 9:33-35; Luke 9:46-48: They were arguing as they traveled about who “should” be the greatest.

And now on the night before Jesus is going to be crucified, He teaches on this same topic one last time. Here’s the main point: True greatness does not come from what you get but from what you give.

Read Luke 22:25-28

I see four lessons from these verses that Jesus wants us to learn and apply (hearer and doer) as well.

I. Stop Selfishness

- Jesus brings them from comparison and competition back to community by giving them a lesson in how differently things are to run in His kingdom. **(Luke 22:25)** There is a sharp contrast between the servanthood philosophy of the Savior and the world system in which they lived. The world’s way teaches that we should spend all our energy to get to the top and then when we get there, we can boss others around.
- This is so contrary to how a Christian should live that the Apostle John calls out a guy named Diotrephes in **3 John 9** by describing him like this: **“but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.”** ESV

II. Start Serving

- **Verse 26, “But Ye shall not be so..”**The meaning here is: “It shall not be,” or “It must not be.”
- In the family of God there is only one category of people: **servants.**
- Notice the rest of this verse: **“but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serveth.”**
- This was a counter-cultural and radical teaching for Jesus to define greatness in terms of being the youngest because the oldest was usually at the top of the pecking order. The reference to serving is striking because servants were socially inferior.
- If the disciples wanted to be leaders in His kingdom, they first had to become servants.
- What is a servant? It’s someone whose heart is intent upon, and whose will be bound to, the will and wishes of another. If I am your servant, then what you say goes. You have the last word.
- One of the clearest biblical images of this single-minded resolve to put others first is found in

Psalm 123:2, “A slave looks to his master to provide what he needs, and a servant girl depends on the woman she serves. So we depend on the Lord our God, waiting for him to have mercy on us.”

- When the master moves his finger in command, the servant simply obeys. A true servant is one who has learned to subdue the defiant autonomy of self and to subject the will to the wishes of another. What God says goes. When God says, “Jump,” we should say, “How high?”
- Here’s the principle: If we want to become great then we must give up personal rights and start serving others.
- We need to be repeatedly reminded that our central ambition should be to serve others, not to be served by them. In the kingdom of God, true greatness is measured by how many you serve, not by how many serve you.

III. See the Savior

- I love how Jesus offers a contrast to their competitive hearts in the last part of **verse 27: “but I among you as he that serveth.”**
- You seek to be the greatest and served... Yet I am among you as the One who serves.
- Their selfishness and competitiveness had come up a lot during the three years Jesus was with them, and this was no doubt the last lesson He would teach them before giving His life, Jesus did something they would never forget.
- During the time in the Upper Room, both before, during and after the Last Supper, Jesus did a lot of teaching that is recorded in **John 13-17.**
- While the disciples were debating eternally, examining each other, questioning each other, doubting one another, not serving each other, we find the heart of Jesus. **John 13:1-5**
- It’s noteworthy that in that culture you either washed your own feet or a servant did it for you, but the Master never took on that task...until now.
- The disciples wouldn’t do it because they thought they “were all that and a bag of chips.” Each one thought he was better than everyone else. Washing dirty feet was servant work. It was supposed to be done as soon as they got to the house but no one had done it (believe me, you would want your friend’s feet clean during supper while he reclined next to you!).
- Peter pushes back when Jesus tries to clean his feet but finally asks for the deluxe wash as Jesus models how followers are to treat others.

So, let’s stop all selfishness, and let’s start serving by seeing how the Savior served. There’s one more lesson.

IV. Stay Standing

- I love how gracious Jesus is with his frail and fallible followers. Instead of slamming them for their shallow self-centeredness, or quickly assembling another team, Jesus builds up his buddies in **verse 28, “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations (trials).”**
- I can think of many times that they let the Lord down and we know that they will flee when Jesus is arrested, but they also hung in there when it wasn’t easy to do so. Even when others left the Lord because His demands were too costly, they continued to follow Him.
- **John 6:66-69**
- Jesus affirms us for our efforts. He loves His followers, even when they mess up. But He wants us to move from a climate of competitiveness, from focusing on “serve-us” to “service.” That’s why during His final moments with them, he served up servanthood for supper.

Conclusion

In 1993, Richard Foster, in his book *Celebration of Discipline*, put together a brief comparison of the characteristics of service that is focused more upon self and service that is focused upon Christ. In paraphrased form, it becomes a self-help test worth taking. Why not measure your clarity of vision against his conclusions?

Self-focused service is concerned with impressive gains. It enjoys serving when the service is titanic or growing in that direction.

Christ-focused service doesn’t distinguish between small and large. It indiscriminately welcomes all opportunities to serve.

Self-focused service requires external reward, appreciation, and applause.

Christ-focused service rests content in hiddenness. The divine nod of approval is sufficient.

Self-focused service is overly concerned about results. It becomes disillusioned when results fall below expectations.

Christ-focused service is free of the need to calculate results; it delights only in service.

Self-focused service is affected by feelings.

Christ-focused service ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need. The service disciplines the feelings.

Self-focused service insists on meeting the need; it demands the opportunity to help.

Christ-focused service listens with tenderness and patience. It can serve by waiting in silence.

Achieving True Greatness Begins with a Servant's Heart And is Found in a Life of Service.

I read of a wonderful example from the life of the great evangelist D.L. Moody. It seems that a "large group of European pastors came to one of D. L. Moody's Northfield Bible Conferences in Massachusetts in the late 1800s. Following the European custom of the time, each guest put his shoes outside his room to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. But of course, this was America and there were no hall servants.

Walking the dormitory halls that night, Moody saw the shoes and determined not to embarrass his brothers. He mentioned the need to some ministerial students who were there but met with only silence or pious excuses. Moody returned to the dorm, gathered up the shoes, and, alone in his room, the world's famous evangelist began to clean and polish the shoes. Only the unexpected arrival of a friend during the work revealed the secret.

When the foreign visitors opened their doors the next morning, their shoes were shined. They never know by whom. Moody told no one, but his friend told a few people, and during the rest of the conference, different men volunteered to shine the shoes in secret. Perhaps the episode is a vital insight into why God used D. L. Moody as He did. He was a man with a servant's heart and that was the basis of his true greatness. [Gary Inrig. A Call to Excellence. (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985), p. 98]

People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. - Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. - Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. - Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. - Do good anyway.

Honesty make you vulnerable. - Be honest anyway.

The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds. - Think big anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. - Build anyway.

People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. - Help them anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and you'll get kicked in the teeth. - Give the world the best you have anyway.