

“Upside Down”

Matt 20:17-34

**Scripture Ref: Phil 2:5-7; John 13:34-35; Rom 12:10, 15-17; Gal 5:13;
Eph 4:32; Rom 7:6; Luke 4:18-19; 1 Pet 4:10**

- 1. It has been said that “no theology is of any threat or consequence until we attempt to apply it to our lives.”**

The Lead-up...

17 Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 18 *"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, 19 and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."*

The play

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 And He said to her, *"What do you wish?"* She said to Him, *"Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."*

- 2. They say that power corrupts – and usually the promise of power brings out the corruption!**
 - a. I have found that whenever power or money is involved, it usually brings out the true nature of people.**
 - b. When I worked in the corp world, whenever a position of leadership came open (with increased pay and power), people suddenly started acting different.**
 - i. People that were interested in the job would show up early for work, and stay late.**
 - ii. They would show up early for meetings – prepared – and be more vocal with their ideas.**
 - iii. They would suddenly find better clothes in their wardrobe, get a haircut.**
 - iv. They would drop by the bosses office to “share an idea”...**
 - c. The preening and posturing was just unbelievable – and the politics were even more intense –**
 - i. People would develop allies in key positions, place themselves into certain meetings that would give them visibility...**
 - ii. I sound like I really know what I’m talking about – (!)**
- 3. Cant say that I ever saw the “get your mom to pitch for you” approach... but that is exactly what happened here!**

- a. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, got their mother to come to go to Jesus and try and secure a place for them in the coming Kingdom.
- b. Awwww... how sweet!! Other than the fact that it was an outright manipulation!

22 But Jesus answered and said, *"You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*

They said to Him, "We are able."

4. Think about this for a second... Jesus has just told them that He was going into Jerusalem to be *betrayed ... condemned to death, ... mocked and scourged ...and crucified.*
 - a. Where they even listening? *"oh yea, betrayal, scourging, crucifixion, we're in!"*

23 So He said to them, *"You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."*

5. Two things Jesus tells them:
 - a. #1 – you will indeed be baptized with suffering – James was the first Apostle to be martyred, and John was dipped in boiling oil then banished to labor in the mines of Crete.
 - b. #2 – Unfortunately what you're asking is not for me to determine – God the Father will determine that.
6. The others were not happy about this power-play, but Jesus uses it as a teaching moment.

24 And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.*

7. At this point the disciples were probably listening intently – “rulers” – “lording over” – “exercise authority” ... yes, we're listening!

26 *Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

8. You can almost see their faces drop!

- a. Many Christians believe that if we follow the precepts of Christianity – do the right things, don't do the wrong things – then God is going to “bless me”
 - b. I'll get promoted, I'll have lots of financial blessings – I'll be one of those “successful Christians”
 - c. These guys are thinking the same thing – “hey we're hanging out with the guy that is going to become the king! Surely we'll get some really good position for all the sacrifice that we've made!”
9. How interesting to find that Jesus perspective is exactly the opposite of that.
- a. Jesus said “if you want to be great – you want to be promoted – become a slave!
 - b. Imagine coming home and telling your wife “great news honey, I just got promoted! I am going to be – wait for it – SERVANT OF ALL!” That's right, I'm gonna be a slave!
10. It's the “Jesus Model” of leadership – Servant Leadership - and it's 100% up-side-down from the world's model!

What does it mean to be a servant?

#1 Being a servant does NOT mean being a doormat

11. It is interesting that most of us know the principle of servant leadership, but we usually think of it in the context of what other people could be doing to serve us!
- a. “If you really love Jesus, you'll do this for me. Jesus said we are supposed to serve one another!”
 - b. That's not serving – that's manipulation!
 - c. “But wait” you say, I have never said that – of course not, neither have I. We would never say it in such blunt terms.
 - d. But we do expect it – and we manipulate to get it!
12. As much as we might hate to admit it, manipulation permeates our relationships with one another.
- a. We use manipulation to get others to do what we want– often spiritualizing our intentions... “it's for the Lord”.
 - b. Sometimes we'll use
 - i. Flattery (you would do so well at this!)
 - ii. Guilt (I really need you... I wouldn't ask if it weren't important)
 - iii. Emotional (tears or anger)
 - iv. Even doing things for others so they'll feel obligated
 - c. When we are unsuccessful we become righteously indignant towards the person, judging their lack of love and servant's heart.

- d. When we are successful, we end up losing respect for those we have manipulated (which we may not even be aware of), and losing respect for ourselves.
13. The thing about manipulation is that it becomes a cancer in our lives
- a. It sickens our relationships and causes division
 - b. It hurts our perspective of others – we start seeing others for what we can get from them
 - c. It allows us to obtain things and roles that may not be best for us.
14. As we followed Jesus over the course of His ministry, we never see him using manipulation to achieve a goal – we never see him bully or coerce someone into following Him.

Handling Manipulation

15. I can usually tell when someone is trying to manipulate me, as I suddenly get the feeling that I don't have a choice.
- a. If I don't do this thing, I am not spiritual, or I don't care, or some other heavy.
16. Usually one of three responses...
- a. We cave in – go along – maybe grumble a bit
 - b. We act rude – make them go away
 - c. Or we do what Jesus did, we can simply refuse to play!
17. There were several instances where the religious rulers attempted to manipulate Jesus – what did he do?
- a. He REFUSED TO PLAY! In a few instances He simply told them – NO, in others He simply withdrew. And it drove them crazy!
 - b. “But wait” you say, “Jesus said He came to serve – so shouldn't He do whatever people ask of Him?” ...no!
18. There is a distinct difference in choosing to serve, and being coerced.

Phil 2:5-7

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

- a. Jesus chose to make Himself nothing – but He wasn't forced or coerced. He did it out of LOVE.
- b. When I am being coerced, I lose my option to choose – and I know that I am not being loved –
- c. Love always chooses to do the right thing for others, not force them to do their bidding.

19. I believe that it is always best to do what is biblical, best, and right – regardless of any pressure.
- a. If I love you, I'll always give you the freedom to choose, and not try to coerce you to serve me.
 - b. If I love you, I will always do what is best for YOU – even if you don't like it.
 - c. It's not easy – people sometimes get mad – often they got mad at Jesus – but it never deterred Him from making the right decision.

The Jesus Model - The Upside Down Pyramid

20. The Org Chart

- a. This is a tool used by companies all over – AND by the church. We've even had one. It's handy, it shows the organization and the leaders
 - b. But the focus is always the "boxes at the top" – translation = power (who's in the top box!)
 - c. It translates into "I am the one who makes the decisions", "I am the one who sets the course", "I am the one who tells you what to do"
 - d. In every organization there are people who will strive for that position. Proving their worth, showing their abilities, making sure the right people see the right things.
21. Why is it that people want the top job? For the same reason James and John wanted to highest position in Jesus kingdom. pride!
- a. *(BTW - The same reason Satan got kicked out of heaven!)*
22. Think about this - if anyone deserves to be "served", it would be one person and one person alone – The Lord Jesus Christ. He's the Son of the Living God – the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
- a. But Look what He said...

the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many..

23. Serve... serve... what does He mean by serve? (fact is we all know how to serve, the problem is we serve ourselves!)
- a. Jesus came to serve others – and to give His life as a ransom.
 - b. So what does that mean to me in my daily life?

John 13:34-35

*34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
(also John 15:12, and 15:17)*

Rom 12:10 *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;*

Rom 12:15-17 *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

Gal 5:13 *through love serve one another.*

Eph 4:32 *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

- c. It would seem to me that the true model of greatness in the Kingdom of God is one who is willing to, through humility, **SERVE** others.
- d. Being kind – giving preference
- e. In other word instead of it being all about **ME**, it's all about **YOU**.
- f. In other words – **COMPLETELY UPSIDE DOWN** from the worlds perspective **(Chart #2)**

24. So the question becomes not “how can others serve me” but “How can I bless others, how can I serve others?”

Serve by the spirit (advance chart 2)

25. The true mark of being a servant is now how much work you do – there are plenty of people who work a lot.

- a. I could work a lot for you and it be completely in the flesh – “*I’m going to paint your house – great! – I think it should be purple... uh, I don’t know - Hey, I am serving you – you just sit there and enjoy your purple house!*”

Rom 7:6 *But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

Luke 4:18-19

18 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

- b. **Jesus was empowered by the Spirit of the Lord to be obedient – to minister to people with the heart of God!**

- c. **So we have to ask ourselves – “Am I submitted to the Holy Spirit?” If we are it will be evident in the fruit of our ministry – in the people that come in contact with us – those we serve –**
 - d. **Especially those who we lead – because our heart is not like the gentiles to “rule over them” but like Jesus “I will lay down my life for you!”**
- 26. Are we willing to serve others with the heart of Jesus – not because we’re trying to prove how wonderful we are**
- a. **But simply because we love them, and we want them to be blessed.**

1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

- b. **The indicator will be that people will be drawn to you – because they sense you have the heart of Christ – to bless them and serve them – you will be great in their eyes!**

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