



Bible study: Service, the path to greatness

Objective

In this bible study, we will seek to understand how our calling to serve is also our calling to greatness.

Introduction

In Ephesians 4:11-12, the scripture tells us that God has given the fivefold ministry gifts to the church for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. The simplest way to define that word ministry is service. The word itself is derived from the Greek word for servant.

The authenticity, nature and quality of your service to humanity will be the thing ultimately defines the legacy you leave here on earth. Service is why you are called, and it is how we will be defined!

According to Ephesians 4, God gives us gifts to equip us for service. The nature of God is such that He gives us those gifts to enjoy richly. However, He does not give us gifts just for our own enjoyment, He gives us gifts to equip us to serve.

He prospers us in our health, finances, relationships, minds and spirit with an expectation that we will enjoy the gift of prosperity. But all of these kinds of prosperity, are also given as equipment for service. Your prosperity will follow your service. The anointing on your life will only increase in relation to your service! The blessing will be amplified in relation to your service!

There is so much possibility seen in scripture. There is so much that the scripture says about those who believe in Jesus, what they have been blessed to have access to. There is so much change to be brought to our world through believers. But I strongly believe that we will never experience the fullness of all of these wonderful possibilities outside the calling to serve!

The path to greatness

Matthew 20: 20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.

21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They said to Him, "We are able."

23 So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."

24 And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

- **Prayer is not the path to greatness.**

I believe in prayer. Jesus taught us to pray. Prayer is the life line of a believer. However, prayer in itself is not the path to greatness. If prayer was the path to greatness, the person who spent the most time in prayer would be the greatest of us all. But we all know that this is not true!

The mother of James and John are like many believers, we think that if we pray hard and long enough, we will be great. We think that if our prayer life is more dramatic, then we will become

great. But the reality as seen in this scripture is that through prayer, the path to greatness is revealed. It is only when you get on the path, revealed in prayer that you will be great!

This mother prayed for her sons, and it was revealed to her, her sons and the disciples that the path to greatness is through service. It is right to desire to be great. It is right to pray and ask to be great. However, please understand that service is the path to greatness, not prayer. If you pray and never serve, you will not be as great as God intends for you to be.

- **Your next level is dependent on your service on this level**

The mother of Zebedee, wanted to pray her way to the top, but Jesus is saying, you will have to serve your way to the top!

The disciples on the other hand are upset because they thought that the elevation of other spells their own demotion. They were displeased with the brothers, because it feels like they've just barged in and got their promotion! But Jesus' response is also saying, you don't need to be jealous of another person's promotion. You don't need to feel left out because it seems like someone else has been promoted above you. Celebrate those who have been promoted but give yourself to service! Your day will come! Because Jesus says if you want to be great - you need to become a servant (DIAKONOS). But if you want to be the first among the great people...then you need to become a slave (DOULOUS)!

Servants & Slaves

Generally when we use these words in our culture, they don't really inspire pictures of greatness in you. Culturally, when we think of great people we don't think of servants or slaves, we think of Lords, CEOs, Bosses...people who lord it over others.

However when it comes to the Kingdom of God, greatness is defined by service. In **Acts 13:36**, Paul was talking about the legacy of David who was the greatest king of Israel, and He said about David, that He served His generation by the will of God and then He fell asleep. Because your kingdom legacy will be determined by how you serve and not who you lord it over.

Jesus used two different words to qualify the kind of service He is speaking about. It is important that we understand the difference between these two words because they really show us two paths to two different levels of greatness. Let's explore these paths:

- **Servant**

Matthew 20:26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

Servant. Like a waiter. Someone who runs errands for others. Jesus said if you want to become great. You will need to be a servant.

According to Jesus, greatness will happen through service. The church will not be greater than the quality of her service. Your business will not be greater than the quality of the service your business offers. You will not be great in your career if you do not provide a great service at work. You will not be a great friend if you do not serve your friends in a great way. You will not be greater than the quality of your service.

A servant is someone who is dedicated to the errands they run. Many people are stuck on the same level because they are unwilling to serve. Could it be that it is not a demon that's holding you back, could it be that it is your self-centered ambition which is absent of real service?

Who are you serving? Who are you running errands for? Who are you waiting on? Who are you ministering to?

And by the way, you don't serve to be great. You serve, to serve & bless people. That's what makes you great! You don't serve to be great so that you could stop serving after being great!

He who wants to be great among you must be an errand boy! A servant. We have got to renew our minds about what it takes to be great. Greatness in the kingdom looks more like Jesus washing the feet of the disciples than Jesus seating on a throne.

So the first level of greatness Jesus mentioned in this scripture can be achieved by being a servant.

Slaves

Then in v27, Jesus says that he who wants to be chief amongst you must be a slave! In other words, if you want to be great amongst people who have been made great through service you will need to be a slave.

The word He used here is the Greek word Doulous. It is an adjective signifying a person who is in bondage. A slave does what they do because they are bound to a higher power or a higher cause that compels them to do it.

The difference between a servant and a slave is bondage. At most, servants are bound to doing their jobs right. They are committed to what they do. Slaves on the other hand are not just committed to doing what they do, they are bound to a higher power, a person or a cause. And it's this higher power that compels them to do what they do.

Here's Paul, someone who often describes himself as a slave of Jesus, in **1 Corinthians 9:13** He is speaking to the Corinthians and saying to them that as someone who ministers to them spiritual things, he has a heaven backed right to receive material things from them. But then He said in verse 15 that I have not used any of these rights because I don't preach the gospel for my rights, I preach the gospel because I AM COMPELLED to preach the gospel! He says I have to preach the gospel because there is a higher force that compels me to...He says woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! (**Read 1 Corinthians 9:13-19**)

You know you have found the path to greatness when you no longer do it because of the rights and privileges you get by doing what you do, but you now do it because you feel compelled to do! Servants are dedicated to the work they do because of the benefits they get. Slaves are dedicated to the work they do, because of the person or cause that compels them to do it even if they are not being compensated!

Conclusion

In these last days God is looking for slaves and not just servants. The kingdom of God, the purpose of God is looking for people who are committed to kingdom purposes because they are bound to Jesus Christ! In the world, slaves obtained by force, in the kingdom slaves are obtained by love. You were born to do great things. You were born to be great. What is your level of commitment to the cause of Jesus? Are you a servant or a slave?

Discussion

- From today's bible study, in your own words, what is the difference between a slave and a servant?
- What are some practical ways that you can serve those in your home, your work, your church and community at large
- What kinds of mindsets or thinking hinders us from
- Do you remember a time that serving instead of seeking to be served has ended up being a blessing to you? Share your stories of the power of serving with someone

