

Pleasant Grove Church

SBSG Sermon Notes

Date: August 1, 2010

Sermon Title: "So, you want to be great, huh?"

Secondary Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-5

Main Scripture: Mark 10:35-45

The Request of James and John

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him.

"Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

³⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³⁷ They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

³⁸ "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

³⁹ "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 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. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ 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."

1

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Mk 10:35-45

The meaning of Servant...

Servant of the Lord.

diakonéō [to serve], *díakonía* [service], *diákonos* [servant, deacon] *diakonéō*. This word for service, as distinct from *douleúō* (to serve as a slave), *therapeúō* (to serve willingly), *latreúō* (to serve for wages), and *leitourgéō* (to do public service), carries the basic nuance of personal service.

A. *diakonéō* outside the NT.

1. The concrete sense is basic: a. "to wait at table," b. "to care for," and c. (comprehensively) "to serve." For the Greeks service is undignified; we are born to rule, not to serve. Service acquires value only when it promotes individual development, or the development of the whole as service of the state (or ultimately as service of God). If this demands some renunciation, the idea of self-sacrificial service finds little place.

2. In Judaism, service is not thought to be unworthy; hence a deeper understanding of it develops. The LXX does not use *diakoneín*, but has *leitourgeín*, *latreúein*, and even *douleúein*. Philo has *diakoneín* for "to serve" with an echo of waiting at table. Josephus has it for "to wait at table," "to obey," and even "to render priestly service". The commandment to love one's neighbor offers a solid basis for sacrificial service, but in later Judaism tends to be weakened by the distinction between the righteous

and the unrighteous and the construing of service as meritorious rather than sacrificial.

B. *diakoneín* in the NT. By exalting service and relating it to love of God, Jesus both sets forth a completely different view from that of the Greeks and purifies the Jewish concept.

1. The sense "to wait at table" occurs in Lk. 17:8; Jn. 12:2. An astonishing reversal takes place when the returning master rewards his servants by waiting on them (Lk. 12:37). Jesus himself is similarly present as one who serves (Lk. 22:27). Hence when he asks who is greater, the one who sits at table or the one who serves, the obvious answer that the Greeks would give is wrong. Yet Jesus does not substitute an answer that is theoretically opposite. Instead he points to himself, for as the Son of Man who is also Lord of the kingdom, he institutes a new pattern of human relationships which extends even to waiting at table or washing the feet (Jn. 13:4ff.).

Questions for discussion and reflection:

1. What do you think about the request of James & John in verse 37?
2. Is it wrong to be ambitious? If so, why

3. When you are confronted with unreasonable requests how do you respond?

4. Now that you understand the definition of servant, how would you describe yourself as a servant? Are you Christ focused or are you self focused?

5. What is the greater lesson Jesus is teaching the disciples about serving?

Digging Deeper: When you look at your life, have you been unreasonable in some of your requests for positions of authority?

Prayer Focus: Dear God.....help me move beyond my selfish desires so that I can please you as a worthy servant.
Amen...

In Acts 6:2 *diakoneín* means "to supervise the meal," i.e., its whole provision, preparation, and organization. This *diakoneín* as love in action is set in tension with the *diakonía tou lógou* as the proclamation of love. Most likely what was involved was not just the distribution of portions to those in need but the arranging of common meals, and the radical issue might well have been that of table fellowship rather than wrangling about the better portions; if so, the appointment of the Hellenistic Seven takes on added significance. *diakoneín* is also used for Martha's serving in Lk. 10:40 (cf. Jn. 12:2) and that of Peter's mother-in-law in Mk. 1:31. When the angels serve Jesus in Mk. 1:13; Mt. 4:11, they, too, are probably bringing him food after the period of fasting.

2. The wider sense "to serve" reflects the same transvaluation of values as the narrower meaning. Waiting at table may well be included in Lk. 8:3, but the term covers many activities in Mt. 25:42ff. Here service of others is service of Christ and involves personal commitment. Worldly rulers lord it over their subjects but the concern of the disciples is with God's kingdom, the way to which leads through suffering and death that has service as its point. Hence the only path of greatness for Christians is to become the servants and even the slaves of all (Mk. 9:35; 10:44). More than table service is now involved; all kinds of sacrificial activity on behalf of others, as exemplified by Christ's own self-offering, are required. Service of others is service of God, and it may entail service even to the point of death itself (Jn. 12:25-26).

i.e. *id est*, that is
cf. *confer*, compare

3. The life of the community is thus a life of serving. Every *chárisma* is given (1 Pet. 4:10) in stewardship, and the *charísmata* comprise gifts of word and gifts of action, the latter especially being described as *diakoneín*. Timothy, Erastas, Onesimus, and Onesiphorus (Acts 19:22; Phlm. 13; 2 Tim. 1:18) offer examples. The prophets rendered an advance service (1 Pet. 1:10ff.), and the apostles also do service (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3: "a letter *diakonētheísa* by us"). This service cannot be proud, self-righteous service; it is discharged only by God's power and to his glory.

4. A particular service of Paul's is the collection for Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:19). Thus he uses *diakonón* when he says that he goes to Jerusalem with help for the saints (Rom. 15:25). This is a single instance of the more general service of the saints which is commended in Heb. 6:10

Grand title applied to a variety of persons in the Bible. The basic term, *servant*, covers a range of meanings. Used some 800 times in the OT alone, servant refers to a slave (with less stigma than in most recent history), to an officer close to the king, or to the chosen leader of God's people.

Isaiah 41:8, 9 defines this highest servanthood as something granted by God's grace: "But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, ... I took you ... I called you. I said, 'You are my servant.' " This title is thus applicable to heroes of faith and

action—to patriarchs (Gn 26:24; Ez 28:25; 37:25; including Jb 1:8; 2:3; 42:7, 8), Moses (Ex 14:31; 1 Kgs 8:53, 56; and elsewhere), David (2 Sm 7:26-29; Jer 33:21, 22, 26; Ez 37:24) and his descendants (as Hezekiah, Eliakim, Zerubbabel—Hg 2:23), the prophets of Jehovah (2 Kgs 10:10; 14:25), and other faithful Israelites such as Joshua and Caleb (Nm 14:24; Jos 24:29; Jgs 2:8).

Prophets other than Isaiah employ this term, but only Zechariah joins him in giving an apparently messianic prediction under this name. Zechariah 3:8 says, "Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates ... men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch." Some would see Zerubbabel as the individual in view here (cf. Zec 6:12.); however, the use of "Branch" is decidedly messianic in Isaiah (11:1) and Jeremiah (33:15).

*The servant of the Lord in specialized biblical usage points to Messiah, at the same time alluding to Isaiah's central message. Though he, with others, employs *servant* with a range of significations, he composed some passages known as the Servant Songs. These distinctive sections of his book are distinguishable in content, but they cannot be extracted from the surrounding context without disrupting the flow of prophecy. Isaiah's focus is on the future Messiah-servant.*

None can question the NT's unanimous messianic interpretation of Isaiah's servant, nor its application of this understanding to Jesus Christ. The more debatable issue is how to discern a definitive messianic intent in Isaiah's prophecy itself. Most are agreed that Duhm's 1892 commentary on Isaiah correctly highlighted four servant songs: 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12. The last of these is "foolproof," but some would include verses 5-7 in chapter 42, verse 7 in 49, and 10, 11 in 50. Should

cf. compare
NT New Testament

one add Isaiah 61:1, cited by Jesus Christ himself at Nazareth (Lk 4:16-21)? Though the title *servant* is not repeated here, the theme is unmistakable.

Since Isaiah 49:3 addresses Israel as "my servant," some scholars read a *collective* idea into all the songs. Others find a *cultic* significance, comparing the Babylonian Tammuz myth. Various *individualistic* views suggest some unknown contemporary of Isaiah (or "Deutero-Isaiah"), a choice from known historical figures (e.g., Jeremiah, Cyrus, Zerubbabel, or the prophet himself), or the coming Messiah. The latter was the predominant Christian view until the end of the last century. The *synthetic* interpretation is an attempt to understand a development, progressing from a collective figure to a clear individualization in the fourth song. The movement is personification to person, corporate personality to messianic Savior.

Isaiah sets the stage for the Messiah-servant's appearance by introducing Immanuel in chapter 7, divine Prince in 9, and the Branch in 11. The shock to Israel of a suffering servant-king is eased in this series of songs, where their own corporate struggles (Is 49:4) typify Israel's (and the world's) redeemer. Oscillation between nation (or remnant) and individual is between type and ideal anti-type. Franz Delitzsch suggests a pyramid, with national Israel as the broad base (42:19), spiritual Israel in the center (41:8-10), and Messiah at the apex.

A "servant Christology" pervades Acts (3:13, 26; 4:27, 30), and 1 Peter, with numerous allusions in the Gospels. Jesus himself quotes Isaiah 53 explicitly only in Luke 22:37, but he seems to allude to it in Mark 10:45; 14:24; and possibly 9:12. Peter not only emphasizes vicarious, redemptive suffering (1 Pt 2:21-25; 3:18) but seems to highlight the theme of Isaiah 53 in summing up OT prophecy (1:11) as predicting "the sufferings of Christ and the

e.g. for example

glories that would follow." Paul includes these elements (1 Cor 15:3; Phil 2:6-11; cf. Rom 4:25; 5:19; 2 Cor 5:21), and John's "Lamb of God" title derives from Isaiah 53:7 no less than from the entire sacrificial system.

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²Elwell, Walter A. ; Beitzel, Barry J.: *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids,

Mich. : Baker Book House, 1988, S. 1927