

Sunday 9th August

Servant Leadership – Matthew 20: 20 – 28

We are starting a four part series on leadership and types of leadership. Today's subject is about servant leadership. My message I hope will not only apply to us as a church but I hope as individuals, we can take something from it.

Have you ever argued over the T.V ? Who gets control of the remote ? What about the car when you want to go to different places? What about toys? What about arguing over destination? One of you wants to go shopping the other wants to go to an exhibition. Restaurants? The list continues. What about on the roads? Who is going to be 1st to get their way?

These situations occur when one person wants to do one thing and the other wants to do the opposite. A battle of wills starts with one person winning and the other feeling bitter. When was the last time you were involved in a power struggle within your family?

This is small scale compared to when we join a club, where groups of people potentially could argue over various matters. This is small scale compared to local politics, where people and parties argue over how best to represent and help their local communities. This is small scale compared to decisions that are made nationally. We've all seen Elections!!! But no matter the scale small or big the root of this is just the same but this never happens in Church, does it?

You see the attraction of power & position for many is that you get to call the shots. You get to have your way and get the fame and recognition. For those with ideology you can impose your opinion on the masses and in the words of Jesus in Matthew 20:25 The Gentiles lord it over the people and high officials exercise authority. Throw in the temptation and power that money brings and you can easily get caught up in corruption and oppression. For those who have read or watched Lord of the Rings we see how this 1 small, beautiful ring caused people and kingdoms to fall as it contained such power. It corrupted all that wore it.

This is the way of the world and Jesus calls us to not be part of this world (John 15:19). He calls for us, his people to be different.

Romans 3:23 says all have sinned and fall short of the kingdom of God. This means that we are all sinners and imperfect and when we make decisions whether that is what we watch on T.V or what our country should be doing our decisions could be (although not always) tainted in selfishness and sin. Ladies & Gentlemen we really need to be praying for those in leadership and authority. Children pray for your Mum & Dad. Thankfully we have a God who is in control (Have a read of Romans 13).

We come to our passage for today

It's hard to know what the motive was when James & John with their Mother approached Jesus to ask if they could sit on either side of him in his kingdom.

Were they asking because they wanted power and position?

or

Were they honestly asking because they loved Jesus so much they wanted to always be by his side? After all John refers to himself in his Gospel 6 times as 'The disciple Jesus loved'.

And of course a Mother always wants the best for her boys and all 3 as a family had been following Jesus everywhere. Remember there were many others that followed Jesus apart from the 12 Disciples both men and women.

The request ended in an argument quite like the one in Luke 22, which was about 'Who was the greatest!

These disciples were young and sometimes lacked maturity and maybe it's easy for us to judge James & John and say we would never ask that.

Let's look at Jesus' response to their request

Jesus says in Matthew 20:26 – 28 to be different to the Gentiles around them not to lord it over people, not to be like the world where things are run top down. God's kingdom is different and Jesus turns everything on its head

“whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – 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”.

In fact if you look at the previous passage of 'The Rich Young Man' and 'The Parable of the workers in the vinyard'. In Matthew 19:30 and Matthew 20:16 and we read those famous words of Christ.

'The last shall be first and the first shall be last'.

We as God's people at home or at Church are called to lead and make decisions not based on selfish interest but on the interests of others.

This is so counter cultural! We live in such an individual and consumer society where everything is centred around you and me. Just look at the tablet or the smart phone. On this one device you can watch T.V, speak to the friends you want, block those you don't want, do your shopping online, take photos, search for information, listen to music. You can almost create the world you want cutting off the bits you don't like. But it's not reality and you can have a million friends online but feel completely lonely. The people we leave out might feel lonely. Don't get me wrong the tablet / smart phone can also be a force for good but we need to recognize its limitations and we need to challenge ourselves and others if we become inward looking.

We are encouraged today to look out for ourselves when we should look out for others.

This can also filter into our churches. We hang out with the same people, we talk to those we know, in the end we can be in danger of forming cliques and living in ghettos while the world around us remains lost.

Christ is who we follow and he got on his hands and knees and washed the disciples feet. Imagine that the Creator of the universe enters our world and wipes away the particles of dust from our mucky feet!

The other point I would like to make is that we are part of a living body the Church. Church is not a club, nor is it about me. This is not the Church of Jonathan Greenwood but Jesus Christ, he is the head, the groom and we are the bride. It is not my church so to speak I am part of it but I relinquish all selfish ambition and desires to have Church my way. We all need to surrender to Christ and make Church not about us but about Christ. It's interesting that the Church is described as a bride and groom as so many today spend thousands of pounds on weddings, I know a couple that spent £18,000 on their big day but the marriage falls apart. We can treat Sundays like that, we pay

more attention on how we look on the big day – Sundays and yet in our relationship with Christ perhaps we're struggling. Christ wants that intimacy and relationship with us just like a healthy marriage.

1 Corinthians 12 – 14 talks about us being 1 body, baptised by 1 Spirit and all with very different gifts. We all need each other!

1 Corinthians 12:12-20 ¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body-whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

We are called to serve one another not looking for power or position imposing our agenda. We need to die to self, Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

Let us go out and serve our Church and our Community.