

A. Assembling Together

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^B John 13:1-4

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C. The Lord Addresses Their Thoughts and Concerns

1. First: His Illustration Luke 22:25

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^D 1 Peter 5:1-3

^E Acts 10:38, 1 Timothy 5:17

^F Matthew 18:3, Mark 9:35

^G Philippians 2:5-7

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A. Introduction

1. Assembling Together

a. August's theme verse is Hebrews 10:25, *not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.* – a verse is clearly addressed to believers

(A) indeed, there is little incentive for unbelievers to come to church except by compelling invitations like those that the master told his servant to use, *'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.'*

(B) but even believers question, 'Why go to church?'

(1) I can worship God as well on the golf course, at the beach, at the cottage, or wherever

(2) why not stay at home in front of a church service on TV with great music and a dynamic speaker?

(3) after all, so often – as we mentioned last week – at church the service is wearisome; the pastor, boring

b. questions we're trying to answer in this month's messages

(A) what is there in our ministry as a church that should make it compelling for a believer to be here?

(B) when believers assemble, what according to the NT should their expectations be?

c. « Read Luke 22:24-27 »

(A) in the disciples discussion and the Lord's teaching we discover a partial answer to these questions:

(B) in Christ's church we should expect servant leadership

(C) that's not simply people whose service is to be leaders

(D) but rather people who leading by the way they serve

2. let us look at this short history as recorded by Luke

a. what caused the disciples' to engage in this discussion?

b. how did the Lord address their thoughts and concerns? ... His illustration? ... His principle? ... His Example?

c. and let us apply these truths to the church, the body of Christ, of what it should be and how it should act

B. The Disciples' Discussion Luke 22:24

1. 'And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.'
2. this incident took place at the Last Supper
 - a. as the Lord celebrated the Passover with the twelve
 - b. look for a moment at John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. 5 Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.
 - c. if John wrote this history in chronological order – Bible historians did not always do this but I believe John did so here – then early in the supper Jesus washed their feet
 - d. remember the discussion between Peter and the Lord?
 - (A) Peter was unwilling that the Lord should wash his feet
 - (B) the Lord, however told Peter how much it was needed
 - (C) and Peter submitted himself in this matter to Jesus
 - e. then later, the discussion arose as to who would betray him
 - (A) 'Is it I?' 'Is it I?' echoed around the room
 - (B) besides Jesus, and the few disciples which He informed, only the traitor Judas knew who it was; and he left
3. now it was after these things that this dispute arose
 - a. 'which of them was regarded as greatest'?
 - b. this was not the first time they had had such a discussion
 - c. there is another incident recorded back in Luke 9:46 An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. 47 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, 48 and said to them, 'Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.' – but the disciples were slow to learn as we also are

- d. then as Jesus and disciples were headed to Jerusalem for this last Passover, James and John sent their mother as their spokesman to seeking a favour: Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. 21 And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She *said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.' 22 But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to Him, 'We are able.'
 - e. and now again, in this memorial service
 - (A) when Jesus had again announced his coming death
 - (B) emphasising it with the bread and the wine
 - (C) the disciples are engaged in this same question
4. why was this thought so dominant in their minds?
- a. despite living with and learning of the Master for three years, the disciples had taken on the thought processes of the nation and the world in which they lived
 - (A) the Jews thought that when Messiah came, He would be a temporal prince, one leading His army in victory against the forces of Rome and their enemies
 - (B) in this He would be like other princes of this earth
 - (C) He would have his officers of government, ministers of state, treasurer – and which of the disciples would be raised to the highest office?
 - b. there is Jesus: contemplating His death and preparing them for it; and there they are, striving about offices and rank
 - c. how deeply seated in the human heart, in our old nature, is that love of power and pride of ambition! – and how often does this emerge in the church which is the body of the meek and lowly Jesus Christ!
 - d. all too often the world sees the leaders of Christ's church
 - (A) contending for the greatest place
 - (B) pressing that everyone submit to their opinions
 - (C) presiding in their roles with great pomp and splendour
 - e. now listen to how...

C. The Lord Addresses Their Thoughts and Concerns

1. First: His Illustration Luke 22:25
 - a. **And He (Jesus) said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles (or, nations) lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called (or, call themselves) 'Benefactors'"**
 - b. if, says Jesus, you are going to let the world's ideas shape your thoughts and actions, your desires and ambitions
 - c. then let us step back and examine where such ideas lead
 - d. what are the kings of the nations of this world like?
 - e. point one: the world's rulers delight in power
 - (A) they lord it over, exercise dominion or sovereignty over, the nations which they govern
 - (B) look at the extent even today to which political parties in all nations will do those things to keep themselves in power – in the democracies, changing election rules and boundaries in their own favour– in nations with dictators, taking over the army, ruling by force
 - f. but such an attitude is to be far from the leaders of the church of Jesus Christ – Peter later wrote to fellow-elders in the churches, warning of this very thing: 1 Peter 5:1 **Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd (pastor) the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.** – Peter's words to pastors and elders
 - g. point two, the rulers of the nations like high sounding titles
 - (A) in this case, that of 'Benefactor' – literally, 'do-gooder'
 - (1) how lucky for the nation to have them as king!
 - (2) this title was actually taken on by rulers: the first record to do so was Cyrus, then a Grecian king of Egypt, Ptolemy Euergetes; and then currently the emperors of Rome – what a devastating reminder!
 - (3) the title's implication '**you let me rule, and I will do well for you**' it amounted almost to a bribe
 - (4) but Jesus is the only true Benefactor; indeed the same word as a verb is used about Him by Peter in witnessing to Cornelius, Acts 10:38 **You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good (benefacting) and**

healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

(B) it is even so today – the holder of a political office may have the title of ‘the Right Honourable such-and-such’ but be the greatest rascalion walking the earth

(C) and this has certainly entered the church

(1) the title, ‘Reverend,’ taken from the Latin meaning ‘worthy of respect or honour,’ was probably originally given to pastors or elders in obedience to 1 Timothy 5: 17, ‘The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.’

(2) but how far that has gone from that instruction,

(3) depending on the office held, we hear such high flown titles as ‘The Reverend, The Very Reverend, The Most Reverend, and The Right Reverend’

(4) the term ‘pastor’ means ‘shepherd’ and it is being embellished today in much the same fashion: Senior Pastor, Lead Pastor, Chief Pastor

(5) always remember that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Chief Shepherd or Pastor of the sheep.

(6) pastors are but under-shepherds of Jesus Christ.

h. the world picks up on these things; look at how it measures power in even the evangelical church. The 2005 issue of TIME magazine identified in their estimation the 25 most influential evangelicals in America. But for TIME, influence is synonymous with worldly power. Billy Graham, Rick Warren, Chuck Colson were not cited for their impact on peoples’ lives, but on their political impact; not on their service, humility, death to self, but on the legislation they get passed.^{-(2)}} Christians, too, fall into the same thought-trap

i. Dr Will Whitcombe, one of the godly men involved in the late 1940's in bringing together evangelical baptist churches into the association we call our Fellowship, used to say that there are far too many people in church of Jesus Christ who love to wear the pips and badges of office but from whose thoughts the idea of humble service is far removed.

2. Second: His Principle Luke 22:26

a. Jesus said: But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.

- (A) the 'But...you' is an emphatic introduction to this verse; let us turn away from the ways of the world
- (B) the Christian's attitude must be in sharp contrast
- (C) how often has the Lord repeated this principle
 - (1) Matthew 18:3 and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.'
 - (2) Mark 9:35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, 'If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.'
- (D) in that culture and time, to be the youngest was to be given the dregs of the responsibilities, the most menial of duties; in other words, they got the dirtiest jobs
- (E) to be a leader in the Kingdom of God means to serve
 - (1) not with eye-service, seeking the praise of man
 - (2) but from the heart, being done to the Lord
- b. Leon Morris says on this: Jesus is not saying that if his followers wish to rise to great heights in the church they must first prove themselves in a lowly place. He is saying that faithful service in a lowly place is itself true greatness.⁻⁽³⁾

3. Third: His Example Luke 22:27
- a. Jesus said, For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.
 - b. the word 'servant' in the previous verse and the phrase, 'the one who serves' in this verse, are one and the same word – the word from which we get the English word deacon, those who in the book of Acts were called upon to wait on the tables to make sure that the needs were met of all the widows and other poor who were being fed out of the gifts of the members of the church body
 - c. so just remember: a deacon is a table waiter – and not in the classiest of restaurants either, but in the place where the neediest of society are being served by the church
 - d. the same word, deacon, is sometimes translated minister and has exactly the same implication
 - e. and who is our example in all this? Jesus Christ Himself
 - f. with His foreknowledge of what would follow
 - (A) of the thoughts and discussions behind this dispute

- (B) Jesus had taken a towel and had washed their feet
 - (C) the task performed only by the most menial of servants
 - (D) he set the example on which He could now call with full force, that these disciples might see the true way
 - (E) 'Look,' says Jesus, 'and learn of me!'
- g. in a similar manner, Paul also gives us this exhortation in Philippians 2:5 [Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7a but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant...](#)
- h. this is the love response to our Saviour; Brendan Manning wrote: ["What establishes preeminence in the Christian community is not office, title, or territory, not the charismatic gifts of tongues, healing or inspired preaching, but only our response to Jesus' question 'Do you love Me?'"](#)^{4}. – and that love is shown by humble service; servant leadership

D. Conclusion

1. this is what leaders in your church should be
 - a. it is not easy: as A. T. Pierson illustrated it, when all the layers of that onion we call Self are peeled away – self-righteousness, self-trust, self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-will, self-defence and self-glory – layer by layer – then emerges the self-pride by which we boast that we are truly humble
 - b. so pray for each of those who leads in each of the various aspects of the ministry of the church – Awana leaders, Sunday School teachers, your Pastors, and so on – that daily they may look to serve Christ and not self
 - c. pray that as people enter this church – whether it be on a Sunday at our worship service or at any of the number of programs and services that are held at various times and places – pray that they may see such leaders in this church
 - d. and, as you, yourself, may be led by the Holy Spirit of God to take on some aspect of leadership, pray that you may do so with this servant attitude that Christ encouraged
2. so as God's people be engaged in encouraging and carrying out servant leadership, in following Jesus Christ, ['just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'](#) (Matthew 20:28)

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AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. From *Breakpoint Commentary*, by Mark Early – Kerux illustration #29117
3. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Luke* – by Leon Morris, *in loc* v. 27.
4. *The Rabbi's Heartbeat*, by Brennan Manning, 2003 – Kerux illustrations #29122