

Served by Greatness, Serve to Be Great

Matthew 20:20-28

INTRODUCTION

1. What good mother does not desire the best for her children?
 - a. The mother of James and John was no different
 - b. She desired great things for her two sons - **Matthew 20:20-21**
2. Yet she was not aware of the significance of what she was asking Jesus...
 - a. Serving in His kingdom would require great sacrifice and suffering - **Matthew 20:22-23**
 - b. Her request could only be granted by the Father - **Matthew 20:23**
3. This request in behalf of James and John displeased the other apostles – **Matthew 20:24**
 - a. Upon which Jesus used this opportunity to teach an important lesson - **Matthew 20:25-28**
 - b. I.e., to be great in the kingdom one must serve, even as the Son of Man came to serve

[This is a lesson every Christian needs to remember, yet it goes against what the world would have us believe. To encourage us in being willing to serve, perhaps it would help to recall that we have been...]

I. WE HAVE BEEN SERVED BY GREATNESS

A. SERVED BY JESUS...

1. He came to serve, not to be served - **Matthew 20:28**
2. He served by giving His life a ransom, dying on the cross for our sins
3. He serves even now, as our High Priest who intercedes for us - **Hebrews 7:24-25** (*“but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”*)

B. SERVED BY THE PROPHETS...

1. The prophets spent their lives in service for our benefit - **1 Peter 1:10-12**
2. Thus we have been served by men like Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and many other “heroes of faith”!

C. SERVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT...

1. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets - **1 Peter 1:11**
2. He also inspired the apostles to reveal the gospel - **1 Peter 1:12**; **John 16:13** (*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come”*)

D. SERVED BY THE APOSTLES...

1. They are the ones who preached the gospel to us - **1 Peter 1:12**
2. Through them, we have come to believe in Jesus - cf. **John 17:20** (*“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word”*)
3. Thus we have been served by men like Peter, James, John, and Paul, who suffered greatly in their ministry to us! - cf. **1 Corinthians 4:9-13**; **2 Corinthians 11:24-29**

E. SERVED BY ANGELS...

1. They had a keen interest in the things being revealed - **1 Peter 1:12**
2. For they had a part in the process of revelation - cf. **Daniel 8, 9**; **Luke 1:11-19, 26-38**
3. Thus they too have ministered to us - cf. **Hebrews 1:13-14**

F. SERVED BY OTHER CHRISTIANS...

1. Someone taught us the gospel, others continue to teach us and our children
2. Some made it possible for us to assemble, and each week clean up what we leave behind
3. In times of sickness, many have prayed and rendered various forms of service

[With so many rendering so much service, it is easy to feel pampered. Indeed, we have been “**served by greatness**”! Do we take it for granted? I hope not. We can show our appreciation by emulating those who served us. So let me just offer a few ways that we can...]

II. LET US SERVE TO BE GREAT

A. SERVE IN UNIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST...

1. Unity among the family of Christ is a treasure to be sought after – **Psalm 133**
2. If it were not so...
 - i. Christ would not have prayed for it among his followers (c.f. **John 17:23**)
 - ii. Paul would not have preached about it (**Ephesians 4:11-13**)
3. But since unity is obviously important among the brethren, then we should do all things within our power to maintain that unity
 - i. Serving one another in love
 - ii. Constantly searching the Scriptures to ensure we are all obeying God’s word
 - iii. At times, acquiescing to our brethren rather than having a prideful and arrogant heart

B. SERVE IN EDIFYING THE BODY...

1. Many have contributed to your spiritual growth, can you help others? - cf. **Ephesians 4:16**
2. Begin by being present at every service, greeting every one present
3. Take a special interest in those who are new, encourage them
4. Offer to help teach our children, even if it only means to assist another teacher
5. Volunteer whatever service you can render in the work and worship of the church

C. SERVE IN GLORIFYING GOD...

1. When our brothers and sisters look around at us, they should see someone who is glad to be here worshipping God (**Psalm 122:1** – “*I was **glad** when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD”*”)
2. We may not realize how our attitude toward worship can influence someone else
 - i. As others see us singing, if we do it with a smile on our face and a genuine joy in our heart, that can rub off on others (the opposite can also be true)
 - ii. Those of us who lead in services, if we approach it with a lack-luster attitude or are unprepared, we can influence the worship of the entire congregation!
3. Let’s all serve one another in glorifying God by worshipping with all our heart!
4. By being here – both physically and mentally!

D. SERVE IN SUPPLYING NEEDS...

1. Has anyone ever showed you kindness? “Be kind to one another” - cf. **Ephesians 4:32**
2. Visit the sick or elderly in hospitals, and at home
3. Render service such as cleaning, transportation, errands, etc.
4. Minister to the poor, hungry, or those otherwise in need

E. SERVE IN MULTIPLYING THE FAMILY OF GOD...

1. Someone led you to Christ, can you not lead another to Him? - cf. **John 1:35-42**
2. Begin by being hospitable, offering acts of kindness and service
3. At the very least, invite to services, offer a Bible correspondence course
4. Hone your skills in personal evangelism, seek to improve your ability to share the gospel

CONCLUSION

1. The important thing is that we be people of service...
 - a. People who serve others, not just benefiting from the efforts of others
 - b. People who are producers, not just consumers
2. Serving others is not just the path to greatness in the kingdom, it is also the path to happiness in life:

“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Acts 20:35)

Shall we not follow both the example and teaching of the Son of Man, and live to serve others...?