

Living Beyond Myself, pt.1, 7.27.06
Greatest In The Kingdom of God

Introduction – 1. About the series – taking the kingdom of God from within and bringing it to others. Moving the dominion of the King outside the shell of our bodies into the hearts of others. 2. Renetta give overview of mission's week & students share. 3. If we want to be great in the Kingdom...if we want to see the kingdom spread to other nations...then we must be the “servants of all.” 4. Story of Northwood

The Attitude of a Servant – Phil 2.1–11

- Spend majority of the time on attitude, b/c it's the most critical. Your attitude will impact your actions and determine your award from God.
- Background to the text: 2.1–4, esp. vs. 3–4. The great passage tells us about Jesus divinity & humanity our concentration is on the verses 1–4. They describe the attitude of greatness and then verses 5–11 illustrate the perfect example of greatness
- Attitude Checklist (Highlight them)
 - Renetta talking with the kids at the first of the week about having a great, helpful attitude.
 - No selfish ambition or vain conceit– (NLT: Don't be selfish, don't live to make a good impression on others.) The attitude of a servant is not to seek to advance oneself; you attempt to prove your own superiority or expertise; you demonstrate your superiority by accenting the inferiority of another; you glory in your successes; egotism; there were Judaizers who prided themselves on there ostensible show of observing the Law while claiming to be Christians; Greeks who gloried in their wisdom & cultural attainments.
 - Here is one way easy way to check this one...how much time in a conversation do you spend talking about yourself, your accomplishments, degrees, life, children...you turn the conversation back to you...

- You're like a little child that can't stop rattling about yourself...you would think listening to the kid with all his many stories that he's lived 5 lives.
 - You can't let someone get one up on you or you can't be silent about your accomplishments, etc.
 - Jesus is the supreme example of no selfish ambition or vain conceit; he had ample opportunity; the devil tempted, the religious establishment taunted, the crowds tested (Make him the leader); he didn't focus on who he was, but on what he was to do – serve & suffer for mankind
 - The attitude of a servant isn't to show others who you are , but to serve them where they are.
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- Consider others better than yourselves & Look to other's interest – you are selfless; you aren't self-centered; you do take care of yourself, but you aren't infatuated with yourself; You don't have a “Mirror, mirror on the wall...” mentality; you don't have an overstated opinion of yourself; this church like every church then & now needed greater unity (4.2)...often times the reason homes, work environments, and churches don't experience unity is b/c of the crashing of ego's & personal agendas & just flat out selfishness
 - Wake up and say: How can I better serve my wife...what can I do to make her life easier?
 - Make allowances in your day for interruptions and changes
 - Kids instead of thinking of only your needs, ask, “Is there anything I can do to help?” and then do it immediately.
 - Do you want to remove disharmony in your relationships? Consider others better...
 - Do you want to feel good, consider others better than yourself...Students this week, you felt satisfied by

serving others...servanthood doesn't end when the projects done it is our life.

- Illustration:

It had been a trying week at our Love & Action office. At five o'clock on a Friday, I was looking forward to having a quiet dinner with friends. Then the phone rang.

"Jeff! It's Jimmy!" I heard a quivering voice say. Jimmy, who suffered from several AIDS-related illnesses, was one of our regular clients. "I'm really sick, Jeff. I've got a fever. Please help me."

I was angry. After a 60-hour workweek, I didn't want to hear about Jimmy. But I promised to be right over. Still, during the drive, I complained to God about the inconvenience.

The moment I walked in the door, I could smell the vomit. Jimmy was on the sofa, shivering and in distress. I wiped his forehead, then got a bucket of soapy water to clean up the mess. I managed to maintain a facade of concern, even though I was raging inside.

Jimmy's friend, Russ, who also had AIDS, came down the stairs. The odor made Russ sick, too.

As I cleaned the carpet around Russ's chair, I was ready to explode inside. Then Russ startled me. "I understand! I understand!"

"What, Russ?" Jimmy asked weakly.

"I understand who Jesus is," Russ said through tears. "He's like Jeff!" Weeping, I hugged Russ and prayed with him. That night Russ trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior—a God who had used me to show his love in spite of myself.

Jeffrey Collins, "It Happened on a Friday," Christian Reader (March/April 1998), Vol. 36, no. 2

- - Jesus lived this out...he could have had others serve him; he could force his way to the platform, but rather he looked to our interest & he addressed the greatest need we all have – forgiveness of sins, redemption from death, deliverance from the devil.
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 - Humility – in the minds of Paul's readers the belief was that if you were a free man you showed contempt to anyone else who wasn't...the poor, women, children & servants were not considered your equal and were meant to serve. Paul is now

asking them to do the opposite. Humility is lowliness of mind, it isn't suggesting mental or intellectual weakness, but that you lower the elevation of your ability, experience, position, pedigree and serve anyone.

- Story of the first black English parliamentarian. He was asked by another representative to go fetch him some tea & hang his coat. He did w/o saying a word
- A reason some of you are disgruntled with life, family or work...you want people to serve you and when they don't it gets all over you.
 - Marriage isn't fulfilling...humble yourself and serve the other one
 - The reason some of our relationships are so dissatisfying is b/c of the collision of pride...like to bucks with locked horns and your both starving

- Grade yourself: Pass/Fail.
- Phil.2.5-11: Jesus' attitude wasn't one of pride or pretense, but of humility and selflessness.

The Actions of a Servant – John 13.1-17

- 13.3-5: *This is critical. Jesus knew his position, yet this didn't deter him from performing a menial task for his disciples. The task was lowly and only done by a servant. No one was running to do this job; the job was identified with inferiority.
 - The more mature we are the easier it is to serve others. It's easier for a senior in high school to go assist a class of first graders than for a second grader to assist a first grader. The first & second grader have more in common, but the second grader can't resist the temptation of proving himself, showing himself superior, demonstrating why his presence is so necessary. The senior doesn't have to prove himself & is able to put up with the childishness of the 1st grader, the

“look at me” showmanship and show genuine love and provide deeper assistance.

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- 13.12–17: This is more than a call to footwashing. Jesus is illustrating in a succinct way all that he did on earth and what he was about to do on the cross...“I am Lord, but I came to serve. I washed your feet, now follow in my footsteps.”
- TS – As you consider this story here are
- Here’s my point: **You don’t graduate from servanthood.**
Servanthood is our life. A servant serves all the time. This isn’t just a phase you go through, but a life you live.
 - How many times have you said when you saw an opportunity before to serve, “I don’t do that anymore” “I’ve done my fair share, I’ll let someone else do that.” “I’ll pass...I don’t want to do that...that will keep me away from people I enjoy being with...I’m too busy...I don’t want to be strapped down...”
 - Students when you see a need before you, don’t say, “Well, this isn’t Missions Week so I’m going pass”, but rather see this as an opportunity for action. Servanthood is 24/7.
- **Servants act whenever there is a need they can respond to.** The disciples needed their feet washed...so Jesus did it. Can you imagine the interchange? “Who’s going to wash our feet? I don’t want to sit next to Nathaniel, His feet stink...I’m not going to do it.” Then Jesus, “guys don’t worry I’ll get it.”
 - 1000’s came to Jesus for encouragement, healing or a miracle. He served them regardless if they would have followed him or not
- **Servants respond to the most menial/lowest tasks.**
 - Washing feet was the most base forms of service. No one was looking to do this job...nobody had volunteered to do it...but it was a need...
 - Renetta gets the call from LJ City Hall...we need some houses cleaned to put the dislocated citizens in...you show up and there are maggots in the refrigerator, unmentionable refuge

throughout, disgusting odors, and putrid filth...How did you respond? I don't do maggots...no, you did maggots.

- You say, "I want to be used by God". What are the needs around you...the menial tasks that no one else is responding to...in home, community, church or work? Do those. Often, we have needs listed in our bulletin, why don't you seriously consider engaging in one of those opportunities
 - A servant sees the need...it may be a menial task...and she responds.
 - What is it that is in us that doesn't want to respond? Don't wait for it to leave...to feel the anointing...until you have a good attitude...just do it.
 - This week look around for opportunities to serve the needs of others through giving of your time, attention, money, abilities & prayers.
 - *Important: Don't let not being an expert or having a lot of experience keep you from serving...so what if you can't do it like so & so, it's what God has put before you...learn as you serve. Like the teacher teaching science, "Just be one day ahead."
 - Visiting with Curry Juneau – less than a week after he was saved he was teaching a class of young people.
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The Award of a Servant – Matthew 20.20–28

- A great story of how life operates in sin infected humanity...politicking...back room negotiations...and positioning
 - Today, you become great in the world, by pushing and posturing and trying to draw attention to yourself & successes. We want to be first...recognized...get the award...picture in the paper...the position.
 - You become great in God's kingdom by kneeling and scrubbing and redirecting the spotlight to God.

- Jesus says, “The way things work in my Father’s kingdom is the very opposite of how they work in this world. You get to be first by being last.”
- Greatness is not obtained by commanding others to do things for you, but rather in doing things for others.
- Mother Theresa and meeting the needs of the poorest and worst outcasts...she wasn’t looking to be the greatest...she was looking to serve and God made her one of his greatest...as the title of a book says, “you descend into greatness.”
- Who wants to be greatest in the kingdom of God? (Have them stand) Serve the needs of others. **The award of serving others is greatness in the sight of God.**

For many years, I have attended midweek Eucharists at St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico. One thing I love is the hand-lettered sign that hangs over the only door into the sanctuary: SERVANT'S ENTRANCE. There isn't any way in or out of that church except through the service door.

Deborah Smith Douglas in The Other Side (May-June 1991). Christianity Today, Vol. 35, no. 10.