

Serve the King!

Our Lord and King came not to be served, but to serve so;

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow...” (Phil 2:5-10)

The concept of a servant king is somewhat alien to our understanding, for ordinarily it is kings who are served by others. Jesus demonstrated something remarkable, something that challenged contemporary thinking during His time on earth and still does today. As God and King, He came to earth to represent His Father, teach about the kingdom of heaven and prove it by manifesting kingdom power and authority with signs and wonders. He knew that *“a servant is not greater than him who sent him”*, words He shared with His disciples just before the last supper, after He'd washed their feet. He was teaching them an important point – that they too were called to humble themselves and serve the kingdom and God as He was.

However, in 21st century England, servitude carries negative connotations. Perhaps the notion of servant-hood conflicts with our imperialist past? Modern society places so much emphasis on title, status and significance, that servitude is regarded as something lowly, yet it is precisely what disciples of Christ are called to do. To lay down their lives and serve Him through the propagation of His word and all it entails. But even here we have missed a point. Today much energy is spent on sharing the ‘good news of Jesus Christ’. Yet what did Jesus say the ‘good news’ was? *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17)*. We understand the ‘good news’ primarily as Jesus and all He has and is doing for us; but He says there is much more - that the good news includes the fact that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This kingdom, of which He is King, operates on entirely different principles and protocols to planet earth, including in matters of servitude.

Therefore if we truly seek to be sons and daughters of God, we must understand we are here on earth to serve, not be served. Church life should not be about what we can get out of it but what we can *give* to the One who was and is, and is to come.

Serving Christ can solicit opposition and hostility.

People love power and money, titles and important positions – including in church and Christian organisations. Yet Jesus humbled Himself and *made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant*, obedient to the Father's will, even unto death. He humbled himself in the face of hostility and even hatred from the religious leaders of the day.

Significantly He gave His followers a discipleship model: *“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well for I am also. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent, greater than he who sent him. If you know (understand such) these things, blessed are you **if** you do them.”*
John 13:13-17

The challenge 21st century believers have with such passages is grasping the depth of His words. What Jesus is saying, when considered alongside His other teachings, is that if we truly seek to be His disciples and followers, we will be blessed, but, we will very likely have to experience much that He did too.

He chose to lay down His life to fulfil God's will, even unto death.

Martyrdom may not be required of us, but it might? For sure, in every other way we must be willing to sacrifice our lives, endure hardship, pick up our cross (i.e. our callings) and follow him wherever He leads us. Such actions may raise eyebrows, cause controversy or even hostility, just as they did for Jesus, because God's ways are not man's ways. People started trying to stone him and throw him off cliff-tops from the earliest days of His ministry. Satan hates obedient followers for he is the archetype rebel and will not hesitate to stir up the crowd against those who try!

Problems can even arise in the home: remember when Jesus was teaching and one of His disciples came to him and said; *"your mother and brothers are outside, they want to see you?"* What was His response? He ignored their request and instead spoke some rather revealing words, *"who are my mothers and brothers - here are my mothers and brothers, those who do the will of my father in heaven!"*ⁱⁱ Indirectly, He indicted his own family for disobedience and lack of faith.

Comfort and safety have no precedent in the life of a disciple.

Laying down our life to serve is all very well but what about our responsibilities you might say? Well, Jesus said *"let the dead bury the dead"*ⁱⁱⁱ, *"go and sell all you have and give to the poor"*^{iv} and *"follow me and I will make you fishers of men"*.^v Note the first disciples response; *immediately*^{vi} they put down their nets and went. Did they not have jobs and family businesses, wives, children, dependents – responsibilities, yes! But they still went - immediately.

An American missionary once said the two questions most people ask when considering 'mission work' is; "will I be comfortable and will I be safe?" Friends, if you seek safety and comfort as a disciple in the mission field then you have missed the point. If you won't step out of the proverbial boat unless the sea is calm then faith is not at work.

When Gabriel told Joseph to cover the scandal of Mary's pregnancy do you think he felt safe or comfortable living in a community, for which the punishment for adultery was death by stoning? Did they feel safe or comfortable when God told them to go and hide in Egypt until the threat to Jesus' life had passed? What do you think Sarah might have said to Abraham when he told her they were going to sell up and move to a far away land - and live in a tent? Was that safe or comfortable – or even wise? 'Did God really tell you this' Sarah must have questioned? When the disciples escorted Jesus among hostile crowds, or walked for days in the wilderness in the searing heat of the Judean desert, were they comfortable and safe? Were the apostles, saints and prophets of old, tortured and martyred for their words, ever comfortable or safe?

Serving the King will likely come at personal cost.

In contemporary Christian culture we have also forgotten that Jesus cautioned us in another matter: *"do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a mans enemies will be those of his own house. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And He who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.* (Matt 10:34-39.)

Luke records the first part of that conversation like this; *“do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided; three against two, and two against three.”*

These are tough words and Jesus didn't stop there, in Matthew 19 we also read: *“Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, 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 lands for My name sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”*

This is a tough call and direct challenge - but it's the truth!

The reward in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy

When Jesus comes back to rule and reign for 1000 years from Jerusalem, who does He say will rule and reign with Him? His saints. So it's time to start adjusting our thinking and preparing for a potential role in world leadership!

“But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever...then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall obey Him.” (Daniel 7: 18 ,27)

It is His saints, those who love and obey, worshipping in spirit and truth, faithful, loyal, who pursue His kingdom, who will rule and reign with Him. So learn about the kingdom and start practicing its ways. You might think, 'but I go to church every week, pray and go to bible classes. I volunteer in church, doesn't that count?' We are not saved by works but by faith, works being an outward demonstration of faith. The same faith calls us to seek first the kingdom, learn and obey its laws, precepts and ordinances, and to love and honour its King. For one day you may be chosen for a God given position of authority to judge the nations with Him?

“Hold fast to what you have until I come, and he who overcomes and keeps my works, until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.” (Rev 2:25)

We are called to serve our Lord and King as faithful servants, upholding, admonishing and practicing all He requires of us. However, much of what He requires of us also conflicts with the world, including aspects of the 'established church', which has assimilated far too many worldly ways into it over the millennia.

Ignorance will be no excuse on Judgement Day – for all you need to know is in your bible. Do not overlook the teachings of Moses and the prophets, for what did Jesus teach, not just about the kingdom of heaven but also the law and the prophets. He chose to be a bondservant of His Father and was exalted by Him and given the name above every name. This is the example we are to follow. For it is servant hood that qualifies us for what is to come. If we serve as loyal citizens of the kingdom of heaven, passing muster on Judgment Day, holding fast to truth, enduring persecution and hostility, this will qualify us as overcomers and in turn we may find ourselves seated with Him, ruling and reigning over the nations, for a thousand years.

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their Revelation 20:4.

ⁱ Luke 8:20 / Matt 12:47 / Mark 3:32

ⁱⁱ Mark 3:33 / Matt 12:48 / Luke 8:21

ⁱⁱⁱ Luke 9:60 / Matt 8:22

^{iv} Matt 19:21 / Luke 18:22 / Mark 10:21

^v Matt 4:19 / Mark 1:17

^{vi} Matt 4:20 / Mark 1:18