

BEING A SERVANT

There are polls and lists of the "best dressed" and the "most beautiful" people and probably none of us will ever make such a list. We won't ever make the list of the top ten wealthiest people in the world or even in our hometown. There are lists of the "most admired" and the "least admired." I find it interesting in this world where success is measured in terms of wealth, clothes and beauty that the people that end up on the "most admired" list are the likes of Mother Teresa and Billy Graham. That fact should give us all some hope that true values are still being recognized in the world in which we live.

The idea of "humility being the path to greatness" is not a particularly easy-to-comprehend concept. In fact, most people take just the opposite approach of bragging and trying to promote themselves and are filled with pride. These efforts end up being counterproductive in that others see them as being "small and petty" rather than "great." Jesus taught the concept of "servanthood" in the most famous of all His teachings, the Sermon on the Mount. The idea of "going the second mile" and "turning the other cheek" are vivid pictures of a life that is not dominated by pride and of one who has the best interest of others uppermost in his mind. Believe me, such behavior is not something that can consistently be "acted out" on the stage of life, it can only be "lived out" of the basic nature of a person. Unless our basic nature has undergone the transformation of "dying to self and being resurrected to new life in Jesus Christ," then the best we can do is to try to "act it out." On the other hand, if Jesus is living in us, then behavior that is marked by humility happens as naturally as a tree bears fruit. It is to this end that we are born again: that Jesus lives in us and it is His life and His nature that is expressed in what we do.

Jesus not only taught "servanthood" and humility early in His ministry to the crowds, he also taught this same thing until the very end to His closest disciples. One of the finest teaching opportunities that He had was at the Last Supper and many of the Kingdom principles were emphasized and reinforced at that time.

LUKE 22:14-18 The preparations had

been made and Jesus and His disciples had arrived at the upper room to observe the Passover. For about 1467 years the Children of Israel had kept this observance to commemorate God's salvation in delivering them from slavery in Egypt. For 1467 times the generations had performed a drama that was to teach them a key truth of the Plan of Salvation. For 1467 times lambs had been sacrificed in each home so that they might understand the offering of the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for sin for the whole world. The moment in history when "the real thing" was going to take place almost upon them. This Last Supper really was the last time the observance of the Passover would point to the offering up of the Lamb of God. It would be the last time that Jesus would take part in such an observance until the fullness of the Kingdom of God comes. The future occasion is thought by many to be a reference of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb that is mentioned in Revelation 19:9.

A similar reference was made to the wine that was passed around to the disciples. During the Passover meal there were four cups shared and this was one of those times. As we will see, after the meal, Jesus passed the cup one more time. Throughout the meal, there were occasions of prayers and thanksgiving and portions of the Psalms were sung. It was a serious experience that was rich in meaning for the Jews.

LUKE 22:19-20 Part of the Passover observance involved eating unleavened bread. The fact that the bread was unleavened has been used to symbolize the urgency in which they left Egypt and the preparation of removing any leaven from their homes prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread was symbolic of the need for separation from the world. There continues to be meaning in this for us. There is urgency in our fleeing from anything in life that would entrap or enslave us and there is certainly a need to be continually separating ourselves from the world system in which we live.

The "bread" took on new meaning at this occasion in that Jesus associated it with Himself. As part of His teaching among the people, He had referred to Himself as the

Bread of Life. This teaching formed a bridge between the old and the new. The unleavened bread in which we see the urgency and importance of purity for our lives had now become the means by which we can accomplish the seemingly impossible goal. The breaking of the bread symbolized the sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. This giving was for us to pay the penalty for our sin.

Later on, after the supper had ended, Jesus again referred to His sacrifice in associating the wine with His blood that would be shed to inaugurate and seal the New Covenant. We are told to "eat the bread (and drink the wine) in remembrance of Him." This commandment is parallel to the commandment given to the Israelites regarding the Passover observance. They are symbols of the reality of the sacrifice of God's Son for our sins and the sins of the world and of the everlasting hope of glory and that is *Christ in us*.

LUKE 22:21-23 It is thought that the timing of the revelation that one of the twelve would betray Him was prior to the Supper. Matthew and Mark indicate that Judas was there for the Passover meal but left prior to the Lord's Supper. Jesus knew what Judas had done in agreeing to turn Him over to the religious authorities. We can only speculate as to his motives for doing what he did.

The Plan of Salvation had been determined before the world began. Jesus knew what was coming and He allowed it to play out on the stage of history. The fact that God knows what the world and people in the world will do does not relieve any of us of our responsibility to make the right choices and to do the right things.

It is interesting that none of the other disciples suspected Judas. They questioned among themselves as to whom it might be. Mark quoted them as saying, "Surely it is not I." We have a tendency to always think that "it is someone else" rather than ourselves who needs help or who may fail. This too is part of the pride we have and speaks to our need for humility and brokenness in our own lives so that Jesus can express His life through us.

LUKE 22:24-27 This discussion regarding greatness was also likely held early in the evening. It was in response of this bickering that Jesus picked a basin, took a towel and washed the feet of the disciples. He was obviously the leader, He was obviously

the greatest One there, He was obviously in control, and yet He had no problem in performing the lowliest tasks. What freedom there is in the Kingdom of God! In the world system, the kings exercise lordship and require that other serve them. But for those in the Kingdom of God the truest picture of the life of Jesus expressed through us is that we are among people as "those who serves."

LUKE 22:28-30 Because of their faithfulness to Jesus, authority would be granted to them in addition to the fellowship they would enjoy with the Lord.