

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: December 9, 2012

## The Servant Heart

by Dan Trygg

"... all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son" Romans 8:28,29

"It is enough for the disciple to become *as* his teacher, and the slave *as* his master." Matt. 10:24,25

"You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. 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 10:42-45

According to Rom. 8:28,29, **one of God's major purposes for us** in our walk with Him, both here in this world and ultimately in eternity, **is that He desires to make us like Christ in our character.** The student is to become *as* His teacher, the disciple *as* his master (Matt. 10:24,25a). One of the outstanding features of the incarnation, both in the broad strokes of the big picture and in the day-to-day living out of Jesus' life, was the unselfish servant heart which He demonstrated before our eyes. Jesus' own words from Mk. 10:42-45 present to us not only His own heart, but also the challenge of our conformity to His character in this area of service. He said, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." **Jesus wants to teach us how to serve as He did.**

We have seen in His life among us the ultimate of condescension and humility. He, who, being God, had the greatest privileges of authority, glory, and self-sufficiency, laid aside these rightful comforts and abilities to become a servant on behalf of us, His creatures. He endured the most incredible hardships, suffering, and shame in order to liberate us. Words fail to capture the completeness of His servant heart, His self-giving. The apostle John could only say, "We know love by *this* . . .". This gives love a true meaning, a measure (I Jn. 3:16, cf. I Jn. 4:9,10). Without the demonstration of this incredible self-giving, we could never begin to get a handle on the fullness, completeness, or depth of God's love for us. We see this inexpressible giving and condescension not only in the one-time decision to come in human flesh, but we also see it sustained in His life and sacrificial death as a lasting example to us (Jn. 13:1-17,34; I Pet. 2:21-25; 4:1-19; I Jn. 2:5-10; Jn. 15:12,13; I Jn. 3:16-18). Do we find service to others to be restrictive? Does it involve giving up freedom, comfort, or substance that is inconvenient? Does it cost something in the way of sacrifice, hardship or pain? How our possible complaints sink down in shame as we consider *His* incredible self-giving! How the grumblings of selfishness are cut off in shame by the sacrifices of the multitudes who *have* walked after their Master in the serving and giving of themselves for Him!

The purpose of the example of Jesus, or of those who reflect His heart, is not to shame us or make us feel guilty. Our God delights in *liberating*, not in *oppressing*, . . . in *drawing us* in freedom and love, not in *driving us* with guilt and shame. There is an incredible wonder in these sacrificial lives which draws us, ...a supernatural quality of desire and strength which impresses us. This is the very saltiness of the salt, ...the brilliance of the light..., which is meant to impress the world, as well to stimulate our own hearts (Matt. 5:14-16). Furthermore, the strength of the presence of God which is evident in these lives, and testified to by their lips, is to be the encouragement to us that He will be the faithful support to us in the risks we may undertake, the prices we may consider (whatever they may be), as we contemplate serving God and others. These faithful brothers and sisters are the "cheering section" for us as we run the race (Heb. 12:1), the works which God prepares beforehand for *us* (Eph. 2:10). "You can do it!", they cry. "He is faithful! Trust Him!"

**What characterized Jesus' servant-heart?** We have already alluded to several things, but possibly by looking at them in a little different light, we may be able to relate our own lives and choices to Him and His choices more effectively.

**1.) Willing Condescension.** Basically, the term has two component parts. You can easily recognize the root as being related to "descend". The prefix, "*com*", means "together-with". Thus, the word means to "come down from a higher place in order to commune with another". It can mean to voluntarily set aside the privileges of rank, class, formal convention or dignity in order to relate to someone of a lesser station. He was willing to leave

His position of comfort, privilege, power, and control in order to meet our needs. He willingly set aside these things in order to be able to serve and help us.

**2.) Initiative.** He came to where we are in order to reach us. In His own words, He "came to seek and save that which was lost". He did not require that we come to Him for help; He came to us, when we did not even understand what help we needed. God initiated the contact with us, and made a way of salvation for us.

**3.) Accommodation.** He adjusted Himself to approach us in ways that were understandable and appropriate for us. He put on human flesh, spoke in human speech, using terms and stories people could understand. He was able to make the tax collector and sinner comfortable in His presence, because He adjusted Himself to meet them heart to heart. He did not compromise truth, morality or righteousness, but He removed every obstacle to love.

**4.) Humility.** This has three aspects: humility toward God, humility toward others, and humility toward self. His **Godward humility** is made visible in that **He did not balk at doing what God's will required.** He readily accepted, and devoted Himself to fulfill, the will of God. His agenda was to discover and embrace what He saw that His Father wanted Him to do (Jn. 5:19), no matter where that pathway might lead. Rejection, discomfort, misunderstanding did not deter Him from serving those whom God had appointed for Him to serve. **In regard to people, His humility was revealed by His openness to all, His acceptance of all.** There was no arrogance with Him. From the outcast and poor, or to the seeking Pharisee or rich man, His heart was open to serve any honest inquirer, regardless of human distinctions. **Humility toward self** is seen by the fact that **Jesus knew that, as a man, He was limited.** He was aware of general parameters for His ministry calling, which He respected, unless He saw that God was making an exception (Matt. 15:21-28). In the face of unending demands upon His time, He knew that He could not do it all, so He chose to move on in accordance with the larger vision for ministry which God had placed in His mind. Success and public acclaim did not go to His head. The will of God came before all else. He also recognized His need for time alone to cultivate and maintain intimacy with the Father (Mk. 1:32-39).

**5.) Graciousness and honesty.** The apostle John declared that through the incarnation of the Word part of the glory of God was revealed, namely grace and truth (Jn. 1:14). These words describe the characteristics of Him who dwelt for a while among us. He was gracious, marked by kindness, courtesy and acceptance, as well as honest and sincere in His treatment of others. These also are marks of the servant heart that Jesus modeled for us.

**What are some principles of serving which we can observe from Jesus' life?** There are a number:

**1. Service should be practical.** Jesus addressed the needs of the whole man. He healed men's diseases, and fed them, recognizing their physical needs. He always addressed the spiritual as well, however, using the opportunities which came through His physical ministrations.

**2. Jesus met people where they were in order to serve them.** He sought the lost, and accepted them as they were in order to share good news of hope with them. He ate with the tax collectors and sinners and was, thus, able to help them. The animosity and judgmentalism of the Pharisees, on the other hand, had no positive effect on these "sinners", as they were referred to.

**3. In Jesus' example, service was sometimes mundane and simple.** He washed the disciples' feet and encouraged them to be as willing as He to do the humble servant tasks. He spoke of even offering a cup of fresh water to a disciple as being a significant act of service before God (Matt. 25:31-46).

**4. True service to God was done to honor Him only, not to get praise from men** (Matt. 6:1-18). Humility, even secrecy, was to be employed in service to avoid an impure heart.

**5. Great sacrifice in service often reveals a great faith and is a special honor and delight to God** (Mk. 12:41-43; cf. II Cor. 8:1-5; Phil. 2:5-11).

**6. Self-giving grows out of an awareness of other people's needs above that of your own** (Phil. 2:3-5). Paul said that he preached Christ Jesus as Lord, and himself as a *bond servant of others* for Jesus' sake (II Cor. 4:5).

**7. Jesus was watchful for the service opportunities God brought to Him.** He knew He had a calling and a destiny that caused Him to reach beyond the parameters of His daily life as a carpenter, so He quit that vocation to pursue what God was telling Him to do. Nevertheless, He was always at the ready for whatever God might show Him along the way (Jn. 5:19,20).

We are commanded to love each other and build each other up (Col. 3:12-17, I Jn. 2:7-11; 4:7-5:3). Christ came to set us free from legalism and "dead works" (Heb. 6:1) to serve one another in true love as a fruit of God's Holy Spirit in us (Gal. 5:1, 13-6:10). **The "grace and truth" which is revealed in our lives by walking in the Spirit is the manifestation of Jesus' character** (Jn. 1:14). **This is true Christlikeness.**