

Heart to Serve

19 Sep 2010

Mark 10 : 41 – 45

- Context ; James and John wanted to be the main guys in the Age to Come
- When Christ came to show the world what God was like, he came as a servant
- His purpose in life was to serve (going to the cross was an act of service)
- There is not one example where Jesus put his interests ahead of others

Philippians 2 : 3 – 8

- “not something to be grasped” = “not something to be exploited or used to advantage”
- Serving like Jesus involves putting interests of others before our own, and not exploiting our position to our own advantage
- Having a heart to serve requires having a soul of humility
- Humility was considered foolish in the ancient world – you could not make it in the world if you were humble, it was a sign of weakness in a culture that applauded strength
- The NT writers had to invent a new phrase for humility – literally means “Having a deep sense of one’s littleness”
- The Bible also speaks about false humility ...

Colossians 2 : 20-23

- Paul warning the church at Colossae not to be drawn into Judaism - the way to holiness is not via a set of rules. This approach is futile but also results in false humility.
- We can view serving as a set of rules, something we have to do. Serving in this way arises from and feeds a sense of false humility – can result in serving in order to be seen and noticed. “Look at me, how great I am at serving”

Look at an example of serving out of true humility.

Mathew 25 : 31-40

- The main point of this teaching by Jesus is that our love for God shows in how we love our brothers and sisters in God’s family
- But notice the response of the righteous - they were serving without even realising they were serving. It was their second nature, their automatic “right turn” to serve by showing hospitality, by visiting those in prison, by feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, giving clothes to the needy
- They had servants’ hearts and were blessed by God and took up their inheritance in the Age to Come.

Luke 22 : 23 – 27

- It takes time to become a true servant – the 12 disciples had not got it yet ...
- The disciples were willing to squabble over what they saw as a throne

Do you desire a throne in God’s Kingdom ? Like the disciples, is it a position of leadership that you desire because of how important you will feel ? But a throne can be other things too.

Do you desire the throne of always wanting your way - that your opinions will be followed more than anyone else’s? Do you desire the throne of always wanting your needs to be met, rather than considering what is best for the church ? Do you desire the throne of convenience – of not wanting to sacrifice your time or energy to serve others. Do you have a throne of aloofness – not seeing the need for close relationships and to be open with your life ?

We are called not to take up our throne but to take up our towel of service !

John 13 : 1 – 5

- Jesus here performs the most menial task of a servant - he leaves his position at the head of the table (where the host sat) and got down on his knees and washed dirty smelly feet
- Notice the disciples did not squabble over this position – they did not fight to take the towel from Jesus

John 13 : 12 – 17

- If anyone had a claim to the throne, it was Jesus. But he picked up the towel
- We are called to do the same – pick up the towel and be willing to serve in the most basic way
- If we are honest with ourselves, we often are too tired or selfish to take up the towel but we eagerly reach for the throne
- The way of the towel is a noble task, vs 17 - it results in blessings from God !

***"Blessed is the servant who esteems himself no more highly when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, foolish, and to be despised; since what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more."* - Francis of Assisi**

But what does it mean to be blessed ?

Its often interpreted as being happy, but that is not the Biblical meaning. To be blessed by God means to enjoy His favour, usually in a spiritual sense. We are not promised that God will give us a comfy life and lots of toys if we serve. But we are promised that we will enjoy God's favour and that we will grow in our knowledge of Him and in our relationship with Him. Serving helps us to be transformed into the likeness of Christ – that is a true blessing from God.

Conclusion : Being a true servant in God's community is who we are, not what we do. If we focus on serving by what we do, we can easily serve for the wrong reasons, to be noticed. That type of serving is based in false humility, not the true humility that Jesus served with and went to the cross with. We are made to be a community - serving our own interests (wanting our throne) does not create community, but serving others does.

Questions to reflect on :

Do you reach for the "towel" or the "throne" in the Kingdom of God ?

Are you a servant yet in your nature ? In every area of your life ?

Do you have the HEART yet of a servant ?

In what ways can you become a better servant in God's Family ?