

## Sunday Morning Message

October 22, 2023

Title – *Servant Leadership; Being a Servant*

Text – Mark 9:33 - 37; 10:35 - 45

Congregational Reading – Mark 9:33 - 37

### Introduction

Today's message comes from the Gospel of Mark, which has been the focus of our devotional reading for the past several days. Mark is one of the synoptic gospels along with Matthew and Luke, meaning that they are more like each other than they are to the Gospel of John.

Some facts about Mark:

1. He may have been converted by Peter. (1 Peter 5:13)

*"13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son." (1 Peter 5:13)*

2. He may have been the young man in the Garden of Gethsemane.

*"51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." (Mark 14:51-52)*

3. He was the son of a believing mother. (Acts 12:12)

*"12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying." (Acts 12:12)*

4. His uncle was Barnabas who was the one who discipled Paul (Colossians 4:10).

5. He went with Paul and Barnabas on their first journey but came home early (Acts 13:5).

6. He was the reason for the split between Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:36 – 41).

*"36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto*

*the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."*  
(Acts 15:36-41)

7. About ten years later, he was reconciled with Paul. (Colossians 4:10 & 11; Philemon 24)

*"10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) 11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."* (Colossians 4:10-11)

*"23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; 24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers."* (Philemon 1:23-24)

*"11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."* (2 Timothy 4:11)

8. Tradition has it that John Mark was dragged to death through the streets of Alexandria in 64 A.D.

9. Mark's focus seems to be the Gentiles, particularly the Romans. He explains Jewish traditions to a people unfamiliar with Jewish customs. He records more about what Jesus did, rather than the things that He said. Some of the longer discourses have been omitted. He presents Christ as a Servant. His writing contains a lot of action. He often uses the words, "straightway and immediately," which makes this a book of action.

10. He wrote particularly to a Roman audience. He used he used Latin words not found in the other Gospels ("executioner," 6:27; "farthing," 12:42).<sup>1</sup> There are fewer Old Testament quotations or allusions in Mark than in the other gospels.

## Transition

The focus of today's message will be on Jesus' teaching regarding being a servant. Mark's gospel presents Jesus as a servant and then teaches us that we need to be servants as well. This subject of servanthood is dealt with in both chapters nine and ten:

*"33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. 36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and*

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: King James Version*, Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 1479.

*when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." (Mark 9:33-37)*

Note – Matthew 18:1 – 6 is a parallel passage to Mark 9:33 – 37.

In this passage of Scripture, we see the disciples arguing amongst themselves about who among them will be the greatest. This is a common problem with man. We love to compare ourselves among ourselves:

*"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12)*

This passage teaches what the Lord thinks about all this self-exaltation. Should we be worried about our position, or our status; or how we are seen by other men?

**Illustration** – Two Bible College Students – Brother Albert and Brother Nunez

If we compare Mark's Gospel with Matthew's, we see that the disciples were arguing about this. It's bad enough that we are so carnal as to be concerned with greatness, but to fight about it takes it to another level. The Bible is clear:

*Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. (Proverbs 13:10)*

This whole story is replete with pride. It is pride that caused these men to desire greatness in the first place. There is a big difference between wanting to do great things to glorify the Lord, and doing things that will draw attention to ourselves. Sometimes, it is difficult to judge in ourselves what our true motive is.

The teaching of the Scripture is clear, however. God wants His children to be humble:

*"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:6)*

*"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James 4:10)*

*"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (1 Peter 5:5 & 6)*

Jesus develops this idea of not seeking greatness and being a servant in Mark chapter ten (Mark 10:35 – 45 [there is a parallel passage to this in Matthew 20:20 – 28]):

*"35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. 36 And he said unto them, What*

would ye that I should do for you? 37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. 38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: 40 But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. 42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. 43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: 44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. 45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:35-45)

Look at a similar passage in Luke 14:7 – 11

"7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:7-11)

## Concluding Thoughts

### 1. Don't Seek Greatness – Be a Servant

Illustrate – Many people want to be put into a position that elevates them, like a teacher of an adult Bible class – Instead why not try to teach anyone who is willing to listen, whether adult or child.

Many people want to be considered for the office of the deacon – Instead why not be a deacon: a servant.

Διακονέω (diakoneō - dee-ak-on-eh'-o)

Definition - **an attendant, that is, to wait upon** (mentally or as a host, friend or [figuratively] teacher); technically to act as a Christian deacon: - (ad-) minister (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon.

The greatest example of this is the Lord Jesus, Himself:

*"3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; 4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. ... 12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. 16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. 17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."* (John 13:3-5, 12-17)

At the conclusion of this Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, something that seemed very strange to His disciples at the time and would seem almost preposterous to us today, especially in this time of social distancing. It is not our custom to wash feet, nor is it necessary today to wash other people's feet as we all wear shoes. However, in Bible days, people wore sandals without socks, and walked on dirty roads that were at best, dusty; but were often, very muddy. People's feet were often filthy. So, it was not unusual for people to wash their feet upon entering a home. A parent might wash the feet of her small child, or a wife, her husband's. In the home of somebody wealthy, it might even be customary for a servant to wash the feet of an invited guest. However, it would have been very unusual for the master of the house to wash someone's feet.

- a) **There was a need** (The disciple's feet were dirty.).
- b) **There were in the room the necessities to meet that need** (The basin, the water, and the towel were all there – verses 4 – 5.).
- c) **There was negligence on the part of the disciples** (The supper was now over; they had been in the Upper Room for a while, and yet they all still had dirty feet.).
- d) **The need was met by the Lord.**

## 2. Don't Minimize Anyone's Worth in Your Mind

Jesus put a child up as an illustration. We tend to dismiss children as being unimportant. Everyone is equal in the sight of God, and everybody is important to the cause of Christ.

**Illustrate** – Pastor Rick rebuked me for not acknowledging my son.

- 3. **Become Childlike Yourself** - Be teachable. Be willing to accept rebuke at times from those whom God has placed over you, and even sometimes from those who are positionally underneath you.

D. L. Moody once said, “The measure of a man is not how many servants he has, but how many men he serves.”<sup>2</sup>

**Illustration** – The great missionary and founder of the, Hudson Taylor, was an example of a man who understood what it meant to be a servant leader. Two of his young missionary students were complaining about a clogged-up sewer line. While they argued about who should go down and fix it, the great missionary himself went down and took care of the problem.

Once, Hudson Taylor was being introduced by a Presbyterian moderator as the visiting missionary speaker. The introduction was effusive and ended with a reference to “our illustrious guest.”

“Dear friends,” began Hudson Taylor, “I am the little servant of an illustrious Master.”<sup>3</sup>

That’s all we are – little servants of an illustrious Master.

The Hudson Taylor story has inspired many other servant leaders.

A student at a Bible school in the Philippines became disturbed over the condition of the men’s rest rooms, since they always seemed to be neglected in the cleaning routine. When nothing was done to eliminate the filth, he took matters into his own hands and complained to the principal of the school. A little while later, the student noticed that the problem was being corrected, but he saw with amazement that the man with the mop and pail in hand was the principal himself!

Later the student commented, “I thought that he would call a janitor, but he cleaned the toilets himself. It was a major lesson to me on being a servant and, of course, it raised a question in my own mind as to why *I* hadn’t taken care of the problem.”<sup>4</sup>

**Illustrate** – Dr. Bowen cleaning our bathrooms.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael P. Green, ed., *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching: Over 1500 Sermon Illustrations Arranged by Topic and Indexed Exhaustively*, Revised edition of: The expositor’s illustration file. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> John Stott, *The Preacher’s Notebook: The Collected Quotes, Illustrations, and Prayers of John Stott*, ed. Mark Meynell (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Green, “servanthood.”