

# I AM THE SERVANT

[I AM Series—Lk 22:27]

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. CONTEXT OF THE 'I AM' DECLARATION

- Jesus has directed them to prepare for the Passover
- He is the 'Teacher'—master—whom the disciples obey
- He has directed all preparations—He is the host of the dinner
- At the Lord's Supper He inaugurates the New Covenant
- Two discussions arose
  - They questioned each other—who would betray Him?
  - They disputed who of them would be reputed as greatest?

#### Read the Text—Luke 22:24-30

*24 And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. 25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors' ". 26 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. 27 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. 28 You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; 29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

### B. THE ISSUE—REPUTATION

Their argument is about the superficial image—v 24

- "as to which one of them was *regarded to be* greatest"
- **δοκεω** = seemed to be—was reputed—was accounted
- They were concerned about whose reputation was the greatest

### C. OUTLINE

Jesus answers this with four points

- He describes what they seek
- He rejects what they seek
- He explains *true* greatness
- He gives an example of *true* greatness

## II. JESUS DESCRIBES WORLDLY GREATNESS

### A. BACKGROUND

1. He uses **Gentile** rulers as His example

- Not to condemn non-Jews—but to show contrast
- To show what *ungodly* people do
- **εθνος** (Gentile) = other nations who do not follow Jehovah
- So this is the way pagans—or *others*—behave
- Another use of the term = the masses, the human family
- Today—we would say—*worldly* rulers

- So Jesus is really describing *worldly* greatness
2. His points—*worldly* reputations are built on three things
- Attaining and lording **positions** over others
  - Gaining and exercising **authority** over others
  - Buying or extorting the **adulation** of people

## B. ATTAINING AND LORDING POSITIONS OVER OTHERS—v 25

1. “lord it over them”—**κυριεύω**—the opposite of being a servant
- **Verb** taken from **κύριος** = lord, master, owner, possessor
  - To have total dominion over
  - To exercise total power and influence over
  - To have complete mastery of
2. The *noun* ‘Lord’ was used in a positive sense
- a. To refer to God
    - As a substitute for ‘Jehovah’—which was not spoken
    - As a Greek translation of OT ‘Adonai’—Master
  - b. As a form of respectful address—‘sir’
  - c. To address rulers or authorities—‘lord’
3. In the NT this **verb** was used in a negative, restrictive or worldly way
- a. The power of **death**

### Rom 6:9

- Christ has been raised from the dead and cannot die again
- So death no longer has *dominion* over Him

- b. The power of **sin**

### Rom 6:14

- We have been brought from death to life
- We are now dead to sin, and alive to God
- Sin will no longer *master* us—have no *dominion* over us

- c. The power of the **law**

### Rom 7:1

- The law has authority [*dominion*] over a person only as long as he lives—e.g. marriage binds only in this life

- d. **Controlling** people’s beliefs

### II Cor 1:24

- Paul said he did not *lord* it over the Corinthians’ faith
- But worked *with* them for their joy, so they would stand firm in their faith

- e. The **lords of this world**

### **I Ti 6:15**

- God is the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of **lords**
- ‘lords’ = (verb) those who lord over others—i.e. all earthly powers and rulers

4. Only once is it used in a positive sense

a. In the life hereafter—of Christ *after* His resurrection

b. Text—**Rom 14:9**

Christ died and returned to life so He might **be the Lord** of *both* the dead *and* the living.

c. Even Christ did not assume this power until *after* His resurrection!

- All authority was given Him *after* fulfilling the Father’s will
- His purpose was not to obtain mere *worldly* power
- *After* His resurrection—He was given transcendent lordship

**Mt 28:18**—*all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me*

- Now His dominion is more powerful than any earthly lordship

## **C. GAINING AND EXERCISING AUTHORITY OVER OTHERS—v 25**

1. “those who *have authority* over them”

a. Not a noun—but the rare use of the verb—used on 3 times in NT

b. Meaning—ἐξουσιάζω

- To bring under the power of
- To control—to be master of

2. It is always used in a restrictive or negative way—here and:

a. **I Cor 6:12**—do not let appetites *control* you

- Paul says everything is permissible for him
- But he will not be *mastered* by anything—e.g. food or sex

b. **I Cor 7:14**—we are not *masters* of our own bodies

- A wife’s body does not belong to herself alone—but also to her husband
- A husband’s body does not belong to himself alone—but also to his wife

## **D. BUYING OR EXTORTING ADULATION FROM PEOPLE—v 25**

1. “are *called* ‘benefactors’”—εὐεργέτης

2. Meaning

a. Literally—one who has done something good

- b. Title given to someone who has done the country a good service
  - Like ‘savior’—or ‘father of the country’
- 3. The good meaning of this word
  - Honored *after* doing a good service
  - So being a benefactor results from doing an *act of service*
  - Not just for holding a position or exercising pretended authority
- 4. Jesus’ usage of the word
  - a. Jesus uses it ironically—with a touch of sarcasm
  - b. He says they *call* them benefactors
    - 1. They are not *true* benefactors
    - 2. Instead—they are extortioners
      - They abuse their positions
      - They tax the people for personal gain and power
      - Then use this money and power to buy popularity from the people whom they have abused
    - 3. They have not *earned* the title by *serving* others
    - 4. They have doubly served **themselves**
      - By abusing their authority—and their people
      - By buying public recognition and honor for themselves

## E. SUMMARY—OF JESUS’ DESCRIPTION

- Greatness in the eyes of the world is about three things:
  - 1. Position
  - 2. Power
  - 3. Popularity

## III. JESUS REJECTS WORLDLY GREATNESS

### A. HIS STATEMENT—v 26—“But it is not this way with you”

- 1. Literally = “But you not so”
  - This is not a description—but a command
  - The command: “You are not to be this way!”
- 2. Jesus’ command involves two parts
  - Do not **do** what the world expects
  - Do not even **think** as the world thinks

### B. DO NOT **DO** AS THE WORLD EXPECTS

- Do not seek positions for the purposes of power or fame
- Do not lord your positions over others
- Do not focus on gaining power
- Do not abuse your authority
- Do not be driven by the urge for popularity

### C. DO NOT EVEN **THINK** THE WAY THE WORLD THINKS

1. Do not settle for what *seems* to be greatness
  - a. *True* greatness is not what the world says it is
  - b. Summary of what the world says greatness is
    - Domination—power
    - Recognition—fame
  - c. But both of these are imaginary and fleeting
2. Change your *attitude* about and *understanding* of greatness

Learn what true greatness is!

3. Why?
  - a. He was about to confer on them truly great power—**read vv 29-30**

*And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

- b. He has also conferred on His saints the same great power
  1. They will **reign** with Him eternally—**Rev 22:5**
  2. But this comes to those who are true **servants**—**Rev 22:3**

## IV. JESUS EXPLAINS TRUE GREATNESS

**Read text—v 26**—*but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.*

### A. HIS BASIC MESSAGE

1. His shift in Focus
  - a. From what *seems* to be greatness—to what really **is** greatness
  - b. By re-defining greatness—as being a real *leader*
2. Two essentials make someone *really* great
  - a. Becoming ‘youngest’
  - b. Being a servant

### B. BECOMING YOUNGEST

1. **νέος** = young—newborn—new—youthful [adjective]

- Our prefix—new—like ‘neophyte’ (newly planted, novice)
- In NT—fresh—newly produced—like ‘new wine’
- In NT—‘young’—younger men/women in the church
- In NT—‘younger’ brother—the prodigal son

2. This deals with chronology and age

a. Not that one is less in stature, character, or importance

**EXAMPLE:** Large wooden pole—vs—short, skinny rod  
It is not the age or appearance that matters

b. It suggests a stage of life

- Time of training—apprenticeship
- Time of learning the ropes—to be more effective
- One who comes through the ranks
- Earning the right to be heard—by demonstrating experience

3. Jesus Himself had done this

- Grew in wisdom/stature/favor with God and man—**Lk 2:52**
- Spent 30 years learning carpenter’s trade—apprenticeship
- Spent time learning and teaching God’s word
- He was a *real* person—who could relate to others

## C. BEING A LEADER

1. Meaning of ‘leader’—**ἡγέομαι**

- Ruler—commander—one with authority
- Root word for ‘hegemony’—predominant influence over others
- From a word meaning—to lead another by taking him with you

2. Notice—this is a *verb*—not a noun

- A leader is one who *acts*
- Not just filling a position of power

3. Principle: to become a leader—one must be a **servant**

a. Meaning—**διακονέω**

- To attend another—to wait upon
- To minister = to provide the necessities of life

b. Notice—this is also a *verb*

- One is not just *called* a ‘servant’ by position
- Though it is popular to talk about ‘servant-leadership’
- But this means *really* to **do** things that help other

**EXAMPLE:** ‘plastic butlers’ do not really serve

c. Characteristics of this verb—to serve

1. It is done *voluntarily*
2. It is done out of *personal* devotion

d. Two other verbs might have been used here

1. **δουλεύω**—to serve in bondage to—to act as a slave

But this is obligatory—*not voluntary*

2. **λατρεύω**—to do service of worship—to lead in worship

But this is institutional—*not personal*

e. Also notice—this is a present active participle

- One who *is* serving—not past—but continuous present action
- Not something that you *did* once—but then *quit* doing
- No—this is a lifetime task—a lifestyle of *becoming*
- Remember—we are preparing here for *eternal* service!

## D. SUMMARY: TWO KEY PRINCIPLES OF TRUE GREATNESS

1. **Aptitude**—you cannot lead until you have learned the ropes

2. **Attitude**—you cannot lead without genuine humility

a. **Negatively**—arrogance does two things

- It alienates ‘leaders’ from followers—forfeits leadership
- It blinds people with false sense of self-confidence

b. **Positively**—being a servant does two things

- Servants take nothing for granted—they are appreciative
- Servants always focus on others’ needs—they always do good

## E. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF REAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP

1. Good leaders

- Identify with their followers
- Earn the right to be heard—by coming through the ranks
- Know what the people are going through—empathy
- Care about their followers and their needs—sympathy

2. People follow leaders

- Who they have confidence in—the leader’s aptitude
- Whom they respect for their attitude
  - Because the leaders are humble not arrogant
  - Because the leaders have their best interests at heart

## V. JESUS GIVES AN EXAMPLE OF TRUE GREATNESS

**Read the text—v 27—***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.*

### A. JESUS SETS THE STAGE WITH A RHETORICAL QUESTION

1. Question: Who is normally identified as the greatest?
2. The normal answer is—the one who eats at the table
  - Either the master of the house—who hires the servants
  - Or the honored guest—whom the master invites to dinner
  - But not the lowly servant—who tends to their needs

### B. REMEMBER THE CONTEXT—THE PASSOVER MEAL

1. Jesus is the Master
  - a. His is the ‘Teacher’—**v 11**
  - b. His disciples call Him ‘Rabbi’ and ‘Lord’
2. Jesus is dining with his disciples—students—followers
3. Jesus should be at the ‘head’ of the table—though they ‘reclined’
4. The disciples should be serving Him
5. But Jesus had already brought them into His inner circle

**Jn 15:14-15—***I no longer call you servants [δουλους], because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends [φιλους], for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

- a. They are no longer mere household servants—as slaves (*δουλοι*)
- b. They are now His friends—*φίλοι* [for whom there is brotherly love]
- c. And with this comes a promotion
  - To be like Him
  - To serve as a true servant—*diakoneo*
  - To be willing to lay down your life for your friends—**Jn 15:13**

### C. JESUS TURNED THE TABLES ON THEM—WHAT JESUS MEANT

- Though you call me Master—and rightly so
- I am the one who has served you—here and now—see **vv 17-20**
- My position as Lord has not prevented me from serving you
- My identity as Lord—who I AM—has compelled me to serve you
- Because I AM the personification of greatness and leadership



## D. WHY DID JESUS DO THIS?

1. His immediate purpose—was to identify with us

a. He became ‘youngest’—**v 26**

- Born as a child
- Grew as a man among men
- Experienced everything that humans go through

b. He became a ‘servant’—**v 26**

*Ph 2:6-7—Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

2. His motive—pure love—unconditional love

a. The obvious goal: to save us—even when we were His enemies

b. The less obvious goal: to help us—regardless

3. His ultimate purpose

a. To obey the Father—and thus to please Him

b. To please the Father—He came to serve God’s children

## E. WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN JESUS SAYS ‘I AM’ A SERVANT

- When we say—I am not able to meet (serve) my needs—He says “I AM”
- When we say—I am not able to save myself—He says “I AM He” who was sent to do it for you!
- When we say:
  - I am not able to feed myself—I AM the bread of life
  - I am lost in the darkness—I AM the light of the world
  - I am not able to protect myself—I AM the Good Shepherd
  - I am not able to find the way—I AM the Way/Truth/Life
  - I am unclear about eternal life—I AM the Resurrection/Life
  - I am uncertain about the future—I AM the Alpha/Omega