

- Did you hear about the woman arrested and sentenced in Australia recently for participating in smuggling drugs? During her trial, Melina Roberge admitted that she was addicted to the likes and attention she got on Instagram and she spend an entire trip taking pictures of herself and a friend in exotic locations, all the while being the cover for trafficking cocaine. Her preoccupation with herself has landed her in jail for a minimum of 4 years.
 - The word selfie is now part of our lexicon. It is in the dictionary. It reminds me of the character from Greek mythology named Narcissus.
 - Narcissus was so beautiful that everyone who saw him fell in love with him. He was proud, in that he disdained those who loved him.
 - Nemesis noticed this behavior and attracted Narcissus to a pool, where he saw his own reflection in the water and fell in love with it, not realizing it was merely an image.
 - Unable to leave the beauty of his reflection, Narcissus lost his will to live. He stared at his reflection until he died. Narcissus is the origin of the term narcissism, a fixation with oneself and often with one's physical appearance.
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- Who is the greatest football player of our time – why?
 - Who is the greatest president of your lifetime – why?
 - Who is the greatest musician – why?
 - In almost every case it is because of their talent, accomplishments, achievements, visibility and awards.
 - Let me ask the question again.
 - Who is the greatest teacher you have ever known – why?
 - Who is the greatest friend you have ever had – why?
 - Who is the greatest co-worker (either with or for you) you have worked with – why?
 - It's funny how the criteria change isn't it? Suddenly it is less about what they have achieved and it is more about how their impact on you.
 - One of the things that will cripple your ability to change and keep you from growing as a person and in your faith is a pre-occupation with yourself. Selfishness.
 - Selfishness is like having a disease. A disease that many people have and they don't know they have it. I have yet to meet someone who would freely diagnose themselves as selfish people, yet I have met a lot of selfish people.
 - If we were to diagnose the symptoms of this disease, we would look for:
 - A habit of putting my own schedule before the needs of others.
 - A desire to make sure others see me in the best light.
 - A inability to forget or get past the wrongs others have done to me.
 - Whispers in my mind that I deserve something better.
 - A decision-making process what decides how to use my resources based on what makes me happy.
 - A demand that the church serves all of the needs of me and my family.
 - An inability to apologize.
 - The reason this is a difficult disease to eradicate is that it is celebrated in our culture.
 - I read an article about relationship selfishness this week. The article started, before telling you how to tell if you are selfish, that the first thing you need to do is make sure that you are happy. I'm not the writers saw the irony in the article.
 - We are told that we "deserve" better. The government or company we work for "owes us." Our happiness is our first concern. I have the "right" to never be offended.
 - It is easy to buy into this but the truth is this: **LIVING AS A SERVANT IS GOD'S GATEWAY TO HAPPINESS AND SIGNIFICANCE.**

- The writer of Matthew, the first book of the NT, catalogued an exchange between Jesus and his disciples about this very issue.

Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

- Please make sure that my boys get what they should have. I want them to have the best. Before you judge too harshly, what parent doesn't want the best for their kids.
- James and John are men probably in their late teens to mid-twenties. They have been with Jesus for almost three years.
- Mommy brings her two boys to Jesus to see if she can position them for success in this world. I love the picture. She kneels, showing deference, because of what she wants to ask. The boys are right there, but she is doing the talking.
- I wonder if this was James and John's idea, or their mother's?
- We're going to unpack Jesus' response and the not so joyous response of the rest of the disciples in a bit, but once again, it helps to see what led up to this request.
- Like I said, the disciples had been with Jesus for the better part of three years. They had seen him do amazing things, puzzling things, and listened to him teach. He had invested heavily in them. It was clear that they had priority over the others in the crowds. He had chosen them. There was a sense that they were special. In the case of John, a case can be made that he was Jesus' closest friend in the 12.
- It was right before the last week of Jesus life and Jesus was speaking to his disciples. They had just watched Jesus interact with a rich man and Jesus said how difficult it was for a rich person to get into God's kingdom.

Matthew 19:27 Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" 28 Jesus said to them, "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. 29 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."

- Pretty heady stuff. This is quite a promise. Quite something to look forward to. I wonder if their minds were racing. I wonder if in this, they missed Jesus last statement.

30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

• I think they completely missed it. Or ignored it. Here's why I think that. Within days we read: *Matthew 20:17 Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, 18 "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death 19 and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"*

- Jesus was giving a picture of what awaited him. He was telling them what it was going to look like in the near future. It was not a picture of glory and honor, but of suffering and death. The first word we read next is "Then"
- Yeah, yeah Jesus. We get all that. Bad stuff is going to happen. Yada, yada, yada. Now, here's an important question

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- I would love to know Jesus' internal dialogue. God, are you sure these men are the ones you are going to change the world with? They are so dense. They just aren't getting this. And my time is almost up. What am I going to do?

22 “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” “We can,” they answered. 23 Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, 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 by my Father.”

- The brothers were picturing thrones and accolades and high honors, when the reality and what Jesus knew was coming were agony and humiliation and death. They were still picturing sitting on 12 thrones judging the twelve tribes and they wanted the two best thrones. The positions of power and influence. They were lobbying to get ahead of the rest of the disciples.
- “We’re all in this together,” but then whispered on the side: “but we deserve a bigger raise. We want more credit. We can handle greater responsibility.”
- If you were one of the other 10, what would your reaction be?

24 *When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.*

- Was it because of the request? Or because they got in their first? Or they were smart enough to try and use a woman Jesus cared for to manipulate Jesus?
- You can picture this heading for conflict. For division. For problems.

25 *Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

- If you have been around the church for any length of time, you have heard about serving. But what is Jesus saying here? What does it look like?
- **LIVING AS A SERVANT IS GOD’S GATEWAY TO HAPPINESS AND SIGNIFICANCE.**

I. Being a servant is an attitude rather than a position.

- James and John wanted power and position.
- Jesus is making a contrast here between the leaders the subscribe to the world’s position and the way it is in God’s kingdom.
- The Gentiles lord it “over” those whom they lead. These rules have positional power. They are the kings, governors, bosses. They have the position over another person. They have achieved rank.
- Jesus does not have an issue with achieving a position or rank. The issue is the attitude behind it. It is lording it “over” another. Whenever we have power or position, we run the risk of thinking we deserve from others. This leads us acting with relational indifference or distance.
- Instead, Jesus says, your attitude should be one of a slave. It is not about your actual position, it is about your attitude towards others. The way you think about people should be to consider that they are above you. Relationally. In priority.
- How do you think about those who are lesser than you? Do you think you are better? That perhaps you deserve a little more?
- Anyone in any position can have the attitude of a servant.
- **Make a practice of seeing everyone you meet as important as you are** and then act like this is true. Serving is a relational thing. Living as a servant is not antiseptic.
- This is easy some of the time, but not all of the time.
- **We serve when our lives are based on love.** These things are all connected. If we want to connect with others because of Jesus, we must love others. It forms the basis for serving.

Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

- When we love others, and this leads us to serve them. When we serve others, it stokes our love for them.
- The second part is related to this.

II. A servant puts other's needs first when they have the power not to.

- The leaders in the world have the ability to enforce their will. Jesus describes as “lording it over them”. Because of their position or power or skills or experience, they have the right, ability to push other people, to manipulate, to make them do what we want them to do.
- You will frequently be in a place where you simply do not have to serve others. When you are in a leadership position, you can actually force people to do what you want. For others, we manipulate, coerce, demand what we desire from others.
- Jesus contrasts this with being a servant. Consider a servant. They do what is asked of them. They are told when to jump and how high. They do their master's bidding.
- There are probably jobs and people you would want to avoid. There are times when getting others to do what you don't want to do is all you want.
- A servant takes action for the benefit of others when you would rather not.
- This is not doing everything for everyone. We need boundaries. We need to work away from do-dependency. What it is though, is not making your primary decision process about what is most convenient and useful for you.
- **Take time to think about what would serve another person.**
- Think small (doesn't need to be big). Think immediate (don't put it off). Think what you are capable of (anyone can send a text, make a visit, get some food, listen). Put yourself in their shoes (what would you want in their situation?).
- *“If you want to know if you are functioning as a servant, see how you react when people treat you like one.”* (Lorne Sanny)

III. A servant is active for someone else's good, even at risk to their own.

- They are not primarily active for their own good, rather than using them for your own.
- Jesus makes the contrast between a secular leader who leads by command. They “exercise their authority”. In other words, they want something done, they have the authority to make it happen, and they use that power and authority to make others do what they want.
- Jesus says that instead of leading from the back by commanding, we are led from the front by example.
- A servant or slave only attends to their own needs when all the needs requested of them are met. Hear what I am saying. I am NOT saying to avoid what is to your benefit. The risk to you, your reputation, the trouble to your schedule – none of these should keep you from serving.

1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

- You can't be a servant if you are not ACTIVELY serving.
- Jesus modeled this a week later, when he went around the room at the last supper and washed the disciple's feet and then died for them.
- *“The point of purpose is to determine how you will serve others. If you don't plan to serve, you don't need a purpose.”* (Cheryl Bacheider)
- **We serve most readily when we realize who we really serve.**

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

- **Make a point of regularly serving.** There is so much opportunity to make a huge difference. To invest in the lives of others. To enable ministry. To change the world. Pick something. Try different things. Just do it!
- **LIVING AS A SERVANT IS GOD'S GATEWAY TO HAPPINESS AND SIGNIFICANCE.**
- Jesus concludes by telling them that if you want your life to matter, pour it out for others. Because that is exactly what I did.
- *"Those who devote themselves to themselves will ultimately have but themselves to show for themselves."* (Andy Stanley)
- Now the question is – how do you want to be known in your life?
- What do you want people to say about your legacy?
- More importantly, what do you want Jesus to say when you see him face to face?
- What Jesus is saying is that greatness is not derived by position, power or achievement.
- Jesus knew the suffering they would eventually go through for him, even though they were not ready yet. James would be one of the first Christian martyr's, the record of his beheading is in Acts 12.
- John would face a different kind of pain as he would be the last of the apostles to die. He would have to live with their deaths, until death claimed him.
- James was the first martyr, and was beheaded under the reign of Herod
- John was the only disciple that lived to an old age, but underwent much persecution and ended up exile to an island to live out his years there.
- Peter was crucified upside-down in Rome under the emperor Nero.
- Andrew was said to have been crucified in Greece, after traveling to the now Soviet Union and Turkey for Jesus.
- Thomas died being speared to death by soldiers in India.
- Philip was put to death by a Roman proconsul for converting the proconsul's wife.
- Matthew was said to have been stabbed to death in Ethiopia.
- James (the other one) was stabbed and clubbed to death.
- Matthias, who replaced Judas, ended up being burned to death.
- Bartholomew was put to death in Arabia, some traditions say skinned alive.
- Simon (the Zealot) and Thaddeus who were killed for who they followed.
- None of them got what they pictured when they walked down the road with Jesus towards Jerusalem. They wanted to be something. And they were. Because they served and ultimately gave it all.
- Following Jesus and growing is not about what more he will do for your benefit.