

The honour of servanthood

The world holds servanthood in contempt, and servants are generally considered a lower class of mankind. Being a servant of someone else is not a sought-after career one would choose. Legislation forbids the use of the word “servant”, replacing it with “worker” in an effort to lift the status of those who serve others. We tend to want others to serve us, and modern life focuses upon the ego and status of man.

Yet, when I look at the Bible, I see something very different. Firstly, the angels, being glorified spiritual beings, are called,

Heb 1:14 “... ministering spirits, sent out to render service ...”

and in the book of Revelation when John the apostle falls down to worship an angel, the angel quickly stops him and says this about himself,

Rev 19:10 “I am a **fellow servant** of yours ...”

The apostles often refer to themselves as “*bondservants*”, which means “*slaves*”, and in *Revelation 1:1* we read that God sends the message of the revelation of Jesus Christ to us, his “*bondservants*”. In the same verse, John the apostle is also referred to as a “*bondservant*”.

Even the nation of Israel is called to be a *servant nation* (*Isaiah 41:8, 9*), serving the Lord by reaching out to other nations and serving them with the light of the gospel (*Isaiah 60:1-3*).

When the disciples argue about who is the greatest among them, Jesus corrects their false understanding of greatness by saying,

*Mat 20:26 "Whoever **wishes to become great** among you shall be your **servant**,*

*20:27 "and whoever **wishes to be first** among you shall be your **slave**;*

20:27 "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Here Jesus does not rebuke them for desiring great things. Rather He teaches them how greatness in the kingdom can be achieved – *by becoming a servant.*

When Mary anoints Jesus' feet with the costly spikenard oil and her tears, wiping His feet with her hair, Simon the Pharisee is indignant that Jesus should allow this low-class servant woman to do this. Instead of sharing the Pharisee's attitude, Jesus honours her by prophesying that through the ages, what this woman did (serving Jesus) would be spoken of in her *honour.*

Jesus again corrects the disciples' erroneous thinking regarding their position by saying,

Luke 17:7 "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'?

17:8 "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?

17:9 "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?

17:10 "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

In case we might think that this servanthood attitude is only for this life, after which we reign as kings, let us consider the following passage from *Revelation 4:4, 10*. Here we see a scene in heaven where the 24 elders are seated before the throne having crowns upon their heads. Kings, right? However, in *verse 10* we find them voluntarily casting their crowns down at the feet of Jesus as an act of worship – *servng Him*.

The last thing that Jesus did before He was crucified, was to wash the disciples' feet. Then He taught us that we should be like-minded. Paul writes that we should,

Gal 5:13 "... serve one another through love."

This shows what the core of servanthood is. *We serve because we love*. Servanthood and giving oneself for another are therefore the *greatest expressions of love*.

However, the greatest honour of servanthood is still to be revealed. We understand from the Scriptures that because Jesus deliberately,

Phil 2:7 "... emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men,

2:8 "and being found in appearance as a man He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross.

2:9 "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him the name which is above every other name,

2:10 *“that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow ...”*

It is the act of emptying which won Jesus the glory.

My question is, *“What glory is bestowed upon Jesus?”* We read again and again about this glory that would fill the earth, and the great honour bestowed on Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. What is it that will cause the highest heaven to sing out His praise and glory; that will fill the eyes of all who see with tears of joy and shouts of the highest praise? We read the account in Luke. This passage tells of the time when Jesus returns in all His glory as King and Conqueror. Jesus’ own words ...

Luke 12:37 "Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when He comes; truly I say to you that HE WILL GIRD HIMSELF TO SERVE AND HAVE THEM RECLINE AT TABLE AND WILL COME UP AND WAIT ON THEM."

He the King, takes off His robes, puts on a servant’s garb and serves us! That does not seem to make sense to our feeble minds. Why does He do that? He does that because the roll of servanthood is to lift another up. Every servant works for another in order to bring benefit to his master. Now Jesus, the Master and King, deliberately switches rolls. He, the King of kings, wishes to lift us up to sit with Him in heavenly places as kings and priests to our God (*Revelation 5:10*).

He serves us so that as we eat again of that bread and drink again of that cup (*Matthew 26:29*), we become one with Him (*John 17:21*) and in doing so He *shares His glory with us* (*John 17:22,23*), that we might be

Eph 1:23 “the fullness of Him who fills all in all;”

Eph 3:19 "That we might be filled to all the fullness of God."

Wonder of wonders! The love employed here goes beyond my human understanding.

I think we need to change our view on servanthood. It is a great honour to serve others. It is in giving that we receive, in dying that we really live.