

## **A Different Understanding of Greatness: Servanthood**

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**Winning By Losing Series**

**Mark 10.42-45**

**Part 2 of 2**

There are very few areas where you see the difference between the way of Jesus and the way of the world more sharply distinguished than when it comes to how people relate to status, position, and power. I was just reading an article in the newspaper about Michael Jackson. He performed this past week at the World Music Awards. His concert rider was one of the most expensive ever. It cost the show \$470,000. Michael Jackson demanded a private jet for his 20-person entourage as well as an entire 5-star hotel for almost \$100,000 a night. He also demanded that a wall be knocked out between two hotel suites.

You've read some of the ridiculous celebrity demands, haven't you? Mariah Cary demands that her room backstage have bunny rabbits, puppies, and kittens to keep her company. She requires Cristal Champaign and a box of Bendy Straws to drink the Champaign with. Her contract rider also states 16oz. plastic bottles of Evian are the only acceptable bottled water for the dressing rooms. Once during a tour of China, Mariah apparently needed four vehicles to carry her 60 pieces of luggage, including the 350 pairs of shoes she brought with her. Another time she sent 20 assistants to redecorate the toilets in a music store before an album signing to ensure that the toilet paper was in her preferred shade of pink.

P.Diddy requires a large supply of napkins in his dressing room with his name printed on each one.

When Jennifer Lopez did a charity event, she demanded a large trailer furnished all in white with flowers, tablecloths, drapes, candles, and couches, a VCR, CD player, 43 music CD's all done in white. She demands her coffee to be stirred counter-clockwise. She's obviously studied the physics of stirring liquid in the Northern Hemisphere.

Power and position is often used for the purpose of radical self-indulgence. Power and position in the world has sometimes led to the attitude that the rules that apply to normal human beings don't apply to the powerful.

Muhammad "I'm the Greatest" Ali once got in an argument with a flight attendant on a plane because he refused to buckle his seatbelt. After repeated requests from the flight attendant that he must buckle his seatbelt before they could move the plane, Muhammad Ali said, "Superman don't need no seatbelt," to which the

flight attendant reportedly responded, “Superman also don’t need no plane – buckle up.”

The rules that apply to normal people, don’t apply to the rich and powerful. How else can you explain the damage done to hotel rooms by movie stars and rock singers? How else can you explain the temper tantrums by people like Russell Crowe and supermodel Naomi Campbell?

20 centuries ago Jesus told us that one of the major distinctions between the way that his followers were to act and the way the world acted concerned how we followers of Jesus deal with power, position, and authority.

SLIDE – Mark 10.42-45

<sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> 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.”

Jesus never taught that everyone has equal authority. He frequently talked about genuine spiritual authority. But he is teaching here that his followers exercise authority in a way that is very different than the way the world exercises authority. Authority is not to be used to satisfy insane self-indulgent demands. Authority is not to be used to communicate that the rules governing normal people do not apply to the celebrity. And authority is not to be used to lord it over people, to control, or to manipulate.

There was an article I read not too long ago titled “Bosses From Hell.” It described a series of tyrannical CEOs – people like Harold Geneen. Harold Geneen was described as perhaps history’s most dictatorial accountant. He ran the huge ITT in the 1960’s and 70’s. His method of leading was to publicly humiliate his top 120 executives every month at a grueling 4-day, 14-hour long meeting that made some of them physically ill. He loved to watch his underlings squirm and experience pain as he tore into them in front of their colleagues.

And then there is Martin Davis, who was CEO of Gulf and Western. During his tenure, because Gulf and Western was so predatory and acquisitive, it was nicknamed Engulf and Devour. Once a visitor asked why half the offices were empty on the top floor of the company’s Manhattan skyscraper. Martin Davis responded, “Those were my enemies. I got rid of all of them.”

Or how about Al Dunlap. As CEO of Sunbeam during the 1990’s Dunlap once charged a bulletproof vest and handgun to his expense account which was understandable considering the delight he took in laying off thousands of workers and subjecting his executives to profane abusive tirades. He threw a chair

across the room at the head of Human Resources. He allegedly threatened his first wife with guns and knives and refused to attend the funerals of either of his parents.

Most of you are familiar with Leona Helmsley. Her most brilliant business move was having an affair with the elderly real estate baron, Harry Helmsley whom she conned into leaving his wife of 33 years by buying herself a huge engagement ring and then telling Harry that it was from a rival of his. When she took over his hotel empire, she was called The Queen of Mean. Hundreds of employees said she berated and fired on the spot for allegedly things like a misaligned lampshade.

Jesus said,

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Mk 10:42 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> 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.”

You know, it is interesting that the followers of Jesus in the early church really understood this new style of exercising power. So, for example, the apostle Paul frequently refers to himself as the slave, or servant of Christ. Romans 1.1

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Ro 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—

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1Co 3:5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

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Gal 1:10 Am I now trying to win human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

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Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

We see the same self-identity in James in James 1.1

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Jas 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

We see the same thing in Peter, 2 Peter 1.1,

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2Pe 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

And with Epaphras in Colossians 4.12,

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Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.

Followers of Jesus in the New Testament saw themselves as servants of the Lord.

And Jesus himself, who is Lord of the universe, shows the way that God exercises authority in the world. Not by self-indulgently serving his every whim or acting as if the rules don't apply, or dominating and shaming people under him. Instead, Phil. 2.6-7 read this way:

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Phil 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

I've been doing a brief series that I've titled "Winning By Losing." And it is designed to communicate that the way of Jesus is very different than the way of the world. The way that the world teaches us to win is by one-upsmanship, but looking out for #1, by getting ours now, by pushing and elbowing everyone else aside, by dominating, by making sure that our crazy wants are always satisfied.

But the way of Jesus is so different. Jesus taught us that position, power, and authority is given so that you might use your position to do more good for more people. Not self-indulgence, but service. I've called today's talk, "A Different Understanding of Greatness: Servanthood." Let's pray.

SLIDE – Mark 10.42-45

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For those of you who were here last week, you may recall that two of Jesus’ most trusted confidants, James and John, came with a request saying,

SLIDE

Mk 10:37 They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

It may be that they thought that when Jesus got to Jerusalem he was going to usher in the kingdom of God in all of its fullness. The Kingdom of God is often portrayed as the great banquet thrown by Messiah for his followers. Perhaps they were asking for the best seats – the one at the right and left hand of the host of the banquet. Perhaps they thought that when Jesus got to Jerusalem as Messiah, he was going to engage in the great end-time judgment and that James and John would sit on thrones helping Jesus exercise that judgment.

But Jesus tells us that the reason that he gives authority to his followers is not so that they can satisfy all of their wants – build bigger and bigger homes, indulge all of their appetites, dominate, rule and manipulate. The reason he gives authority to his followers is so that they could serve. Vv. 43-45,

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Mk 10:43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> 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 Bible teaches that as servants of the Lord, God has certain assignments for us to accomplish in this life. We read in Eph. 2.10 these words:

SLIDE

Eph 2:10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We followers of Christ are God’s masterpieces. Literally, we are his works of art, created in Christ Jesus, not self-created, not self-made men and women. The spiritual life in every Christian man or woman that comes through the born-again experience was created in Christ. And the purpose of our new lives in Christ was to fulfill the unique assignment that God has given to each of us according to his

sovereign will. The Bible teaches that if you are a servant of the Lord, there is a plan, a destiny that God has in mind for you. Life is about discovering God's purpose for you, God's assignment for you in this world. And to miss your assignment, is to live a wasted life.

Life is not about indulging as many of your wants as you can, or trying to live above the rules, or creating your own dreams, and going after those things. People who live with no sense of God's assignment, folks who live with no sense of God's purpose, constantly drift from one experience to another. They move from one job to another, one relationship to another, one location to another – always discontent, always searching, always on the move, always frustrated, never at peace.

Friend, do you believe with all your heart that God had a unique destiny in mind when he created you and saved you? And that you are the only person on earth that can fulfill your destiny? That there are good words which God has prepared beforehand that only you can do?

It is absolutely the truth that there is a portion of this world, there are situations, there are people, there are decisions that only you can touch in the unique way that God has purposed this world to work. It is absolutely the case that only you can impact the world the way that God has uniquely assigned you to impact the world.

And friend, here is a little secret. Life is all about choosing for or against your assignment from God. Sometimes the choice is huge. There is an obvious fork in the world and if you take the one fork, it is going to lead to a mammoth life change, a radically different trajectory than if you take the other fork in the road. And Jesus is saying to you, "Follow me on this one fork in the road. You are on assignment from me."

But these mammoth decisions come along very infrequently in life. Most of the assignments from the Lord are very small. There is a phone call that God wants you to make. There is a person in the hospital that God wants you to visit. There is a dishwasher that God wants you to empty. There is a difficult conversation that God wants you to have. There is a relationship that God wants you to reconcile. There is a prayer that God wants you to pray.

Friend, would you say that when you wake up in the morning you have a sense of purpose, you have a sense of identity that you wake up and say, "Today, I am a servant of the Lord. I am on assignment from Christ. I'm not just a servant of my clients, or my boss, or my customers, my children, or my patients. I am not just a servant of my schedule. Sitting in this cubicle or working in this office, or serving these customers may not be my life's dream. This class, the meeting may not be the be-all, end-all of my life. But I am called today in every encounter to uniquely impact people in my sphere in a way that no one else can. As a

servant of the Lord I am on assignment to make choices and decisions that only I can make.”

Friend, you matter. There is a purpose to your life. You have a destiny. Your choices matter. Whether you smile or not; whether you forgive or not; whether you give or not – it all matters.

You are called to be a servant. But there are a number of challenges to being a servant in a world that utterly rejects servanthood as a definition of greatness.

#### SLIDE

Servanthood is often inconvenient and can feel like a waste of time.

As servants, our time is not our own. Our money is not our own. We are on assignment from God. The question constantly is, “Lord, what are the good works that you prepared beforehand for me to do?” And sometimes, the good work which God has prepared beforehand are really inconvenient and feel like a waste of time.

If you are one of those Type-A people like me, who like to be highly productive all of the time, if you are one of those people who tries to squeeze production out of every minute, it is hard to do activities that don’t feel terribly productive. It is especially difficult to be inconvenienced and to waste time if you already feel incredibly stretched. Many folks in their 40’s and 50’s are living in what is called “the sandwich generation,” sandwiched between the demands of children and the demands and needs of aging parents. But if your identity is that you are a servant of the Lord first, then you allow him to determine what a productive use of your time is going to be.

And so, the Lord might determine that a productive use of your time is to attend your 8-year old daughter’s soccer banquet in which each of the 25 girls on the team receives an award and has cute things said about them regarding why they won the award for team spirit, or most improved, or most helpful. God may want you to go to your 8-year old daughter’s soccer banquet without a book.

I remember when I attended law school, I think I was in my second year, but I was incredibly busy. I was serving in the church, discipling some men, teaching on Sunday. I got a call from a friend in the church saying, “Hey, we need help moving a family on Saturday morning.” I thought to myself, “Saturday morning? That’s my big study time.” But I said, “OK, I’ll do this. I will get done by 11:00 a.m. I will have the rest of the day to study.”

So a few of us guys show up at the house at 9:00 a.m. We ring the bell several times; not a good sign. The family is just getting up. The wife greets us at the door in her bathrobe. I walked into the house – nothing is packed. All the books are still on the bookcases. I remember this as clear as if it was yesterday. The

wife walked around the house real slowly and then gets a broom and hands it to me saying, “Here, I guess you could carry this out to the truck.” I’m walking out to the truck with a broom. She handed me things like a bucket, a sponge. At one point, this is not exaggeration, she hands me wet clothes from the washing machine. There is still water in the washing machine. She hands me sopping wet clothes. “Here, carry these out.” I think I got done at 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon.

I am a servant of the Lord. Servanthood is often inconvenient and can feel like a waste of time.

Miroslav Volf in a fantastic new book titled *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*, writes this:

#### SLIDE

*Every word and every deed, every thought and every gesture, even the simple act of paying attention can be a gift and therefore an echo of God’s life in us. You sit on your couch, beer or soda in your hand and junk food by your side watching TV for hours – that’s ordinary. You work around the clock not because you have to feed your family, but for no other reason than to park a better car in your garage than your neighbors have – that’s ordinary. You get up from the couch to pray with your kids or you give time and energy to help educate a prisoner or to lend an ear to an elderly person – that’s extraordinary. Why? Because you are giving. Every gift breaks the barrier between the sacred and the mundane and floods the mundane with the sacred. When a gift is given, life becomes extraordinary because God’s own gift-giving flows through the giver.*

We could say the same thing about serving. When service is rendered, life becomes extraordinary because God’s own heart of service flows through us to the one being served.

Here is the second point:

#### SLIDE

Servanthood Is Often Unnatural Can Feel Contrary To Our Desires

Now, it is certainly the case that serving can feel incredibly natural and fulfilling. Some of the areas God calls you to serve in will be consistent with your temperament, talents, and spiritual gifts. So, for example, we read in 1 Peter 4.10-11 these words:

#### SLIDE

<sup>1Pe 4:10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup> If you speak, you should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you serve, you should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised



through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Sometimes preaching, counseling, or hospitality is the most natural thing in the world for you. It hardly feels like service. But there are other times when servanthood is unnatural and can feel entirely contrary to our desires.

John Ortberg in his book *The Life You've Always Wanted* speaks about "the ministry of the mundane." Ortberg writes:

SLIDE

*The opportunity to engage in the "ministry of the mundane" is offered to us countless times a day. A colleague asks for help with a project at work. Someone's car stalls by the side of the road. This ministry can happen at home, in the middle of the night when one of the children cries. I could fake being asleep, and then as my wife is leaving the room, say a few words very groggily, as if I would have tended the child, but I'm just a heavier sleeper so it is too late now. This way I can get both the credit for wanting to help and the luxury of staying in bed.*

*But here is what can happen. I could get up and take care of her. Instead of being resentful, I could be thankful that my daughter is alive. During the day, instead of focusing on all the "ministry tasks" she is keeping me from, I could just focus on being there to help her. If I do this, I become a little less addicting to having my own way. I become freer to serve someone else without thinking, "WOW, what a wonderful husband and father I am!"*

Does this speak to any of you men?

But you know, there is another side to the servanthood coin that is often neglected. For some people, what is most unnatural is leading, stepping out from hiddenness and doing something that is big.

Most of you have heard of Augustine, the great Early Church father. He is considered the most influential theologian between the time of the apostle Paul in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and Martin Luther in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. When Augustine became a Christian, his entire ambition was to live in a monastery and spend the rest of his life in prayer and contemplation. He had lived a very loose and immoral life and now he just wanted to withdraw from the rest of the world and spend time alone with God. But his gifts brought him to the attention of various church authorities and he was asked to become a Bishop which led him into a very public life, the opposite of what Augustine wanted.

There are clearly many of you who feel this tug. You are a private person, but God has called you into service and ministry. He has an assignment for your life that is different than the assignment you would have chosen. I've seen this in my

own home with my wife, Marlene. My wife, following her own inclinations, would have been perfectly content to simply be a mother and now a devoted grandmother. She has wonderful gifts of hospitality. But over the years, God has not allowed her to simply devote all of her time and attention to our family. While she has been an extraordinary wife and mother, God has pushed Marlene out into leadership even though there are times when it is unnatural and it has been contrary to her desires.

I do want to speak to some of you who have said, “the only thing I really want to do is focus on my family. I just want to have a nice family. I don’t want to lead a women’s group. I don’t want to work in the community center. I just want to focus on my two kids.” Of course, it is wrong to neglect the health of your children or family. But I want to tell you that if you have given your life to Christ, it is not up to you to determine the assignments God has for you. It may be that the assignment God has for you pulls you outside of your home into a more public ministry, into a place of leadership even though it is unnatural and contrary to your own desires.

During WWII my favorite Christian writer, C.S. Lewis, took in numerous children who were fleeing London and other cities vulnerable to German bombing. C.S. Lewis was an English professor. He was a scholar and he was a bachelor. Here he is trying to write, trying to prepare college courses, and all the while kids are running around his house. But you know, in C.S. Lewis’ case, his willingness to be a servant of the Lord and to be on assignment for all of these children actually was God’s divine appointment for him. It was one afternoon that one of the children in his house became interested in an old wardrobe. This little child asked C.S. Lewis, “Is there anything behind the wardrobe.” That planted the seed for what became C.S. Lewis’ most beloved book, *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*.

You have no idea what God has in store for you when you obey his assignments.

Third,

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Servanthood Is Often Difficult And We Can Feel Like Quitting

You know, the longer I am in ministry the more I admire people who simply show up. When people see themselves as being on assignment from the Lord, they don’t serve only when they are in the mood to serve, or when they have a feeling of service. They serve when they haven’t gotten enough sleep; when it is inconvenient; when they are not in the best of health. They serve when they are stretched.

The longer I am in ministry, the more I admire simple faithfulness over against great gifting. You can’t lead a small group very long without having folks who

make a commitment to come and who don't show up, or who make a commitment to do childcare, or to bring snacks, or to lead worship and then who never come.

It is amazing to me as a pastor how many times people have come to me and told me that God is calling them to pull back for a season. I'm sure that could happen, particularly in a case when an individual has been under siege for an extended period of time. But it is amazing to me how often God tells people to quit all forms of service – serving in children's ministry, serving in worship ministry, serving the poor. It is really striking how often today the Holy Spirit is calling people to quit things especially when you find so few quit verses in the Bible.

And yet, God's program in America appears to be that he wants his people to take lots of time off, to quit serving folks once they have a child, to quit extending one's self. That usually means taking a year, two years, three years, taking more – taking a decade.

I love people who just show up! I've met dozens and dozens of people over the years who were super-excited, who seemed to be everywhere in the church for six months, and then they are never heard of again. There are two men who work in our FOTV ministry, our ministry to the poor, and our ministry to the homeless who show up week after week. I so admire them.

There is a man named Hassan who has been serving in FOTV for nine years. He began serving 6 months after his conversion. He works in the food pantry somewhere between 40-48 Saturdays a year. He arrives early on Saturday morning to make coffee for everyone and leads the volunteers in giving away the food. He serves in the cold; he serves in the rain; he serves in all kinds of weather because, as he says, "The need of the people doesn't go away with the climate."

We serve not because it is convenient, but because people are in desperate need of help in their lives. And it has been costly for Hassan to serve. He can't just take a leisurely Saturday morning for himself. He can't go to some of the trainings we offer.

And then there is Buddy. Buddy has been working at FOTV for the last four years. He takes several evenings a week every week to buy food for the outreach to the homeless, to lead groups of formerly homeless men in taking the next step towards full re-integration in society. On Sunday morning, he drives our homeless friends to church. Buddy was asked, "Do you ever feel like quitting?" He said, "Not really; there are moments of real disappointment. Recently there was someone we poured a ton of time and energy into and we saw him walk away from the Lord. And with his walking away, he seemed to have wasted

everything we poured into his life. It was hard to see this man go through a transformation and then completely walk away from it.”

Let me ask you a question: Can it be said of you that you are a faithful person? That you don't just serve the Lord and serve others when the feeling strikes you. Can it be said of you that you don't simply serve others only when you are in the mood, but you serve even when you aren't in the mood? Are you a person who can be counted on by the church? Are you a person who can be counted on by others? That when you say you are going to do something, it is money in the bank. You don't have to be reminded, or repeatedly called. If you are that kind of person, you are a servant. If you aren't that kind of person, then you need to grow in your servanthood call.

And fourth,

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Servanthood Is Often Unrewarded Immediately And Can Feel Unappreciated And Unnoticed

You know, our relationship with God is profoundly shaped by our understanding of servanthood. Some of the most egregious sins I've seen committed by Christians have sprung from an aggrieved sense of entitlement. What do I mean by aggrieved sense of entitlement?

The person says, “Here I am, God, pulling all the weight in our relationship. I'm trying my darnedest in this marriage; I'm trying to be kind; I'm trying to be patient; I've been trying to do what you want me to do; I've been praying and praying, but there is no change. I've done everything I know to do to make my business successful; to turn my finances around; but there nothing is working. It just seems like you are silent. I've gone up front for prayer at church; I've received prayer several times for my health; I've tried to believe you would heal me, but I'm still in as much pain as ever. My disease has not improved. Actually, I think things are getting worse.

Over the years, friends, I don't know if I've found a more common route that Christians have traveled to serious sin, things like adulterous affairs, emotional affairs, dropping out of church, walking away from commitments and getting utterly wrapped up in the pursuit of money as opposed to being wrapped up in following Christ and pursuing the expansion of his kingdom. I don't know that I've seen a more common route for Christians to get involved in serious sin than this one thing – that God is not rewarding my efforts to be faithful to him, so why bother? I'm not benefiting. It doesn't seem to matter if I pray for not. It doesn't seem to matter to God if I obey or not. Nothing in my life is turning around.

Friend, if you don't understand servanthood; if you don't understand that you are called to be a servant of the Lord; then you will begin to look at your relationship

with God as if it were a business dealing. We trade our services and our obedience for God's blessing. Jesus confronted this business negotiation model of relationship with God head-on in Luke 17:7-10 when he said,

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Lk 17:7 "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat?' <sup>8</sup> Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink?' <sup>9</sup> Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? <sup>10</sup> So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

What's Jesus getting at in this parable? He is saying that you and I can never put God in our debt. We can never place God under obligation. We can never approach God and say, "you owe me." This parable smokes out all of our legalism. It smokes out all of the ways we relate to God as if we are in some kind of business transaction. "I'm going to trade my prayers, my obedience, and my faithfulness for your blessing."

It never works that way. And you put that idea to death when you see yourself as a servant of the Lord. When you are a servant of the Lord you say,

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Lk 17:10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

In other words, Lord, you owe me nothing. And I see that every good thing in my life is not the result of you paying an obligation that you owe me because of my faithfulness. Every good thing in my life is only the result of your grace – any health I have; any financial prosperity; any of the relationships that are working; the pleasure that I get from my children; the enjoyment I receive through my friendships; the blessing of being in a wonderful church – all of that God, is grace pure and simple. It is gift.

You know, short-term you may not be rewarded for your servanthood. But long-term, friend, service unto the Lord is never wasted.

Buddy, who has been working at FOTV volunteering several evenings a week for the last four years, said, "It is never a waste. I get so much more out of it. I can recall something I heard a while back that says, 'Broadcast the seed...and as a broadcaster we don't worry about where it's going to land. We may never really get to see its fruit. But it is good for us and we always will receive way more than we give. And that's been true in my life. I always feel like I receive way more than I give.'"

Friends, I could say that's true in my life as well. I enjoy my life so much more when I see me helping other people.

Let me close with this story. The other day I spoke with a new friend of mine, Jim Wallis, who is the publisher of the Christian magazine called Sojourners. I called him to offer my condolences since I heard that his father recently died. His father was the leader of a small Plymouth Brethren Church in Detroit, Michigan. Jim said the memorial service that they did for his dad this past Monday was one of the most amazing services he's ever been to in his life. There were easily 600 people at the memorial service. He said it could have gone on all night as person after person stood up and talked about what Jim's dad had done for them.

Someone said, "I wasn't getting along with my parents. Pastor Wallis let me stay with him for a while."

"Our marriage was just on the brink of divorce. But pastor saved my marriage."

"I needed advice at a crucial time in my life. Pastor gave me that advice."

Jim said, "I sat through the service and just wept and wept as I heard stories about my dad." He said, "It wasn't just the church that my dad served in. He served us in our home. My dad was the connector between me and my five siblings. And following my sons' baseball games, it was my dad who would call my son, or my son would call him, and they would go through every thing that happened in the game." Jim said that after the memorial service, his 8-year old son talked with him and said, "Now that grandpa has died, who am I going to talk with about my baseball games?"

I said, "Jim, you are an incredibly blessed man to have a dad who modeled for you a life well lived, a life of service to the Lord, and to others."

Friend, this Plymouth Brethren pastor who just died is great in the sight of the Lord. Not the celebrities who make their insane, self-indulgent demands, who throw phones and believe the rules don't apply to them. It is men like this. It is men like Buddy and Hassan and many of you who understand your essential identity: You are servants of the Lord. Let's pray.

Ministry Time:

You know, in Mark 10.45 it says Jesus demonstrated his servanthood to us most particularly in giving up his life as a ransom for us. Jesus died on a cross in order to perform for you and me the greatest act of service in all of history. No one has ever served more or accomplished more than Jesus accomplished for us when he died on a cross. He died as ransom to purchase for us freedom from God's judgment. He purchased for us freedom from the power of sin. He

purchased for us freedom from powers too great for us. He purchased for us freedom from the power of death. Jesus served you and he served me by dying as a ransom for us.

Today, I'm going to invite some of you into a relationship with Christ.

## **A Different Understanding of Greatness: Servanthood**

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Rich Nathan

November 18-19, 2006

Winning By Losing Series

Mark 10.42-45

### ***I. The Distinguishing Mark Of Servanthood (Phil. 2.6,7; Rom. 1.1; Gal. 1.10)***

### ***II. The Definition Of Servanthood (Eph. 2.10)***

### ***III. The Challenge Of Servanthood***

- A. Servanthood Is Often Inconvenient And Can Feel Like A Waste Of Time
- B. Servanthood Is Often Unnatural And Can Feel Contrary To Our Desires
- C. Servanthood Is Often Difficult And We Can Feel Like Quitting
- D. Servanthood Is Often Unrewarded Immediately And We Can Feel Unappreciated And Unnoticed

### ***IV. The Model Of Servanthood (Mk. 10.45)***