

The CORE TEACHINGS of JESUS

Adopting the Mindset of Serving Others

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Hello, men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror Bible study. For those of you who are online, I'm Pat Morley, and we're doing a series called *The Core Teachings of Jesus*. And this morning, we are going to be talking about the topic adopting the mindset of serving others.

So here's the situation. I was watching a documentary on the Hubble Telescope this week. And they now think that there are well over 100 billion galaxies in the universe. Not only that, and we're one of those galaxies, the Milky Way. And now they think that there are over 100 billion stars in our galaxy. So there are at least apparently 100 billion, whatever that is, who knows what that is, 100 billion galaxies, at least 100 billion galaxies of at least 100 billion stars, or something like that. How do you get your mind around that? It's incomprehensible. And I was thinking this week, it's so incomprehensible, I started watching another documentary last night on black holes with Stephen Hawking. Now I'm really confused. But I was thinking, wow, that's so interesting, because they were talking about information disappearing in black holes, something that never had been thought of before as possible in physics.

So anyway, and I probably don't even know what I just said, but I was thinking this week, what if this entire universe of 100 billion galaxies, ours contains 100 billion stars. Maybe the others contain more or less. But anyway, let's just say they all average out about like ours. So what if all of these 100 billion galaxies were like a marble in God's hand? It's possible, right? It could just be a marble in God's hand. And so how do we comprehend this God? Well, God decided to reduce himself to human flesh for a short season so that we might comprehend his nature. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the exact representation of God's being.

And so Jesus comes to earth and this is the situation. He invites a handful of men, about 12 men, and others as well, but especially 12 men. He invites 12 men to join him on a journey. And what is the goal of this journey? The goal of this journey is to teach them, to disciple them. To equip them not only to live out the redeemed life for themselves, but to help others be redeemed as fishers of men. And then also, to serve these people, to build the kingdom, and to tend the culture. So the highest honor to which you can aspire is to be a disciple of Jesus, to join him on this journey. But the highest honor of a disciple is to be a servant.

THE MINDSET OF A SERVANT

The first thing I want us to talk about today, and I'm going to explain what I mean, of course, is this mindset of a servant. So the goal that Jesus has for us is to be taught, to be transformed, and then to be conformed to His own image, and then to imitate His life. And in this series, we're not really talking about the doctrine of salvation. We're talking to people who are already believers about what you do, the core teachings. Now that you are a believer, what do you do? And we talked about how you see people. Having compassion for them, like sheep without a shepherd, and having an eye for the harvest, and loving God and loving people, and making sure that the relationship is more important than the task, and a view of suffering and God's will and all of these things. And what does the Master need, not what do I want? We've talked about all those things.

But now we come to this problem that we have, and this problem that we have is human nature is selfish. We're selfish. We're selfish. And so in the texts that we're going to look at here this morning, we find a main theme, a core teaching of Jesus, that is staggering.

So in Mark 9, and you can take a picture of this if you're seeing it visually, or you can just write down the verses. But Mark 9:33-37, it talks about an argument that took place as Jesus was walking with His disciples. Now, what's interesting about this argument, which takes place, let's just say roughly at the mid point of the ministry of Jesus. Somewhere around there. The Matthew parallel passage in Matthew 20, Matthew... Is it 18? But in Matthew 18:1, the parallel passage that tries to describe this same experience, it says this. "At that time, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'"

So their human nature, Jesus had invited them on this journey. He had given them this impression, apparently, that they were going to be involved in this great mission. And they're arguing, now that they've gotten a little bit down the way with Him, they're arguing about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And they're arguing among each other about who is the greatest in this verse. And I'm not going to ask you to look it up, but I'm going to read to you. "Sitting down, Jesus called the 12 and he said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and the servant of all.'" And then He took a little child and explained that you needed to become like a little child.

In Matthew 20:20-28, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John, two of the disciples, on their behalf went to Jesus and asked for permission for her boys to sit with Jesus in His kingdom, one on the right and one on the left. So the ambition and the pride and the vanity of the two sons and their little Jewish mother, they wanted this. And then you can imagine that, or maybe you can't imagine, but I think you can imagine, the other 10 were extremely indignant about this, that this would happen. And this is about now, let's just say for talking purposes, three fourths of the way through the ministry. And Jesus says, "The rulers of the Gentiles, they lord it over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. And whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." The mindset of a servant.

And then in Luke 22:24-27, now getting near the end of the ministry. I think it's fascinating that God has chosen to preserve three separate instances taking place in three separate ways where the disciples are jockeying with each other by who's the biggest deal. For crying out loud, they're at the Last Supper before Jesus is going to be crucified. And it says, "Also, a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said, 'For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who's at the table, but I am among you as one who serves.'" I am among you as one who serves.

In Philippians 2:3-5, that might be one worth taking a look at it with me together, if you want to turn there or scroll there, or however you do that. Philippians 2:3. So Paul writes, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature God," who being in the very nature God, as I talked about earlier, "did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage. Rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." Paul goes on in that same chapter in verses 20 and 21, and he talks about the rarity of such a man. He talks about Timothy. He says, "I have no one else like him who will show genuine concern for your welfare, for everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ."

And then the final text in Luke 17:7-10. It's a parable that Jesus tells about you being out in the field doing work, and then coming in as a servant. "Would the master say, 'Come, sit down and join me'? Wouldn't he rather say, 'Get my supper ready, and then after that, you can eat'?" And Jesus says in verse

10, "So you also, when you had done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants. We have only done our duty.'" The chief test of a servant is whether or not you're willing to be treated like one. This mindset of a servant is the way that we overcome the selfish vanity ambitions that we have, this part of our human nature that wants to be admired, be the greatest, be recognized. Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be first should be last. And I am among you as one who serves."

We see this throughout literature. When C.S. Lewis made the note that when Sir Lancelot went out to save damsels in distress, he did that to win worship. He did that to win worship. We don't our good deeds to win worship. There's a tremendous temptation to do our good deeds to win worship.

I tell you what. I can tell when a guy is going to fall. Now, 80% of the time, I can tell you when a guy is headed for a fall, unless he changes his way. Now, I can't tell you when a guy who is going to fall when he's able to pretend that he's got it all together. But when I see a guy with a certain swagger, I can put down big money that he is going to fall. Some of you know, I've been a speaker everywhere, around the country especially, and around the world. And it's interesting. Sometimes I'm on a dais with another speaker who has his own ministry and so forth. I remember one time that I was sitting in the green room, and this very famous Christian guy, much more well-known than that I would ever even want to be, he walks into the room with a little entourage of people. And he just swaggers in like, okay, I'm here now. We can get started. He just swaggers in. He doesn't say anything, but he just swaggers in.

And then he does the most incredible thing. He says, "Okay, now, what's this about here today? What are we doing here today?" Like I'm such a big deal, I don't even have to know why I'm here. I'm such a big deal, I don't need to prepare. I can just stand up and my words will flow and that will be enough. And do you know what? Once he figured out what was going on, he stood up and the words flowed and it was fantastic. And then a few years later, the headlines come out all over the Christian world, newspaper headlines, not just Christian news, secular headlines too, about this particular cat. But it was so obvious to me that he was going to fall because he had not adopted this mindset of a servant.

The chief test of a servant is whether or not you're willing to be treated one. And it's the entire ethos of the Christian experience. And here's the Big Idea today. **The ethos of the Christian life is best expressed as the mindset of a servant.** The ethos, or the underlying sentiment, the underlying sentiment, the ethos of the entire Christian life, is best expressed as the mindset of a servant, the attitude of a servant. Let that mind be in you. Let that mindset be in you which is also in Christ Jesus, who in His very nature being God, nevertheless took on the nature of a servant.

So if we're going to talk about the core teachings of Jesus, this is obviously something we need to include. Because Jesus gathered a dozen men to join Him on a journey, and the biggest challenge, or at least three times along the way, He had to continue to instruct them about having this mindset, this attitude, of a servant. That the path to doing something great is too small yourself down.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

So now I want us to look at the example of Jesus, and that's found in John 13 starting at verse three. John 13 starting at verse three. Right after this dispute that I mentioned in the Upper Room, Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God. So He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet.

Down in verse 12, "When He had finished washing their feet, He put on His clothes and returned to His place. And then He asked, 'Do you understand what I have done for you? You call Me teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet. I have set an example, that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you that no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.'"

Now, what's fascinating to me in this passage is the fact that, in addition to the 11 faithful disciples at that point, even though they'd been arguing about who is the greatest, He even washed the feet of the man who had already betrayed Him. He even washed the feet of Judas, His betrayer. Men, you will know that you have arrived when you are willing to serve the person who has betrayed you. This is the core teaching on service. **The ethos of the Christian life is best expressed as the mindset of a servant.**

WASHING FEET TODAY

So let's take a look at a few different ways that we can go about washing feet in today's environment, because we're not going to be walking around saying, "Hey, can you take off your shoes so I can wash your feet?" There were cultural reasons for doing that. People wore sandals, all the roads were unpaved and so forth, and so it was a cultural way of serving people.

One important way we can wash each other's feet today is with our time. We have so many men here who are doing so many different service ministries. It's phenomenal. We have people doing big things over in ministries and we have a lot of people doing individual things. One of our men, this morning, I decided to start calling him the almost perfect Christian. But he has for years gone by and picked up a man and driven him to the Bible study. And basically been a part-time caretaker, in essence, because then he drives him back home again. So that's one way we can wash each other's feet today. In fact, now that I'm thinking about it, there's another almost perfect Christian right back there who was doing the same thing for another guy who was handicapped.

It might be that you encourage each other with words or encourage other people with words. Sending little texts. So if you have a happy thought about somebody or if you're praying for someone, send them a text. Just let them know that you're doing that. So I try to average more than a text a day myself. Actually, I do quite a bit more than that. But the idea is, and we've said it here before, that encouragement is the food of the heart. And every heart is a hungry heart. So you could send a text to anybody any day about anything with a word of encouragement, and you can be 100% sure that it will be appreciated. And you can be at least 50% sure that it will reach them at a time where they needed to be encouraged, because half the people in the world on any given moment need to be encouraged.

And then another way we can wash each other's feet today is through prayer. So I think I've mentioned here one time, it seems like I did, but I started feeling God was leading me increasingly into a ministry of prayer over the last few years, and now it's fully developed.

For the last nine years, I've had a ministry of prayer, but I've been adding little things. So for example, on the lock screen of my iPhone is a picture of someone that I'm praying for this week. I started this about nine months ago. My literary agent developed a form of cancer and lost all of his hair and sent me a picture of himself. So I just decided to put that up on the lock screen on my phone so that every time I pick up my iPhone and the screen brightens up, I just shoot up a little quick prayer for him. I did that for one week, and then I put someone else's picture up, our granddaughter, I put our granddaughter up. I put her picture on there for one week. So anyway, so once a week for the last nine months or so, each week I put a picture of somebody on my iPhone lock screen so when I pick it up, it just reminds me to shoot up a little prayer for them. So this is a way that I can wash their feet, that I can serve them.

Your spiritual gifts, whatever they are. Using our spiritual gifts to serve one another. This is something 1 Peter 4:10 talks about. The reason that we have spiritual gifts is so that we can serve one another. So to know what your spiritual gifts are and then to fully utilize them.

So there are many other things we could be obviously talking about in different ways we can wash feet. But what I'm trying to get across here, the point I'm trying to get across, is that all these little practical things that we can do for other people, that's the equivalent of following the example of Jesus. That's the equivalent of how we serve people by washing their feet today. And it is the ethos of the Christian experience. **The ethos of the Christian life is best expressed as the mindset of a servant.** Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You for my brothers. Thank You for... I'm not sure about the room today... I guess I was thinking about this too, Lord, as I was even preparing. It seems like, wow, these are the men who are already doing it, so why would I be talking to them about this? But Lord, this is a good reminder for all of us, of course, myself included. And Lord, we just pray that we would, in fact, have the mindset of a servant. Thank You for Jesus. Thank You for including us in the group of men that You're taking on this journey to teach, to transform, and to conform into Your image. And we pray this in Your name. Amen.