

“SERVED BY THE KING”
Imagine Meeting Christ Series #13
Luke 17:7-10, 22:24-27, John 13:1-17
July 3 & 4, 2021

Over the last few months, I’ve invited you to growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ. In our series, *Imagine Meeting Christ*, we’ve looked at Jesus’ desire to grow close to you, to get your attention so that you will look at Him, and recognize His presence, and help you begin to **want** to get to know Him better. Jesus gave you the initial invitation to come to Him, but then what? The next step is up to you. You can either disregard all of the information that I’m giving to you, or you can take that first step toward Jesus to begin the process. And once you give yourself over to getting to know Jesus, your relationship begins to deepen beyond the acquaintance level into becoming His friend.

But we’ve seen that Jesus desires that we grow deeper in our relationship with Him, more than mere friendship, to become His servants, even to the point of allowing Him to painfully expose those areas in our lives that need correction and retraining. He invites us to go deeper with Him to become the people that God wants us to be. Jesus calls us to follow Him, to model our own lives after His example so that all people around us might recognize us as one of His followers as we begin to change, become His disciples, and start living with power and authority given to us by the Holy Spirit.

And as we learn how to grow deeper with Jesus, we begin to see how Jesus lived not only to fulfill the will of His Father, but to live for us, enduring temptation that we will face so that we might see the best way to live in the midst of that temptation, when we are faced by it, in order to stay out of sin and become pure and blameless.

All along this journey these last few months, we’ve had the chance to grow deeper in our dependence on Jesus; yet He doesn’t push us, or badger us to follow Him. Jesus invites us to draw close, He shows us the benefits of following Him, and then He gently extends His hand out to us so that we might reach out and take His hand, so that He might lead us to do His Father’s will as brothers and sisters through Him. He wants to be an active part of our lives, but He relies upon us making the effort to trust Him to lead us where He wants us to go. Only then can we be effective in our world for Him.

Today, we're going to look at the need for us to begin to put that relationship with Jesus into action. Yet, how does that happen? How can we begin to touch the lives of those around us in very significant ways so as to demonstrate the great love of Jesus for all of us? It's one thing to hear Jesus call us to follow Him, but it is quite another thing to actually do as He did. Jesus calls us to be His servants, no matter who we are, no matter what position we hold, and no matter where we are. And we see that in our first Gospel lessons today.

In Luke 17:7-10, we hear Jesus tell us to be ready to do our part to serve the Master, in season and out of season, willingly, even without gratitude or thanks extended to us. Even though we may have already worked very hard, when the Master calls us to serve, we are to be willing to make it happen. And Jesus tells us that it is enough for us to be servants of the Master, following His call and doing all that He calls for us to do. We should not expect any fancy frills or luxurious kickbacks. Jesus says that it is not the servant's place to sit at table after a long day's work and be served by the Master. No, servants follow their Master's command and they are the ones to serve the Master, even if they are tired, even if they are old, even if it seems unfair. As servants to the Master, **we are to be ready to serve Him at all times**, knowing that we are His and He is ours, and He will watch out for us.

But as is common in our world today, many begin to think of themselves as being better than another, because of their position in leadership, or because of their economic situation, or because of their gender, or because of their race. We sometimes **WANT** to take the place of the Master and expect to be served, when in reality, we are all servants of the Master, equal in His sight no matter what the differences are between us. We forget that each one of us has been called by Him to serve, even if we are in positions of leadership or power here in our world.

This same struggle happened among the 12 disciples of Jesus, as we heard in Luke 22:24-27. They had spent 3 ½ years with Jesus, but they still had egos the size of the Empire State Building. They somehow thought that since they were hanging out with Jesus that they were more important than the rest of the people. Even among the 12 there were divisions within them that created three separate

groups at various levels of closeness to Jesus. Some of the 12 were more of the leaders than the others were, and some of them were more of the servants. Yet they were still the 12 that Jesus had called close to Him to be His servants. They were to use their differences to bring about the full implementation of Jesus' ministry, not to make themselves look bigger and better than the rest.

So imagine Jesus' frustration when they started bickering among themselves as to which one of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24). He had called them to follow Him, but they seem to have agendas all their own. They were looking at what their positions would be when Jesus became the King of Israel. They seem to have forgotten that even generals take orders from the king. They had forgotten that their role was not to be the greatest among the 12, but to be the servants of the Master. So Jesus tried to correct their misunderstanding of how things are in God's kingdom. He tells them (and us), *"The kings of the pagans have power over their people, and the rulers claim the title 'Friend of the People.' But this is not the way it is with you..."* (Luke 22:24).

We see it in all governments, where the one at the top (the president, king, queen, emperor, etc.) begins to see them self as something MORE THAN the common people. They expect special treatment, and they begin to rule according to their perception of how great they think they are. Some even proclaim themselves to be the "Almighty," taking it upon themselves to change all the laws and commandments in order to fit with their concept of how everything should revolve around them. Empire after empire has fallen apart devastatingly when the leader of the people went beyond their true leadership position to lord it over the rest of the people. And it continues even today.

However, Jesus confronts this attitude with the great statement, *"But this is not the way it is with you; rather, the greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant"* (Luke 22:26). You see, we are still servants to the Master, even if we are a lay speaker, a chair of a committee, the representative to general conference, a pastor, a district superintendent, a bishop, or anyone else in leadership positions. The position does not give you the right to subject others to criticism and disrespect, but rather to serve them! Jesus tell ALL OF US that we are to be the servants

TO HIM by serving others. The one who is the greatest SHOULD be the one doing the serving! The leaders have been raised to a position of servant, to serve the people, not lord over them.

But this is such a difficult concept for us to learn. As much as I like to serve others, I still struggle at times of wanting to be served. There are times when I get so tired of putting myself out there helping others that I just want to take my seat at the table and have my time being served! Yet, I am continually chastised by these words of Jesus, “*the leader MUST BE like the servant!*” I am constantly reminded that it is not my place to sit at the table and have the Master serve me, but rather I am to be the servant of the Master ANYWHERE, ANY TIME, NO MATTER WHAT! And that’s tough! I have to keep reminding myself of who I am, and WHOSE I am. My crown of glory will not be given to me here in this life. I will receive my crown of glory when I stand before the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and hear MY Master tell me then, “*well done thou good and faithful servant*” (Matthew 25:21).

This last week I was serving the Lord by serving others, and I actually had the person I was serving tell me that I didn’t have to do what I was doing. She was surprised at my service, and almost told me to stop because it wasn’t right that I was serving her. But I explained to her how God had put her family on my heart and had told me to serve their family in that particular way, so yes, I had to do it. Who was I to argue against my Master? The job needed to be done, I had the means and the time to do it, so why not serve their family? I was just following the command of my Master, Jesus.

And we see a similar response to service in the Gospel lesson of John 13:1-17. Listen to how Jesus demonstrated God’s desire for us to serve and how it was received. (READ John 13:1-17)

Now, I have to tell you that I think this is one of the most astounding passages in the Bible. Jesus, the Son of God, “the one whom the Bible calls Head and High Priest, Potentate and Prince, Captain and Commander, King of Israel and King of kings, Master and Mighty God, Refiner and Rock, Governor and Glory, Lion of Judah and Lord of lords, Jehovah and Judge...” took it upon Himself to be the servant who “lends a helping hand, ministers, waits on hand and foot, offers refreshments, is at someone’s beck and call, waits on a table, satisfies another’s desire, bows down, and accommodates”

His 12 disciples there in that upper room. “What He did had neither precedent nor comparison. It’s neither comprehensible as to cost nor fathomable as to implication. It can only be looked upon in wonder: **The Son of God served.**”¹

Now some would say, “The Son of God had no reason to be the servant in that room!” On the contrary, the Son of God, Jesus, HAD EVERY REASON to be the servant in that room! There, before the very ones that He was entrusting the whole of His ministry to, Jesus demonstrated the necessity of being 100% different than the rest of the people of the world if they were to be the servants of God. The Lord of All stepped down from His place at His Father’s side, to come here to the earth to show us the best way to follow God. That’s not being in positions of power ordering people around, submitting others to their perceived authority, but rather getting down and dirty, doing the menial and the mundane, even so low as to washing the day’s dirt and grime off of His friends’ feet.

You see, Jesus “*knew that the hour had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were His own, and He loved them to the very end*” (Jn. 13:1). Jesus took the opportunity to demonstrate what real servanthood looked like. The One who deserved to be served became the servant. The One who deserved to have His feet washed became the very one who washed the others’ feet. The One who should have been able to rest and relax, was right there doing the essential work that no one else in the room even considered doing. While they are bickering about which one of them was the greatest of the 12 chosen men of Jesus, none of them bothered to step down to become the servant who would do such a humble job as to clean the feet of the others. They were all focused on their greatness in their pride of being with Jesus, but Jesus exposed the greatness of being the servant.

Those 12 men were served by the Master, and it flipped them up-side-down. Peter goes so far as to proclaim, “*Are YOU going to wash MY FEET, Lord?*” (13:6). “*Never at any time will YOU wash MY feet!*” (13:8). It was unheard of for the Master to stoop so low as to become the servant! It just didn’t

¹ (Robert Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1998] pg. 157-158)

happen that way, and Peter reflected that mindset to Jesus. He felt instant shame at the sight of Jesus doing the job that should have been done by one of the servants of the house, or of one of the other disciples, or of himself. BUT JESUS SHOULD NOT BE WASHING FEET!

Yet Jesus was just living out His words spoken earlier to the disciples, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45 NASB). It flipped everything up-side-down. It’s not the greatest who are to be served, but the ones who are to be in service to others.

Jesus tells Peter, “*If I do not wash your feet, you will no longer be my disciple*” (Jn. 13:8). WHAT? You see, to be served by the Master, to have their feet washed, exposed all the pride, all the arrogance, all the pomposity within the disciples, and Jesus tells them straight out, “that’s not appropriate in the kingdom of Heaven. Pride has no place in My Father’s house.”

Folks, that’s how Satan was thrown out of heaven, because his pride got him to believing that he was as good, if not better than God. And he had convinced one third of all of the angels that he was right, that he was better than God! Pride has no place in God’s kingdom, so Jesus tells all of His disciples, “If I don’t wash you clean of pride, arrogance, superiority, haughtiness, conceit, and egotism, there is no place for you with Me! You must empty yourself of all self-importance and submit to being the servant!” Plain and simple, we have to be the servant, and the greater we think we are, the more we need to start thinking less of ourselves and become the servants of everyone!

You see, Jesus already knew who was going to betray Him. He knew that “*the Devil had already put into the heart of Judas...the thought of betraying*” Him (John 13:2). He knew that He was going to face the anger and hatred of the Pharisees and Sadducees. He knew that He had to go to the cross and die for the sins of the world. He had already told the disciples three times that it would happen. Yet, Jesus didn’t use all the power that the Father had given to Him (13:3) to protect Himself or make Himself the King by force. Jesus had come to the world to serve US, to touch our lives with forgiveness and grace, to create the path to heaven where we might have eternal life with Him, to wipe

away every stain of sin from our lives so that we could become pure and holy like Him and enable everyone in the world to find all of those things in their life, too.

Jesus already had all authority and all power and all majesty as the Son of God. He didn't come to the earth to lord it over us, to make us subservient to Him, but rather to invite us into His likeness in order to touch the hearts and lives of those who haven't yet found release from their pride and arrogance and superciliousness. God loves them, too, but unless we follow Jesus' example and become the servants of all, how will they see the need for repentance and reconciliation?

Do you see the importance in this passage of Scripture? Jesus asks, "*Do you understand what I have just done to you? ... You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you*" (Jn. 13:12-15).

So let me ask you a few very important questions today. "Is there anyone, anywhere, who you would not desire to serve?" "Are there people whom you deem 'LESS THAN' everybody else?" Are there folks that you say, 'there's no way I'm going to serve them?'" "Are there people that have hurt you, or betrayed you, or treated you wrongly, or persecuted you, or even wanted you dead? How are they going to hear about the love of Jesus for them?" "Are you so ticked off at them that you wish them the worst that God can give to them?"

Jesus says, "HEY, you're My servant. Those people are the reason that I came to earth. They are the ones that I died for. They are the ones that I wish to wash their feet and cleanse them from all unrighteousness. I'm not there anymore, but they are the ones that I have sent YOU to SERVE so that they can find Me, and gain eternal life with Me. You have found Me, have experience My great love, and have found My forgiveness and grace. When are you going to share it with those around you?"

Folks, being followers of Jesus is not a social club that you get to be a part of to the exclusion of others. Being a follower of Jesus does not make you any better than anyone else! Being a follower of Jesus does not give you the right to treat others with contempt, or demean them, or subject them to "less-

than” status. Being a follower of Jesus does not give you the right to sit down and expect others to serve you. NO!

Being a follower of Jesus lifts you up to the status of servant of all and empowers you to follow Jesus’ example of self-sacrifice in order to so demonstrate the love of God in this world through Jesus that those who see you want what you have, and you lead them to the feet of Jesus where they can find salvation, where they can become clean of all their sin, and where they, too, can receive their own marching orders to go into all the world to tell the Good News to all the people.

We have been served by the King, not for recognition of how great we are, but to give us the example of how He wants us to live in our own world so that those who are the least and the lost might find hope; so that the lonely and the forgotten might find a friend who brings healing; so that the abused and the trafficked might find sanctuary; so that the overworked and the overpaid might find new life; so that the abuser and the pusher might find peace within themselves; so that the hated and the despised might find acceptance and kindness; so that the rebellious and uninformed might find redemption.

WE ARE THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST JESUS! We have experienced His service, and are now called to “Go and do likewise.” When will we begin? When will we become the servants of the world, to transform the world into the righteousness of God?

Let’s pray. O God, our Father, You have given Jesus to us to set us the example of who You are for us. Jesus, Your One and Only Begotten Son, came as the servant of all. He humbled Himself for us, so that we could claim our place at His side as fellow servants to all the world. But we can’t do that by trying to make ourselves look better than another, or trying to prove ourselves to be the greatest. We touch the lives of others as we bend down to serve them with the same love that Jesus has for us. Teach us to serve You! Guide us to opportunities to bless others through our service to them. Give us the hearts to outdo one another in love and good deeds so that the whole world, beginning here in Sheboygan, can see You through us. Give us the heart of service, for this we pray in the name of our Great Lord and Master Servant, Jesus Christ. AMEN.