

PLAIN SPEECH

Volume 3 – Issue 12 – 3 January 2010

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

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FIVE LESSONS RELATIVE TO TRUE SERVANTHOOD

When most people think about greatness the imagery that comes to mind is within a purely carnal context. Jesus, however, feels differently. He has clearly spelled out what true greatness is, and it has nothing to do with fame, money, or clout.

Jesus said that to be great one must be a SERVANT; i.e. one who attends to the needs of another (**Mt. 23:11**; **cf. 20:26-27**). Now listen, Jesus practiced what He preached (**Ax. 1:1**; **Mt. 20:28**). In this article, I wish to draw “back the curtain” on that oft-mentioned upper room (**Mk. 14:15**) where God in the flesh (**1 Tim. 3:16**) took up a towel of service. In so doing, I will underscore five lessons relative to true servant-hood. The alluded to text reads as follows:

*“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (**Jn. 13:1-17**).*

LESSON #1

True servants; i.e. those who follow Christ’s example, serve others regardless of their own personal circumstances. Jesus knew the cross was drawing very near (**13:1**). Humiliation and death were right around the corner, and still He took up the towel and served others. Jesus did not allow hardship to stop Him from serving others as He had opportunity. Neither can we (**Gal. 6:10**). Real servants do not let opportunities to serve go by as they utter phrases like, “I’m too tired” or “I’m too busy.”

LESSON #2

True servants serve others regardless of their own status or position. Jesus was/is divine (**13:3**). Jesus was/is Lord and Master (**13:13-14**). Yet, Jesus took a towel, girded himself, and engaged in the menial task of tending to dirty feet. It ought to have been anyone else in the room doing this. Not Jesus! Not deity! Yet, deity it was. Now folks, if God took up a towel and engaged in such an act of service, I’d really like to know who people think they are when they feel they’re above getting their hands dirty.

LESSON #3

True servants get busy serving before someone asks them to do so (**13:4-5**). Nobody had to ask Jesus to grab the towel. Quite the contrary, Jesus, seeing a need, simply met the need. I wonder what opportunities slip by for those who call themselves Christians because they are too concerned with whose “job” it is. Note: No, I am not suggesting we transgress God’s order of headship. What I am saying is that many people need to lose the “I’ll wait and see if someone else will do it” attitude.

LESSON #4

True servants serve even their enemies (**13:12**). All the disciples in the room were served. This included Judas (**13:21-30**). Thus, Jesus washed the feet of the one whom He knew would betray Him (**13:11**). Listen, individual Christians need to serve others (spiritually or physically) as we have opportunity (i.e. as scripture allows) in an impartial manner (**cf. Mt. 5:43-44**).

LESSON #5

True servants train others to serve as well (**13:15-17**). Jesus, through His object lesson, was readying those disciples with a servant mentality. My generation, and the one before mine, has been guilty of training up few real Christians, and as a result there are few true servants. Listen, there is no “servant tree” out there from which we can pick true servants when we are ready. How blind we have been.