

Remnant Life Church  
**Intervention Teaching Series**  
*Servanthood*  
Week 7  
“Serving out of Humility”  
John 13:1-15

In biblical times there was a very set social caste system that was evident in the everyday lives of the people

- It was certainly present in their society
  - Wealth was the primary line of demarcation among the people
  - Those who “had” ruled, those who “had not” served.
  - And once you were identified with a particular group, there was little chance of moving to another
    - Especially from the serving group to the ruling
  - It was not a matter of choice, but of birth, station, and wealth
  
- And it was present in the family
  - The oldest male of the family was the undisputed head of the people
  - His first-born son was the second most important since he would be the one to inherit the family estate through his father
    - The father was tasked with making every important decision for the family
    - He would assign the work in order to keep the family environment healthy, happy, and running smoothly
    - He would be responsible for the health and well being of the entire family, including servants, livestock, and relatives, no matter how distant in relation
    - His word was law, and there was no such thing as debate or even discussion unless he requested another person’s input
  - From the highest to lowest, best to worse, leader to follower – it was all firmly set and had been that way since the beginning...

That was until Jesus arrived -

- Jesus began to teach a way of living and relating to other people that was completely foreign and, most likely, at first hearing, very confusing
  - In **Matthew 20**, Jesus concludes the parable of the workers in the vineyard with the words, “*So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*” (**Matt 20:16**)
  - In **Mathew 19** Jesus encounters the rich young man who cannot give up his wealth to follow Jesus
    - Jesus then says, *Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.* (**Matt 19:28-30**)

- Jesus wanted for them to understand that the wealth and value of this world is nothing when compared with the riches of heaven
- To sacrifice first place in this world is to be rewarded in heaven a hundred times more
- Jesus was also teaching that the things most valued here that make a person “first” (wealth, social standing, fame, power, etc) will not mean anything in the Kingdom of Heaven
- In fact, He says, those who sacrifice those things for the sake of following Jesus Christ will be first in heaven

Understanding first and last according to the Kingdom of God’s definition and living it here among other people requires a total shift in thinking away from the world’s definition

- Jesus states that the greatest demonstration of love is through an act of service
  - **John 15:13** - *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*
  - Many understand this verse to mean that a person may give up their life, or die, for someone else
  - Lay down, in the original language, is *tith-ee-me*
    - It means to lay or set down
    - It also means to bend, kneel, or bow
    - IOW it is a physical posture of service, giving or doing for another person in humility
    - Therefore, within the definition of the original language, the verse can also read...
    - *Greater love has no one than this, to serve one’s friends.*

Jesus demonstrated the willing humility of service to other’s when He washed the disciple’s feet

### **READ – John 13:1-15**

- We read in this account how Jesus assumed the position of the lowest servant
  - Washing the dirt of the street off the feet of a house guest was the work of a child-servant
  - It was considered the lowest action since it was washing the lowest and dirtiest part of the traveler’s body
  - It was unthinkable that the revered Rabbi of their group would physically, not to mention culturally, stoop so low
- But Jesus was not teaching a lesson in hygiene, it was a lesson in serving those around you regardless of your position, station, or standing seen by others or the way you see yourself
  - Jesus was demonstrating a Kingdom principle
  - To freely give of oneself is to demonstrate the love of God
- The disciples, understandably, were horrified at what they were witnessing, with Peter initially refusing to even permit it

- But Jesus clearly tells them that it is this type of servant's heart that is required to be a part of His Father's Kingdom
  - It is not an optional behavior
  - It is not one that you do based on your feelings at the moment

Jesus performed this act for three reasons

- First, to demonstrate to His disciples how much He loved them
  - Serving is an act of love
- Second, to foreshadow or foretell His self-sacrifice on the cross
- Third, to demonstrate the truth of His call and to provide a living example of how each of them (and us) are to serve others in humility

It should not be lost when we consider the act Jesus chose to use that the disciples had struggled throughout the ministry of Jesus with their desire and passion to be great

- In **Matthew 18**, they come to Jesus asking who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven (although Jesus would have known their heart and their motivation for asking)
- In **Matthew 20**, the mother of James and John ask for her sons to be placed in a prominent place in heaven
- In **Mark 9**, Jesus catches the disciples arguing among themselves who about was the greatest
- We read the same thing in **Luke 9**
- Again, He was using His own life as a testimony of His own words
  - **John 15:13** - *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends*
- When was the last time you did something for someone solely for the reason of expressing your love for them?
  - That means it was not done out of obligation
    - Many times people – especially married couples - confuse the two
    - Not because you have to but only because you want to
  - What you did means it was done with no expectation of return
  - It was done without you ever reminding them that you did it
  - Pure love expects nothing in return and does not use their action as a bargaining tool later

The drive to always be first and be served by others is the promotion of self – the flesh

- Jesus said that to be first in the Kingdom of God is to be the least on earth
- Preacher, evangelist, and publisher D. L. Moody hosted a conference in the late 1800s for some of Europe's most well-known and prominent evangelists. Each evening, at the conclusion of that day's activities, the men placed their dirty shoes and boots outside the door, demonstrating the custom in Europe for a hall servant to clean and polish the shoes during the night. Well, no such tradition existed in the US, so Moody suggested to some of his ministerial students there that they might want to fill this need by doing the menial task of cleaning the shoes. His suggestion did not impress them and was met with very little enthusiasm. So later, when all had gone to bed, Moody collected the shoes and took



them to his room to clean them himself. His act of servanthood would have never been uncovered except for the fact that someone happened to visit his room during the act of cleaning. Others were told about it, and the rest of the week, there was no shortage of volunteers to do the shoe shining.

- Even though the students did come around to understand the importance of their teacher's act
  - Do you see the truth that acts of service begin in the heart?
  - Yes, they participated but out of guilt rather than humility

Within the Kingdom of God, however, we come to understand that the most menial and quietest of tasks are those that will speak the loudest of who you truly are.