

To Serve, Not to Be Served

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Ever notice how hard it is to ask for help?
 - 1. It struck me a week ago as I was mulling over this morning's text as I lay awake in my bed at 3am, "Why is it so hard to ask for help?"
 - 2. The answer is obvious, isn't it? Pride. Perhaps especially for men, idk, we want to do things by ourselves. We don't like needing someone's assistance - even if it means that we do it wrong the first time (or ten)
- B. I know that we are all like this to one extent or another - maybe not with something like how to change your brake pads, but with other things:
 - 1. 90% of the time, when people come to me for marriage help, they have already punched the clock. They didn't want to ask for help earlier. Why not? Shame, embarrassment, pride normally
 - 2. People struggle w/ habitual sin but they don't have the courage to tell another brother or sister for accountability. Why not? Often - pride
 - 3. Even when evangelizing the lost it is common to hear people say, "I don't feel like I need Jesus. I am glad that works for you, but everything is fine."
 - a) Jesus is viewed as a crutch. For who? The weak.
 - b) "But not me..." I am strong. I have my life together.
 - c) What is the common thread in all of this? Pride.
- C. What, then, do we do with some of the things that the scriptures say about pride:
 - 1. *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*
 - 2. *Lk 1:52, he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;*
 - 3. *Matthew 23:12, Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*
 - 4. Or our passage, *"The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve..."*
- D. As we talk about advent - the coming of Jesus - why Jesus came, realize that this is one of the primary reasons that Jesus Christ came → to serve you.
- E. Does that make you itchy? I mean aren't we supposed to serve him? Let's see

II. Matthew 19:16–30

- A. *[16] And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" [17] And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." [18] He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, [19] Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [20] The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" [21] Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." [22] When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. [23] And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. [24] Again*

I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” [25] When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” [26] But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

1. What must I do to inherit eternal life?
2. This is mankind’s perpetual problem - we are asking the wrong question
3. Every other major religion teaches some form of “I do, God responds”
4. But every major religion in the world is false except Christianity
5. Truth be told - what you believe about Christianity might be wrong too
6. Quite honestly, this perspective is Paganism through and through
 - a) Idol worship... serve the idol... get rain, get blessing

7. *Psalm 50:8–15*

*[8] Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.*

*[9] I will not accept a bull from your house
or goats from your folds.*

*[10] For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.*

*[11] I know all the birds of the hills,
and all that moves in the field is mine.*

*[12] “If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and its fullness are mine.*

*[13] Do I eat the flesh of bulls
or drink the blood of goats?*

*[14] Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and perform your vows to the Most High,*

*[15] and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”*

8. In other words. I don’t need more service from you. Instead, call upon me willingly (thanksgiving, free-will sacrifice, time of need) and let me serve you. When I serve you, you actually glorify me. Huh?
 - a) God is totally different from what we envision religion to be
9. Some of you just don’t get this - you always feel guilty and inadequate
 - a) Not doing enough, not sacrificing enough, not serving enough. No! You’re not doing any of those things enough. Without God it is IMPOSSIBLE, but with God all things are possible.
 - b) Peter is just like us...

B. [27] Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” [28] Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [29] And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or

children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. [30] But many who are first will be last, and the last first. (ESV)

1. Peter sees an opportunity to point out all the ways in which he is serving Jesus and look at Jesus' response. What does he say?
2. "Oh Peter. Thank you. Seriously. Thank you for serving me in this way. I do not know where to begin to express my gratitude..." Nope. The opposite.
3. Let me paraphrase. "Hold up, Peter. You left your boat, your little fishies. I am going to give you a glorious throne to sit on and you will judge the 12 tribes of Israel. And for everyone else who sacrifices to serve me and follow me - I am going to give them 100 fold what they gave up. AND I will give them eternal life (which, if we are honest, would be more than enough if I didn't do that whole hundredfold thing)." In other words, Peter, nobody out-erves Jesus. In glory, nobody will be talking about all the things YOU did. They will be talking about all the things JESUS did.
4. See how quick we are to get it backwards.
 - a) Look what I've done for you, Lord.
 - b) Look what I am willing to do for you, Lord.
 - c) Look what I've sacrificed for you, Jesus.

III. Matthew 20:1-16

- A. Then Jesus tells this story about a guy who hires laborers
- B. At the end of the day he is super generous to the guys who came at the last minute - giving them a full day's wage
- C. The guys who started in the morning think they are going to make bank and then are upset when they get what was agreed to - the same as the guys who came late, a day's wage
- D. They are mad, frustrated, angry. The employer's response, "Do you begrudge me of my generosity? I gave you a fair wage too."
- E. In other words, "Don't you realize that this isn't about your hard work but about the generosity of God? Are you going to work hard and then get mad that the thief on the cross receives the same eternal life as the Apostle Paul? Is this story about Paul? Or is this story about Jesus?"
- F. Christianity isn't about how much YOU serve Jesus; It is about Jesus serving you → How will he do that? We continue in Matthew:

IV. Matthew 20:17-28

- A. *[17] And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, [18] "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death [19] and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."*
 1. The Son of Man will be delivered... condemned... crucified... raised
 2. This is ultimately how Jesus serves you → he becomes your whipping boy, taking your punishment so you can be set free

- B. [20] Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. [21] And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." [22] Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." [23] 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." [24] And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.
1. What is the desire? To be special, to earn a spot, to be honored
 2. Why were the ten upset? Because they didn't ask first
 3. They still don't get it, so Jesus explains
- C. [25] But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. [26] It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [27] and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, [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."
1. Jesus has all authority:
 - a) He received it from the Father in chapter 3
 - b) He maintained it in version 2.0 of Garden of Eden in chapter 4 when Satan fails to tempt Jesus to sin
 - c) He teaches with it in Matthew 5 through 7
 - d) He exercises it as he commands diseases, demons to leave; commands people to come and follow him;
 2. Jesus has all authority but he doesn't use his authority to have people serve him, instead he flips it upside down and says
 - a) To be great, you need to serve
 - b) To be the greatest, you need to be a slave
 3. Sometimes Jesus says things that don't feel like good news...
 - a) *v27, whoever would be first among you must be your slave*
 - b) Some of you don't get where this is headed. You immediately are thinking, "How can I serve more?"
 - c) You are stuck in the old way of thinking, "If I want to be great (which I do), then I need to serve more and earn the greatness"
 - d) Newsflash, it's not about you
 4. Don't miss what Jesus says next, "*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve*"
 5. Jesus' words in Matt 20:27 are not a command for you to obey. Not even close. Instead, it is a call to be served by the Son of Man
- V. This is the heart of Christianity and what separates our faith from every other faith on the planet
- A. God does not need service, nor is he glorified by willing recruits

1. *Acts 17:25 - nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

B. God is so full and so self-sufficient and so overflowing in power and life and joy that he glorifies himself by serving us

1. *Luke 12:37 - Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.*

C. He does the creating, the sustaining, the maintaining, and then he steps in and does the serving too so he gets 100% of the credit and we get 0%

D. The invitation to follow Jesus is to be served by Jesus

1. Do you realize how liberating this is?

2. Every time Jesus commands us to do something, it is not an invitation for us to serve him, but for him to serve us

a) When he says, "Go and make disciples," he is actually saying, "Go and share what I have done and as you share I will give you joy of obedience, I will give you words to say, I will use you to do impossible things, like bringing a dead soul to life."

b) When he says, "Don't be a drunkard" he is actually saying, "Put aside that old wine so that I can fill you with the new wine, and then you will have a joy and pleasure that is out of this world!"

c) When he says, "Be faithful to your spouse," he isn't holding you back from other pleasures but inviting you to experience true, deep relationship that is designed to model the gospel

3. Everytime Jesus invites us to sacrifice, it is not out of law to earn something, it is to empty your hands so that he can fill them with something more precious by his Spirit

4. If you feel burdened by the commands of Christ, then you don't understand this. You are thinking like a pagan.

5. As we obey, he meets us as our servant, empowering us, helping us. This is why the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, is called our helper

a) We aren't his helper. He is ours.

E. And then, yes, as we follow him, we become like him - participating in the things that he participated in (his cup, his suffering, his joys, his family, his body, his blood)

F. But guess what? As we become like him, he continually serves us all the more

G. Religion says, "Do this and then God will do that," but the command to obey is actually an invitation to be served by Jesus as his Spirit provides us with joy and power.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Jesus came to serve you, but because of our sin we don't want to receive that. We want to earn something from him.

B. The bad news is that you can't. You will never earn favor with God.

- C. The good news is that you don't have to. He invites you to sit down and let him wash your feet. He wants to fill you with his helper, the Holy Spirit
- D. The Son of Man served you by dying on the cross for your sins and he wants to serve you today. Are you willing? Are you willing to be served?

TABLE TALK

1. Do you have a hard time asking for help from other people or accepting help? Why do you think that is?
2. Try to summarize what you feel like I was attempting to communicate today. How is it about Jesus serving us more than about us serving him?
3. What does it look like, then, to become more like Jesus in service of others?
4. What is a tangible way that you can serve someone this Christmas season and tell them about Jesus, the one who served them unto death?