



Turning the World Upside Down Covenant Fellowship

Christ and Culture: Improving Your Serve

Bishop T. Anthony Bronner, Presiding Prelate

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

In sports when one improves their serve, they improve their ability to play. A serve gets the ball in play and it begins the game. The serve also gets the server good position, as well as, placement. The serve establishes pace and power. Well, if we want to play in God's game we must serve. Jesus, in this text, is teaching His disciples about service before His crucifixion. He wanted them to know what being with Him entails. It requires service, and oddly enough the word for servant in the Greek is slave. Jesus wants the follower to be sold out to service. For this to happen there must be abandonment to the worldly trinity of power, prestige and prosperity. Barbara Brown Taylor tells us that serving and following Jesus involves the triad of finding life, losing life and finding it again.

Jesus demands service because that is what He came to do. He came into this culture to serve and give His life as ransom for many. The word **many** is the Greek word *polus* which describes many as weak, strong, great, least, bad, good, and everybody. Jesus came to help those who needed His divine intervention. Therefore, if you want to serve we must be like Christ, and be willing to be a blessing to everyone and anyone.

Mark chapter ten reveals some interesting concepts about motives and the way people serve. Why and how we serve is just as important as serving. We must have the right spirit when serving, and we must do it for the right reasons. Susan B. Anthony once said that she was suspicious of people who always knew what God wanted them to do. Often it coincides with their desires. There are people who want to serve and they serve, but it is tied up to their motives and desires. Jesus engaged the people of the text about their motives. We can observe the **gain to serve, the glory to serve, the greatest to serve, the grief to serve and the gratitude to serve.**

The Gain to Serve

In verse twenty eight, Peter began his conversation about how he and the disciples left everything to follow Jesus. Implying . . . what do we get for this? What is our reward for service? Oddly enough, Jesus affirmed that one gains when he leaves everything to serve Him and the gospel. They will receive in this age and the one to come. The walk with God is full of promise and persecution. Some promises are not obtained without some persecution. We must go through persecution in order to get to promise. Then Jesus said, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first." Strangely, this may be a reference to the one who had everything now and lost salvation, compared to the one who left everything for salvation and service and got everything later.

Will we serve faithfully now and wait to be blessed later or will we be selfish and greedy now? Maybe we must ask the question, what is stopping us from serving God? Is this about gain or what I will get out of it? Just recently, a distinguished black preacher left his reported salary of 600,000 at The Riverside Church because they were allegedly blocking his ability to serve.

Clearly, he will gain and we are praying for his success. Well, we did not leave wealth but a promising future to serve God freely. We too will gain God's favor for serving Him in this present age. Maybe it is true that he/she who laughs first shall laugh last.

The Glory to Serve

Two of Jesus' disciples, once past gain, asked for glory. They wanted equal status with Christ, and desired to be His right and left hand. They asked this after He shared about sin, shame and suffering. It was as though they did not hear that part and only heard about the success. So many of us want the glory without the gory. We want the rainbow without the rain. However, the cross comes before the crown.

Sadly, too many of us want the rewards of service and not the risk or rough places of service. We just want to sit and reign and not work and labor. Jesus said, you will get the pain but the throne is not mine to give. Certainly, they got what they asked for. James was the first to die by way of sword and John lived on the island of Patmos. Often we admire a person's gifts, gains and glory, but we do not have a clue as to the cost. Let God have the glory and you and I remain faithful.

The Greatest to Serve

Interestingly, when the other disciples heard what James and John wanted, they were bothered by the request. However, it was not out of concern but competition. They wanted the greatness for themselves. Count the times in the gospel where there were discussions about greatness. The world is obsessed with who is the best; Tiger or Phil? Kobe or Lebron? Clinton or Obama? Prince or Michael Jackson? This spirit sets up competition, comparison and criticism. We foster this attitude and before we know it we are engaging in **parallel play**. We are in the same sandbox, but we are playing with our own toys – Christian education, pastoral care, youth ministry, armor bearers or administration.

We pretend and think we are protecting the head, but we are fighting for our greatness.

The Grief to Serve

The paradox is when you and I start taking service seriously knowing that there is some grief in service. There are **perpetual needs**. These needs never stop in this culture. They are insurmountable and never ending. Then there is your **partner's nonsense**; their lack of attention, appreciation, attachment and acceptance. Jesus was constantly dealing with his infrastructure. Then there are **private nails**. For Jesus to ransom the people he had to be nailed to the cross. Prior to the cross, He was criticized by the party within and without. And finally, there is **personal nudging**. We are often alone and we must motivate ourselves to maintain and endure. Lest we forget, Jesus died alone for the culture.

The Gratitude to Serve

If it is that much grief involved, then why do it? It is because we have been **called, chosen, and given a chance to change** the world. So we serve this present age because it is our calling to fulfill. We must make changes by first starting with ourselves; the man in the mirror.

Man in the Mirror

by: Michael Jackson

Ooh ooh ooh aah
Gotta make a change
For once in my life
It's gonna feel real good
Gonna make a difference
Gonna make it right

As I turned up the collar on
A favorite winter coat
This wind is blowin' my mind
I see the kids in the street
With not enough to eat
Who am I to be blind
Pretending not to see their needs

A summer's disregard
A broken bottle top
And a one man's soul
They follow each other
On the wind ya' know
'Cause they got nowhere to go
That's why I want you to know

I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you wanna make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and then make a change, yey
Na na na, na na na, na na na oh ho

I've been a victim of
A selfish kinda love
It's time that I realize
There are some with no home
Not a nickel to loan
Could it be really pretending that they're not alone

A willow deeply scarred
Somebody's broken heart
And a washed out dream
(Washed out dream)
They follow the pattern of the wind ya' see
'Cause they got no place to be
That's why I'm starting with me

I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you wanna make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and then make a change

I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you wanna make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and then make that change

I'm starting with the man in the mirror
(Man in the mirror, oh yeah)
I'm asking him to change his ways, yeah
(Change)
No message could have been any clearer
If you wanna make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and then make the change
You gotta get it right, while you got the time
'Cause when you close your heart
(You can't close your, your mind)
Then you close your mind

(That man, that man, that man)
(That man, that man, that man)
(With the man in the mirror, oh yeah)
(That man you know, that man you know)
(That man you know, that man you know)
I'm asking him to change his ways
(Change)
No message could have been any clearer
If you wanna make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself then make that change

(Na na na, na na na, na na na na)
Ooh
Oh yeah
Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah
(Na na na, na na na, na na na na)

Oh no
Oh no, I'm gonna make a change
It's gonna feel real good
Sure mon
(Change)
Just lift yourself
You know, you got to stop it yourself

(Yeah)
Oh
Make that change
(I gotta make that change today, oh)
(Man in the mirror)
You got to, you got to not let yourself, brother oh
Yeah
You know that
(Make that change)
(I gotta make that make me then make)
You got, you got to move
Sure mon, sure mon
You got to
(Stand up, stand up, stand up)
Make that change
Stand up and lift yourself, now
(Man in the mirror)
Make that change
(Gonna make that change, sure mon)
(Man in the mirror)
You know it, you know it, you know it, you know
(Change)
Make that change

© AEROSTATION CORPORATION; MCA MUSIC PUBLISHING; YELLOWBRICK ROAD
MUSIC;