Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Assembly

Climbing The Kingdom's Ladder

Introduction:

Allow me to begin with a question to our young people. What do you dream of becoming when you grow up? Now, allow me to ask a question of the grown-ups. When you were children, what did you dream of becoming when you grew up? Most of us dreamed of becoming menial servants, governed by the whims of other people, not pursuing our own goals but submitting to the desire of others. No? Is that not what we dreamed about? It is more likely we envisioned growing up and climbing the ladder of success. We were going to become wealthy, powerful and famous. We were going to be important and others were going to serve our goals and submit to our whims. That is what following the American dream is all about, isn't it? Get rich and let others submit to us? But we are not only Americans, we are Christians. While our national citizenship is in the USA, our spiritual citizenship is in heaven (**Philippians 3:20**). As such, what we value is different and our picture of success is different. In Christ's kingdom, the picture of success is not about wealth, fame and power. Rather, it is about service (**Luke 22:24-30**). When we dream of climbing the ladder of success in Christ's kingdom, we need to dream of being a servant. But how does a servant live? Examine some passages that describe our service and learn to climb the Kingdom's ladder of success.

Discussion:

I. Our service to Christ is administered by serving others.
   A. Serving Jesus means serving His people. **Matthew 25:31-46** presents a parable of judgment. Some served Jesus and some did not. The interesting thing in this parable is that neither group had been aware of when they had served Jesus or refrained from it. Jesus claimed "as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (ESV). Our service to Christ is administered through our service to others.
   B. We must not be deceived. If we do not serve other Christians, we are not serving Christ. We may have all the correct doctrinal answers. We may worship by the prescribed pattern without fail. But we must be servants of the brethren if we desire to be a servant of Jesus. Therefore, as we examine the remaining principles in this lesson, we must not merely think about some vague service to Jesus in heaven, but of practical service to our brethren right now.

II. No longer seek personal reputation.
   A. One of the greatest points on being a servant can be found in Paul's description of Jesus in **Philippians 2:7**. Jesus took the form of a bond-servant. Notice that meant He became of no reputation. A servant does not seek his own personal reputation. Too often we do not spend time serving, because it does not help our image. It does not help our reputation. We must not be self-seeking. Rather, we should be seeking the reputation and honor of others.
   B. In **I Timothy 6:1**, Paul told Timothy to instruct bond-servants to count their masters worthy of honor. If we are going to serve one another, that is exactly what we are going to do. We will not spend our time trying to have the honor brought to us. We are the servants. We do not get honor. Rather, we work so our masters can be honored. Being a servant means not pursuing my own personal reputation and honor but seeking yours. That doesn't mean we won't have a reputation. We may. It simply means we aren't pursuing our own reputation.

III. Be submissive and obedient.
   A. Probably the most difficult aspect of being a servant, the one against which we are most likely to rebel, is demonstrated in **I Peter 2:18**. Servants are supposed to obediently submit to their masters. **Titus 2:9** also demonstrates this, taking it a step further saying a servant is to be well-pleasing to his master. Our duty as servants is to submit to, obey and please others. In **Matthew 8:9**, the centurion whose servant Jesus healed demonstrates what this means when he describes having authority. He pointed out that being in authority meant telling a servant what to do and the servant does it.
   B. Naturally, we do not like this concept. We, being products of our American culture, do not like to be told what to do. We do not like the concept of having 140 masters to whom we must submit ourselves. Keep in mind, however, if every Christian is acting this way, not lording authority, this

really does not present a problem. Each of us, as servants, will be looking for ways to please and help others. Instead of viewing this as an issue of being bound to do what we are told, we should view it as a desire to be a blessing in other people's lives. As the servant who proclaims, "Your wish is my command," we should keep our eyes and ears open for when others have needs. Then we should view ourselves as the ones who can provide that blessing. Consider Jesus' example. He did not do what we told Him to when He served us. He saw our need and provided the solution.

C. Too often we look at others from a standpoint of what we can get out of them. What can they do for us? What can they provide us? In every relationship, we need to be the servants. Look at the people around you and ask, "What can I do to serve them? How can I be a blessing in their lives? What can I do to add to their lives?" If you want to climb the ladder of success in Christ's kingdom you need to submit to others, pleasing them and not yourself.

IV. Be faithful and loyal to your "masters" even when they are gone.

A. In **Matthew 24:45-51**, Jesus provides another parable of judgment and once again He pictures good and bad servants. The difference between the two in this parable is that the good servant was faithful to his master even when the master was gone.

B. In **Titus 2:9-10**, Paul instructs the servants to be pleasing and not to pilfer. That is, servants are not to take advantage of their masters when they are not looking. If we are going to be servants, we need to have the servant mentality at all times, with all people, whether they are present or not. We must not be like Eddie Haskel of ***Leave It To Beaver***. Remember how he would try to impress Wally's parents in their presence and then be completely disrespectful behind their backs? For him, service was a manipulative game. Serving should never be a means of manipulation for us. Rather, it should be a way of life.

C. We should show all good fidelity to our brethren to their faces and behind their backs. This means defending them and speaking up for them when others speak against them. This means going to them if you see them do something wrong, not going to others. This means serving them simply to be a servant without hidden agendas and underlying motivations. If you want to climb the ladder of success in Christ's kingdom, you need to be a loyal servant to your brethren at all times.

V. Keep on serving, even without thanks.

A. In **Luke 17:7-10**, Jesus presents a parable regarding forgiveness and uses a servant as an illustration. The servant worked in the fields all day without a word of thanks. When he came in, he was simply expected to keep on serving. When he was done serving the meal, he still wasn't given any thanks. While I must certainly preach that you need to be thankful and express that thanks to others when they are kind to you, as servants we must serve whether anyone ever recognizes our service or not.

B. We must keep in mind we are not doing God's will to be noticed by men anyway. That was the problem that the Pharisees had according to **Matthew 6:1**. Our duty is to serve without even trying to be noticed by men. If men notice us, the goal is not to praise us, but to glorify God (**Matthew 5:16**). If you want to climb the ladder of success in Christ's kingdom, then you need to be a loyal servant to your brethren at all times, whether or not any of them are ever thankful. Your reward will come from your Father in heaven.

Conclusion:

Where are you on the kingdom's ladder of success? Do not think that where you are on America's ladder of success will have anything to do with your success in Christ's kingdom. If you want to be a success in Christ's kingdom, then climb the ladder of service. What kind of servant are you?