

I Am Among You As The One Who Serves

by James Jennings

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Scripture: Luke 22:27, John 13:14, Philippians 2:5, Matthew 20:26, 1 Peter 5:2, James 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:22, John 13:12

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Description

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Transcript

I just want to bring something this morning that we had in family devotions this past week. And I guess it stood out to me in a fresh way. So I want to convey this truth to you all.

Hopefully the Lord will make it fresh for you this morning as well. And this really just boils down to considering a certain phrase that we're going to see in Luke's account. But the phrase is, but I am among you, but I, that's Christ, I am among you as the one who serves.

Those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I want to think about this subject of, am I seeking to ascend above others or descend beneath them in order to serve them? And so we're going to start in Matthew 20, verse 17. And as Jesus is going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way He said to them, See, we're going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death.

So Christ speaking of Himself. And they will deliver Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. And He will be raised on the third day.

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to Him with her sons. Kneeling before Him, she asked Him for something. And He said to her, What do you want? And she said to Him, Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand, one at your left hand, in your kingdom.

Jesus answered, You do not know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink? They said to Him, We are able. He said to them, You will drink My cup, but to sit at My right hand and at My left is not Mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.

And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. Jesus called them to Him and said, And so He gives this lesson, and we're going to find this lesson in Luke's account. Or another situation actually in Luke's account.

You know that the ruler for the Gentiles, they lord it over them. And their great ones exercise authority over them. So notice, He says, You know.

So they have this knowledge, they've seen this type of leadership. Verse 26, It shall not be so among you, but, in contrast, whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave. Verse 28, Even as the Son of Man came, not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

So that's what we read right here in Matthew's account. And Christ tells His mother, she doesn't know what she's asking. His response is amazing because we think we know what we're asking so often as Christians.

We think we've got it figured out. We think we've got Christ figured out. And we are far more ignorant than we recognize.

And it's amazing here for Christ to talk about being mocked and flogged and crucified. And what's the very next topic that gets brought up? Right after being taught, telling them, you're going to be flogged and crucified. The very next topic, to me, it's incredibly insensitive.

And it is a mother coming up with her sons asking about them sitting in the kingdom. Them being great. And you know, maybe at the end of verse 19, that whole phrase right there, and He will be raised.

You kind of narrow in on that. Wow, this ruler's going to be raised, and He's going to form a government, and we want to make sure that our children are involved in high positions in this government. You can just miss the main point of the Lord Jesus.

But let's go to Luke now, Luke 22, and this is where we will stay. Luke 22. There's a few differences in these different accounts and situations, which we're going to see.

This lesson had to be taught multiple times. And each time it had to be taught, Christ taught it based upon the conduct of the disciples. It wasn't something that He brought up without them first having a specific conduct that demanded the Lord Jesus respond in a certain way.

There's things as parents, you just don't want to have to bring up with your kids again. But they conduct themselves in that way, and you've got to bring up the lesson again for the 20th time, maybe. And sadly, Christ, with His disciples, He faced the exact same reality.

Luke 22, verse 14. You're going to see it, this situation that leads to the lesson, there is a similar insensitivity from the disciples and what they bring up for discussion. 14, and when the hour came, He reclined at the table and the apostles with Him, and He said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And He took a cup, when He had given thanks, He said, take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

So, take it among yourselves. There's really this unifying picture here of all partaking of the one bread. And He takes the bread, and we find here the Lord's Supper happening at this Passover.

And then, He says in verse 21, But behold, the hand of Him who betrays Me is with Me at the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, the woes of the man by whom He is betrayed. So now this brings up a question among the disciples, right? Verse 23, They began to question one another, which of them it could be who is going to do this.

So they hear there's a betrayer, and they start discussing among each other, who's it going to be, right? Who do I discern it's going to be? You know, let's exercise our discernment. Did Jesus call them to exercise their discernment in this way? Did Jesus look at them and say, hey, you guys need to talk among each other and figure out who it's going to be? No, Jesus is stating what's going to happen. And here, they begin to question one another.

Now, it's really interesting. Look where this takes them. Look where this takes them.

They began to question one another. Verse 23, Which of them it could be who is going to do this? A dispute also arose among them. Amazing, right? One dispute leads to another.

One questioning of something brings up another question. And we're going to think about this in a little bit. How does this transition even happen? Dispute arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

And He said to them, and then we have the same lesson, that from a previous time with His disciples, He already taught them. He brings it up again. And there's a few differences, but it's basically the same teaching.

And He said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest.

In the other account, He did not appeal to the age, and He didn't use the word benefactor. And the leader as one who serves. Then verse 27, For who is the greater? One who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? That's what society thinks is the greatest, right? But He says, But I am among you as the one who serves.

I am among you as the one who serves. So Christ, as He constantly does in the Scriptures, you want to look for the answer to the equation on how do you conduct yourselves as Christians. He appeals to who? Himself.

He appeals to Himself again and again and again. And so we want to consider this. If the disciples had to be taught this multiple times, and it wasn't enough, then we should have the humility to recognize what about you and me, right? So let's pray.

Well, Father, we thank You for Your Word. Lord, forgive us for our pride and dismissiveness of different lessons from Thy Word. Lord, that we think we've got it figured out.

And Lord, I just pray You'd teach us right now, and speak to my own heart and the hearts of my brethren here, that You'd use Your Word as it says, as You said. Lord, sanctify them with Thy truth. Thy Word is truth.

And so, Lord, sanctify us. Make us more like the blessed Lord Jesus Christ right now in this hour. I ask this in His precious name.

Amen. So Christ here, again, leading up to this section, had just talked about His body being given for you. He's talked about His death.

That's what you saw in Matthew, right? I'm going to be flogged. I'm going to be crucified. And then you've got the same thing here.

He's speaking about His death. And in both situations, they go from Him speaking about His death, to then talking about who is going to be the greatest. I mean, that's just incredible that that is what is happening here.

And as you saw in verse 24, a dispute also arose among them. So they're going from one, and they're going right to another. And so you go from Christ speaking about His death, to speaking about His betrayal, to the disciples trying to figure out who's the worst, and then what's the next thing the disciples are trying to figure out? They go from trying to figure out who's the worst, to figuring out who's the greatest.

How do you get there? It almost has the sense that as they were thinking about who's the worst, a lot of them checked out and thought, it's not them. And somehow their minds started thinking about how great they were. For them to even feel comfortable, to get onto this topic of who's going to be the greatest.

And we can speculate a little on how that transition happens right there, but to me it's a shocking transition. So what does Jesus do in this situation? Well, He gives this teaching, verse 25, He said to them. And it's the same lesson that we saw He gave in Matthew 20.

Now, this section chronologically, it's at a later time. And if you read through Matthew, you're going to find He teaches this basically two times as well, at two different occasions. And so this isn't a singular situation that is happening.

In Matthew 20, He's going about His ministry, but here He's instituting the Lord's Supper. It's prior to the Garden. And so, in other words, just like the feeding of the 5,000, the bread that happens at multiple times, you've got multiple occasions for this exact same teaching.

So if that's the truth of the matter, that should really have us be attentive. I mean, if you make a list, what are things Christ had to teach His disciples multiple times? Right? This is one of those things. They're looking to be great, not to be servants.

And so we should really have our ears perked and pay attention here, right? And I mentioned earlier, every time the teaching comes up, that I could tell the disciples' conduct is what prompted it to be brought up. Right? Christ didn't just teach it out of nowhere, but it was in response to wrong conduct from the disciples. So specifically, as I've already tried to emphasize, take note of verse 27.

Don't forget this phrase. And this is really what I want to consider. But Christ right there, as He's speaking and giving this lesson, He makes this incredible statement, that I am among you as the One who serves.

I am among you as the One who serves. Or as other versions rendered, I am in your midst as One who is ministering. Now, it should shock us, what's the first part of that statement that should surprise us? Jesus says, I am among you.

Right? I mean, that's shocking. Christ is among you. Like, they have the Son of God right there with them.

The fact that the Lord Jesus is among these people, these peasants, these people who are His enemies, these fishermen. I mean, this is shocking that He would be among them. That's amazing that Jesus took upon flesh.

Right? His incarnation is astonishing. But you want to top the incarnation off, look at how His conduct was when He was among them. It wasn't just that Christ was among us.

But Christ comes and says, I am among you as One who serves. Right? He doesn't say as One who rules, but who serves. The Creator, the Sustainer, He's the One saying this.

Instead of them washing His feet, it is He who washes their feet. This is amazing. The Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, Christ is calling us to humble servanthood. And, you know, as I look at my own life, and I think if you'd examine your own heart, I think that we are more convinced that we successfully take a place of humble servanthood than we actually do. And these disciples apparently had a hard time grappling with this reality.

So we could deduce from that, what about us? How well have we actually learned this lesson? Because our humility, our spirituality, it can be overestimated. Similar to people nowadays, they have kind of this investment in a certain stock and they really think it's going to be worth a lot in the end. But when it all comes to be tested, you might find out it really wasn't what they thought it was.

It really didn't have the value they thought it had. And so we might be thinking that we're richer in this area of being a humble servant than we actually are. And so, you know, we've got to ask ourselves, can I say even here today, being here at this gathering of the saints of God, at 311 Hedges, when I was driving here, is it on my mind that I'm going to be among the brethren as one who serves? Like, is that on my mind? I'm coming here as one who serves.

That's a priority. Serving the brethren. Or is it a mindset, I'm coming here as one who gets.

Or I'm coming here as one who I'm getting, but I'm not getting what I deserve. My greatness isn't being acknowledged as it should be. So are we concerned here today about the interest of others? And in both accounts in Matthew's Gospel, the section ends with him saying, the Son of Man came to give His life as a ransom for many.

So again, the supreme way the Son of Man has come to serve is being a ransom to secure our release. Right? I mean, you can't get any greater service than that. The Son of God dying in order to set us free, paying our price to secure our release.

So, if you're sitting here and you think, I just thought of these verses last week in my own devotional time, James. And I've heard these taught on before. Well, that's good.

These guys had the same thing. They had it taught on before too. And it apparently didn't do them a whole lot of good.

And so some of you here might not be affected by this in the way you should. And what can cause that is you check out from hearing something right at the beginning because you think you've already got it figured out. And I could do that as the preacher speaking on this right now.

So may God spare us and me from that sort of blindness when we consider truths like this. Alright, well let's consider a few things here. First of all, how did these guys get on the topic in the first place? How do you go from hearing Christ talk about His death to then debating who's going to betray Him, to then discussing who's going to be the greatest among you? And from what I can tell, I don't see a specific reason that is spelled out right here in the passage, but the progression of it, something happened as they are disputing, verse 23, question which one of them who is going to betray Christ.

Something happened there. You're talking about who's going to betray Christ and the next thing chronologically that happens is you are disputing also, it arose among them as to which one was going to be regarded as the greatest. What's going on? It's not like Jesus just spells it out on what happens right there.

But how do you get from discussing this one thing, am I going to betray Christ, to discussing the opposite, am I going to be the greatest in the kingdom? This is just my own speculation, but you know what I look at in my own life, or I've seen at other times and other situations, sometimes when you get overly focused examining yourself, let's say you're examining, am I going to betray Christ? Now your mind is so consumed with who? Yourself. And in the midst of that, you're thinking about self. And so rather than seeing concerns that you're going to betray Christ, you start to have mentally lined up in your mind all these positive things that assure you you're not going to betray Christ.

Whether you're right or not, that's just what's happening mentally in your head. And now that you've got all these positive things, could you see how that thinking of self to this amount could all of a sudden get you starting to think about this opposite spectrum. Maybe I'm not going to betray Christ.

Maybe I'm going to be sitting at His right hand. You know, you check the box. I'm not the betrayer.

Then you start looking at the other one. Maybe I'm the greatest. The timing of all of it to me, it's just odd.

You just finished commemorating the body and the blood of Christ, and now you're contesting for who's going to be master over each other? And they do all this before the Lord Himself. You know, we should... You know what this one lesson in an application from this right here is? It shows how prone we can be to bring up things that are not appropriate. You could bring up something not appropriate.

For example, this men's meeting. We're talking about the men's meeting that's going to happen next Sunday. And give an opportunity for people to share edifying thoughts and different things that have been

an encouragement.

Well, you know what? That's a great opportunity to edify, or it's a great opportunity, I could bring up something that's not appropriate right there. Right? That's what I learned from this situation with Christ. You can go from talking about one thing to talking about something that's not even appropriate.

It's not even fit for the occasion. I mean, put yourself in Christ's shoes. You're speaking of your death, and they're arguing about who's going to be the greatest.

Does that exactly comfort you about their being with you? No, it doesn't. So, second thought right here from this passage. It's how does Christ handle it? Well, Christ, and we should do this too, especially as shepherds, we should look at situations and their teaching opportunities and moments, right? And that's what you parents do with your kids.

If something happens, it creates a teaching opportunity with your children. And that's exactly what the Lord Jesus does. And Christ can appeal to Himself basically saying, look at Me.

Am I aiming for the top? Am I in search of honor and power and greatness? Am I asserting superiority over you guys? And they could look and they'd recognize, no, that's not. He's actually sacrificing Himself when He's the last one who should go and die and He's going to go and die. He's the One among us who serves.

Horatius Bonner, speaking of this text, he says this, it's a wonderful quote. He says, Did it not tell us that our aim should be not to soar, but to stoop? That greatness lies not in ascending above others, but in descending beneath them. And that the highest seat of honor is in truth the lowest place of service.

Service that is willing to go down even to the tomb itself in the performance of its office of love. Not to soar, but to stoop. Right? Not ascending above others, but descending beneath them.

And so Christ, He puts Himself as the supreme example. And you love that, right? In the Christian life, we're faced again and again with Christ being our example. Husbands, love your wives as Christ.

Forgiving others as Christ. It's as Christ, as Christ, as Christ. We should find great encouragement in that as believers.

So now, let's think here. Apart from putting Himself as the supreme example, He also makes specific statements to them in this lesson right here. So let's think about these.

Starting in verse 24, 25, 26, right in that section. So this is the first lesson. Christ says the Gentiles lorded over the people, and those people called them benefactors.

You see that right there? Verse 25. Now what does that mean? You know, I think I got this dead wrong the first time I read it. What does it mean to be a benefactor? Does it even have another version of the Scriptures? What does it say? Because clearly, what Jesus is saying here, is it a positive or a negative statement? It's a negative statement.

And we know that because the very next statement, what does He say in verse 26? Be not so among you. So clearly, whatever is happening in verse 25, He's saying don't let that be a reality. Well, what can be confusing is the people called these Gentiles who exercised lordship, benefactors.

Which is actually a positive statement. Now, the first part of verse 25, the kings of the Gentiles exercised lordship, that's a negative statement. That's a domineering leadership over these individuals.

The statement that ends the verse, benefactors, can be taken as a positive statement. It means helper of the people. So these Gentile kings, the people call them helpers of the people.

So, I read this verse in the morning reading and I thought, oh, benefactors. And I just took it to mean something like, oh yeah, they're just benefiting from the people that are serving them. Well, that's not what the word means.

They're actually calling these rulers as people who are helping them. So, there's a lesson here. We want to get this lesson.

Because Christ says to you and me, don't let this be so among you. Well, what is He actually saying should not be so among us? So the kings of the Gentiles, they dominate, they exercise lordship over their people, yet the people call them helpers of the people. So what's happening right here? Well, I think this illustrates a simple point.

You can have bad conduct, lording it over the people, and yet you can receive a good title from those people. You can be a tyrant, and yet the people actually give you praise. They give you praise.

You can be a tyrant, and the people call you a helper of the people. And so, take note of this, because it will help us understand Jesus' point. Jesus says, don't let this be so among you.

So, He's not just saying don't exercise lordship over them. He is saying that. Don't domineer over these people.

Be a servant leader. And that goes with 1 Peter 5, especially for us elders. Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

So clearly, don't be a domineering leader. But the second thing, what He's saying when He says don't let this be so among you, He's also saying this, don't have a reputation among the people of being a helper when it's not true. And you're actually a tyrant.

That's what happened with the Gentiles. They were tyrants in their leadership, and yet the people called them helpers of the people. It wasn't.

They were being given a label that was not true of them. And so if you put, if you even look in the NET and the translation notes, it's exactly how they define it right there. That even a tyrant can have a label of being a good leader.

And so Jesus is saying don't have a reputation among people of being a helper when it is not true and you're actually a tyrant. And so this is an interesting lesson for Christ to give. You and I can be wrongly labeled as a helper of the people by the people when ultimately what's going to come to find out on judgment day? You weren't a helper of the people.

So if society can call a domineering tyrant a benefactor and it not be true, which you look at the history of the world, this isn't shocking, right? What did a lot of Germans think about Adolf Hitler? Did they call Hitler a tyrant? No, he's a benefactor. He was a helper of the people. They saw Hitler being a positive force.

History shows it's not true at all. It's the same thing. You look at church history.

I mean, brethren, especially in the health, wealth, prosperity movement, you see a lot of self-proclaimed pastors who are lording it over the people and they're gathering all these financial resources from the people through manipulation. And the shocking thing is when you talk to the people, they actually praise the leadership of these individuals. Yet it's not true.

It's an unworthy statement being given to them. And so that's Christ's point. Brethren, just because the people say you're a helper of the people, it doesn't mean it's true.

Because the Gentiles, they led in such a way where they got the label of benefactor, but it was not a true statement being spoken of them. So, Jesus presents this as a negative statement. He's highlighting the hypocrisy, self-serving nature of some worldly leadership.

And if you remember in Matthew's account, He said these words, You know how they do this. Right? So Christ is appealing to something that His followers had witnessed in their own lives and recognized from the kings among the Gentiles. So, that's one observation right here.

I or you, we could be wrongly called a benefactor, benefiting the people, but we're actually living as a tyrant. May God spare us of such hypocrisy. The second thing Christ tells us is become as the youngest.

Verse 26, But not so with you, but you rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as the one who serves. Now, Matthew doesn't use this term youngest. Now, I was telling my kids, it doesn't mean you become like a kid where you throw out your knowledge and everything.

So what's He mean? What's He mean become like the youngest? Well, clearly in context here, He's thinking about positions of servanthood or of ruling over people. So what task tended to be given to the younger people? Listen to this. Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira, they're dropped dead.

God kills them. What's it said there? The young men rose and wrapped Him up and carried Ananias out and buried Him. Who's getting called in to bury the dead bodies and put them in the grave? Who's out there digging in the cold dirt and burying those people who just got judged by the Lord? The young men.

You think of King David's upbringing. Where was David not when they were battling Goliath initially? David was not at the front line. He as the young one was out there watching over the flock.

And when he came to want to be a part of the battle, what did his older brothers think of him? What are you doing here? You don't belong here. You see? And the brothers weren't saying, well, let's swap places and you take my sword and you be in the battle and I'll go watch the sheep. No, they didn't want to go to that place of humility over there.

They wanted to be there at the front line serving. Right? They didn't want to swap places. And obviously Christ washing their feet is no doubt an incredible example of such.

You have the young servants come in and wash the feet. You don't leave the head of the table and come down and wash the feet. Christ is saying, this is how I live.

Become like the youngest. Be willing to do the most insignificant, the most miserable task that the young often are given. Be willing to be in the most humble position of doing the hardest labor.

And don't think anything less of being in that position. Because being in that position, doing those things, is actually the true path to greatness in My Kingdom. It's the true path to greatness in the Lord's Kingdom.

Do we really believe this? Do we really believe this? Luke 12, Blessed are the servants who the Master finds awake when He comes. Truly I say to you, He will dress Himself for service and have them recline at the table, and He will come and serve them. So Christ's point, become as the one who takes the hardest labor and joyfully does such.

Do you think that way? Here we're here, we're among each other as one who serves today. Are we willing to do the most difficult, toughest task to serve one another and take a position of humility? Well, a third lesson right here. He gives us a visual of a table.

Look at v. 27. For who is the greater? The one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? And it answers the question. Is it not the one who reclines at the table? That's how society says it.

And Christ says in contrast, I am among you as one who serves. So you walk into a room. You see a bunch of servants standing up against the wall.

They've got their nice posture or whatever. And then you see a long wood table. You see people sitting down at the table.

Who do you automatically assume is the greater people present? The people standing at the wall ready to serve or the people who are seated at the table? Jesus is saying, the world, we automatically say, those sitting at the table. And Jesus says, I'm one of the guys standing on the wall ready to serve you. I'm taking the humble position of the youngest, which just in His incarnation, becoming a babe and living a perfect life, that is astonishing humility of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How many of us go from full manhood and full maturity and then we become not like Adam an adult in the garden, but we become a babe? That's absolutely incredible. The incarnation of Christ just magnifies in so many ways the humility of the Lord. And brethren, you go to a conference and you see the pastors being interviewed in a Q&A and you see thousands of people with their cell phones taking pictures of the preachers up there on the seats and you go in and you automatically assume those up there on the podium are the greatest.

Christ says, that's not true. That's not how it is in My kingdom. The one standing up and serving is greater.

This is exactly what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12. The parts of the body you cannot see are given the greater honor. Do we really do that as a church? Do we really do that as a reformed Christian culture in America? Do we actively give honor to those parts that are less seen and give encouragement to them? I honestly don't think we're as convinced of this as we should be.

This is my own imagination, but I think in a hundred years, church history books will be written about the idolatry of preachers that has been created through this celebrity preacher culture and reformed circles. And I realize as a church, we've taken part of that through our internet ministries. There's good that happens, but there's also negative things that happen.

And this is something I've heard Paul Washer just state again and again at these conferences. His own disgust at how much people are just falling down and basically worshiping all of these preachers. They've taken one member of the body and exalted that as far superior than all of the rest.

Christ is saying, that shouldn't be so among you. We're here as one who serves. And the servant, the one taking the humble position, is ultimately going to be greater in the kingdom of God.

Well, a fourth thing here to consider. As I mentioned, He appeals to Himself. And I like to appeal to Jesus Christ.

I like to think about Christ. I am among you as the one who serves. I am among you as the one who serves.

In His kingdom, Christ is making it clear that He who is the greatest should not make His superiority known. Listen to this. Bonner says this, His superiority should not be known by anything other than His care for the weakest and most destitute.

What are you known for? What am I known for? What is it that gives me a reputation among the brethren? What gives you a reputation among the brethren? Is it humble, servant, leadership, and laying down your own rights and interests to serve others? Or is it making my superiority known in some other way? Christ demonstrates power and authority not by lording over others, but by serving. He sets an example of humble service showing that true power comes from service and sacrifice, not from dominance. It says in John, If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done unto you. Jonathan Edwards, speaking of all of this, he says, None in the kingdom of heaven ever descended as low as Christ did, who descended as it were into the depths of hell. He suffered the shame, the wrath, and was made a curse.

He went lower in these things than ever any other did. And this He did as a servant not only to God, but to men. And that He undertook to serve us and minister to us in such dreadful drudgery, while we sit at meat in quietness and rest and partake of those dainties which He provides for us, Christ took upon Himself to minister to us in the lowest service, which He represented and typified by the action of washing the disciples' feet, which He chiefly did for that end.

Well, think about Christ and His service to us, because that's His conclusion, right? How do I grow in this area? What's Jesus do? He appeals to Himself? What's He do in both accounts in Matthew? He says, I am the one, I came not to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. Christ really makes it clear, if you really want to grow, look at my shameful, suffering death. That is the greatest act of service that should inspire your own service to one another.

Right? Christ's service of sacrificing Himself is the primary motivation, the primary thing to look at that should inspire and drive you and I to the same sort of service towards one another. And when you think about His work on the cross, it was a willing service. He was willing.

There wasn't restriction. There wasn't hesitation. It wasn't some official performance of an appointed duty, but He was willingly serving.

He said, I delight to do Your will. He delighted to do the will of the Father. Secondly, it's a willing act of service that had no restriction.

Right? It wasn't just to prescribe motions. He was eager to come forth and to do the will of God. A third thing, it's written, Christ didn't seek His own pleasure.

His service was that of self-denial. You know, if anyone does not pick up his cross and die daily, he cannot be my disciple. How can I die to self today in service of the Lord and you all? Even if people repay me, evil for the good I do.

Do I keep on serving? Let me give this example of self-denial. It's always stood out to me from the biography of D.E. Host. And he shared about a situation he faced on the mission field.

Host was one of the, and this was before the internet, but they still made men celebrities, right? And you had the Cambridge Seven. Who were the Cambridge Seven? Basically, seven famous guys who abandoned their riches. C.T. Studd being one of them who was a famous cricket player to chase a quick rabbit.

It is amazing though, when you look at that picture of the castle he grew up in, and then you see the hut of him in Africa, it is quite the contrast. And so the Lord kept them and he was a servant to many. But D.E. Host was one of those Cambridge Seven with Stanley Smith.

And they went to China. And Host says this, we were put in a situation where it would be necessary that one of them should be in the position of leader and decide matters. Not unnaturally, having already been there for some time and being close with Pastor Shee, Host, he felt himself better qualified than Stanley Smith to fill the position.

And so in Host's mind, he's planning to fill this position. Yet Smith ended up being the one chosen to lead among the work, not Host. And listen, you want to talk about servanthood and denial of self? Look what Host says.

When he put the matter bluntly to me, I was ruffled in my spirit. Why should I serve under him? We were about the same age. We'd come to China together.

Try to look at all the comparisons. There didn't seem to be sufficient reason to me. So what does Host do? He suggested, you should write to the mission in Shanghai and get someone else appointed here to serve with you, not me.

Not me. That's very proud. Later on, thinking over the situation, the Spirit of God, this is Host, probed me.

And I was forced to admit that I didn't relish the thought of being under my friend. I thought of my reputation and what friends would surmise back at home when they heard about the situation. The difficulty was really in my own heart.

And now hear this. This is incredible. It was impressed upon me that unwillingness, if it persisted in my heart, it would mean me having to part company with Christ.

Do you hear that conclusion? I don't think we don't think that way enough. Host realizes, if I don't repent of this issue in my heart of being unwilling to serve and take the low point, it wasn't just, well, I'm not going to have fruitful ministry. No, he knew it would lead.

His fellowship with Christ would cease. There would be the sense of restore to me, Lord, the joy of Your salvation. Where have You gone? I'd have to part company with the Lord Jesus Who dwells with the humble ones.

Those who willingly go down. I therefore accepted my friend's suggestion and we worked happily together. You see, that's what Christ came to do.

He's calling us to actions like that. And all of us are going to face various situations in our lives where we've got to have that attitude. And brethren, if you or I reject this attitude of servanthood as Christ did, yes, you are parting with an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will go from a season of nearness to the Lord into a season of darkness and not having His felt presence near until you repent of that sin that has taken root in your heart. So Christ, back to those reasons, He willingly served us. He wasn't hesitant.

He's patient. He didn't grow weary with us. Incredible.

And His charge was free. Absolutely free. Well, after you really look at Christ's service, is it ever possible for us to turn away a situation and say that I'm weary or I'm disgusted from this person and I just don't have what it takes to love them? I mean, you look at Christ.

He'll help you overcome those reservations that you have in your heart. Let me see what time it is. Alright, well, some final questions of personal application for all of us.

Number one, I guess I already mentioned this earlier spontaneously, but do you or I bring up disputes like the disciples here? I'm not saying there aren't times where things need to be disputed or talked about. It's probably wrestled through. But just thinking about it, are there times, think of this, those disciples are talking about who's going to betray Christ.

And you know how it is when you're in an intense conversation. You've got thoughts going on in your mind. What happens when that thought enters your mind about who's going to be the greatest? Right at that moment, you can entertain that thought.

You can let it lodge in your mind. Who was the one who brought the topic up? One of them brought it up. One of them first had it in their head.

Let's talk about who's going to be the greatest. Maybe one of them had it in their head and thought, this is ridiculous. I'm not going to bring that up.

Then another guy brought it up. I mean, who knows what happened. But we face that same thing.

And so, you might say, well, James, I've never brought up some foolish dispute like that. Maybe you've thought it, and did you let it sit there for five seconds? Or did you crucify it and recognize this is not unworthy of building up the body of Christ? So, I think that's a point from here. Do I have conversations that really aren't necessary? The disciples clearly fell into that and Christ had to bring up these teaching moments.

The second thing, do you ever find yourself deflecting concerns in your life? Like, will I be the one who betrays Christ? By talking about the opposite thing, am I going to be the greatest? Do you ever find something gets brought up where we should humbly examine, Lord, am I going to betray You? And we end up in the opposite spectrum. We'll go to the opposite conclusion and then we focus our time on that discussion. A third thing here for personal application, as we have seen, the disciples before wanted to know who was going to be the greatest.

This lesson right here in Luke 22, this isn't the first time that this happened. This wasn't their first rodeo, as they say. Trying to be better than others.

Clearly, they are still driven by that attitude. That pride has persisted despite what having had happened earlier. The same lesson from Christ.

They already heard the lesson. I already heard the lesson. I've already heard the sermon.

And yet, that doesn't mean you're vaccinated from these things never coming back. It's a false vaccine. It's not going to prevent you from getting it.

You can end up getting it just because you've had this teaching. So in the same way these guys were exhorted to repent of their pride, we might as well have been told multiple times, and yet we still are trying to play king of the hill, or still the guy jumping in the front of the line pushing others out of the way. Christ says no.

No, guys. Be among one another as those who serve. This also shows us that there might be lessons that you and I need to hear two times, three times, four times, five times, six times, seven times.

I don't know, maybe some of us are on this the 50th time. And you know, part of why we need it 50 times is we're called to renew our mind every day. And so you might have renewed your mind today with these relevant truths, and then you need it a week later.

You've got to keep tuning the piano for it to sound nice. Or my guitar. I take my guitar off to play it.

I mean, it's amazing how with the humidity and different things, you've got to tune the guitar almost every time you play it. Same thing in the Christian life. We need the Lord to tune our heart every day to take the humble position of servanthood.

So brethren, is your life in this church about being a benefit to others? Or is it about self? Do you know what's scary about this question to me? It's so easy to right away just think, yeah, I'm here to serve others. Well, how do I really know that's true? If these guys could get duped and keep going back to wanting to be the greatest, I'd be really slow to say to myself, I'm here to serve others. Because what if that's just me doing what they did, going from I'm not going to betray Him to I'm going to be the greatest? We should be slow.

I mean, Paul was slow, right? What did he say? I don't know of anything against myself. But you know what? The Lord's going to judge me. And the motive of my heart, they're going to be disclosed on that great day of judgment.

I didn't know they had a bell. Wow, so is that when we need to stop preaching at the 10 a.m. now? What time is it? That is new. Alright, well, 10:51. Well, I'm almost done.

Listen to this. A.J. Gordon in his book, *The Holy Spirit and Missions*, he records about a man named Luo Fook, a Chinese man. He says this, the devotion of certain Moravian brethren in selling themselves into slavery.

Many of you, when you got saved, you heard that clip of Paul Washer talking about Moravians selling themselves into slavery. They didn't actually do that. They were willing to, and so this is written over 100 years ago.

He talks about what actually happened. And Paul eventually, I think, corrected what he said. But, the devotion of certain Moravian brethren in selling themselves into slavery in order to reach the slaves with the Gospel has been much celebrated in missionary literature.

It is probable that some were ready to do that. But no such case of enslavement actually occurred in their history. But it has occurred in recent days.

In recent days being, I think it's written in 1906, so 120 years ago. Some 12 years ago, so maybe 1890. Some 12 years ago, Luo Fook, a Chinese Christian, moved with compassion for the slaves in South American mines, sold himself for five years as a coolie slave.

He was transported to Demerara that he might carry the Gospel to his countrymen working there. He toiled in the mines with them. He preached Jesus while he toiled till he had scores of whom could speak as Paul of Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.

Noble example of the possible spiritual power of these from the land of Sinim. Luo Fook died about two years ago, but not until he had won to the Savior nearly 200 disciples who he left behind in membership with the Christian church. There is no other place in the centuries where the lowest feature of the man of sorrows he took upon him the form of a slave has been so literally reproduced as here.

Among all the nations have there been found those who have borne the Savior's cross in martyrdom. However, to a Christian Chinaman belongs, as far as we know, the unique honor of wearing the Savior's bonds and voluntary servitude. And I'll tell you this, you know what? You tipped me as I was reading that.

If you were in that mine in China and this man came down there and he told you that I sold myself into slavery to be here in order to give you the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, wouldn't that make you have open ears? But we should have the same, because that's what Christ has done. Christ took upon Himself humanity. He left the glories above.

He became a slave. He took upon Himself human flesh. He might not have come and changed as a slave in that way like this man did.

It's the same thing. And if people would be astonished at a Chinaman, and they would see what he has done and his sacrifice, we should be far more astonished that the sinless Son of God would come down and do far greater than that and save a people from every nation. And you know what? This man, he's doing exactly what Christ did.

And what if that opportunity put itself forward for you to be put in such of a situation? That would really show willing to humble oneself in order to serve others in the worst of ways. And many of us will probably never face an opportunity like this. But you know what? We face it in smaller ways with one another in the life of the church.

We want to be among you as the one who serves as the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, His life wasn't about being filled, but to fill. It wasn't about Him being healed, but healing of others.

He was about others being gladdened. One last thought from Horatius Bonner. He says this, is there someone here like Peter ready to say, the Lord's going to wash His feet? Surely this is too much.

Lord, You should never wash my feet. I cannot bear the thought that You should perform an act so humble for such as I. Then the answer, if I wash You not, You have no part in me. If You will not allow me to thus minister to You, You cannot be mine.

Strange, yet blessed thought. We can't be saved. We cannot have any part in Him unless we allow Him thus to perform for us His service of lowly love.

It is as the servant that He is the Savior. In saving, He serves, and in serving, He saves. Do you catch that? You know what's keeping some from not being Christians? They're too proud to let Christ wash their feet.

They're too proud to let Christ wash away all their sins and make them white as snow. They're too proud. And Jesus says, if you won't let Me do that, if you won't let Me wash your feet, you can't be saved.

You can't take part in Me. Well, let's pray. Well, Father, Lord, we want to be among one another as those who serve.

We want to be those not seeking to ascend above others, but Lord, to descend beneath. And Lord, we thank You for Your example. Lord, I pray that Your example of humble service, Lord, would all the more thrill my own heart in ways that I've yet experienced in my life as a Christian.

Lord, we know it is the old, old story, but Father, we pray that Your Gospel would be the fresh, new, striking, convicting story. Lord, not just the old, old, but Lord, something that just smashes the heart. Lord, we would be willing like this man, this China man who went over there and sold himself into slavery and won 200 people to Your name before he died.

Lord, what a place of humility. And Father, I am afraid, Lord. I'm afraid for us.

I'm afraid for myself that this is just not something that we've grasped as well as we think we have. And so, Lord, would You strip away any layers of pride in our own hearts and minds that keep us from really recognizing the areas where we fall short and need to grow even further in this area. And so, Lord, I pray You'd do that in my own life, my own heart.

Lord, make us more like Your Son. Please, please, Lord. We look to You.

We pray You'd bless our time, our fellowship together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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