

To Serve. Luke 22:24-27

Last week we brought a message on how we as believers are to SING. Today I want to look at the command to Serve. Syndicated columnist Deborah Mathis wrote about the time when she was at Union Station in Washington D. C. on a particularly busy day. The first thing she remembers about that experience was all the noisy sounds.

The public address announcer calling out arrivals and departures.

Scores of pagers, walkie-talkies, and cell phones crying out for someone's attention. You could hear horns honking, machines clinking out change, and babies crying.

A security guard yelled at a man who was about to enter a forbidden area. 3 women stood up from their bench in order to argue with each other more loudly.

And a man in front of her was nervously pacing in a tight circle. But then she heard someone singing.

"What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and grief's to bear; What a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer."

Slowly a change came over the noisy crowd. The voice continued: **"O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer."**

The quarreling women stopped their talking and quietly took their seats. People who'd been tense and hurried; seemed to slow and relax - and they strained to hear the voice singing the remaining verses that old hymn.

The man in front of her, who had been behaving nervously quietly said: **"Nice, huh? I don't even believe in Jesus, but that's nice." Like we discussed last week when we expounded on the command of God to SING. Music has a way of changing our lives and the lives of those who listen to the singing.**

When we share the storey of God's love and the gift of His Son Jesus by singing it, it can affect the lives of people around us.

iPods aren't designed to allow you to hear your music selections and also share them with others. **An iPod** is a marvelous music little listening device that is capable of holding your entire musical library. It's capable of holding 100s of Albums of music, 1000s of songs... all in a small little handheld box you can put in your shirt pocket.

But there's no speakers on these things.

Granted, you can buy an adaptor to play the music thru your car sound system. **OR** you can pay \$100 or more for a unit that will hold your iPod and play music on external speakers.

But for the most part, iPods are PERSONAL music machines.

They're designed for your **PERSONAL** enjoyment... not for that of others. As a result, folks who use iPods have a tendency to shut other people out.

It's THEIR iPod... THEIR music.

And when they're listening to **THEIR** music thru those tiny **earphones called ear buds** they often spend that time shut off from others, **in their own little world.**

Now, if you owned an iPod and you wanted to share your music with someone you could share your earbuds with them, or two or more people could plug their earbuds into one iPod.

Of course, this kind of practice (as you might imagine) isn't for casual strangers or people you meet on the street. You gotta really like somebody to do this. **It has to be somebody you REALLY WANT to share with.**

Our Text this morning tells us about 12 men who aren't into sharing. Let's look at these. The disciples. **TEXT Luke 22:24-27** ²⁴ **And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.** ²⁵ **And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.**

²⁶ **But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.**

27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

They've been with Christ for about 3 years now... and the end is at hand. They're gathered in an upper room to eat the Passover meal with their teacher **but they don't realize yet this is the "Last" Supper.**

For 3 years they've lived together, ate together and learned together at the feet of Jesus. But a conversation comes up that tells us these men they haven't understood one of the main things Jesus wants them to understand. In fact, according to Matthew and Mark, **they've had this conversation before.**

The conversation always started with **the disciples arguing** over which of them would be greatest in the coming Kingdom. Jesus' answer was always the same:

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! My Kingdom is going to be different than the kingdoms of this world. In My Kingdom - My church – the greatest will be the one who is the best servant.

In Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus says it this way: "**You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, 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 other words – **if you want great in the Kingdom of God you've got be a servant.** You've got to learn how to share your life with others. Now, remember, this scene in Luke 22:19-20 is describing the last Supper where Jesus... "**took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."** In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.**

Eventually the meal is finished. They've taken of the bread and cup... and then Jesus leaves the room.

When He comes back into the room what's Jesus carrying?

He come back in with a towel wrapped around his waist... carrying a basin of water and He proceeds to wash their feet. Now, why's He doing this?

Well... in that day, most roads were dirt and as people walked from one place to another, their feet got dirty. As a result, if you entered a person's home for business or for a personal visit **it was customary for you to wash your feet before entering...** or (if the family was wealthy enough), **for a servant of that family to wash your feet.**

BUT the master of the house NEVER washed feet. That was **demeaning.** That was work that only a servant would do. That's why, in John 13 we're told that Peter got so upset when he saw Jesus washing their feet. He tells Jesus: "**No... you shall never wash my feet.**" John 13:8 Jesus was their teacher - their master - He shouldn't disgrace Himself this way. But of course... that was exactly the point.

After He washed all their feet, Jesus said: "**Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.**" John 13:14

This all took place at the Last Supper... the template for our observance of Communion time. And as I was studying this passage, it suddenly occurred to me that there must be something about communion that should help me learn to share.

But, I'll be honest with you, at first I couldn't think of a possible reason why that might be. I don't think the idea of sharing was on my list of thoughts. I do think of my faults and each time ask God to show me those faults so I can repent of them and receive forgiveness prior to taking. So often we tend to think of the Lord's Supper as being a personal thing. **Kind of like people who have their iPods... it's a personal experience.** And we tend to think of communion that way—something just between us and God.

Now, I don't want to take away from that... but that's not entirely true. In Acts 20:7 we're told "**On the first day of the week (the church) came together to break bread.**"

You CAN take communion all by yourself but Jesus designed communion to be a time when we would "**come together**" and partake of this meal along with other Christian brothers and sisters.

It's meant to be more than a religious ritualistic ceremony.

It's meant to be a reminder that Jesus "**made himself nothing**" and **took on the very nature of a servant and died to save us** (paraphrase of Philippians 2:7-8).

He gave us an example of how we should become servants of one another. Every time we take of the bread and the cup – that's one of the things we should remember.

Servanthood lies at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian. In Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 Paul drives that home to us. Ephesians 5:21 tells we need to "**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**"

Throughout the rest of the letter to the Ephesian church, Paul tells us what it means to submit:

- **Wives need to submit to their husbands by respecting them and honoring them.**
- **Husbands need to submit to their wives by loving them and giving to them and being willing to die for them.**
- **Children need to submit to their parents by obeying them in the Lord.**
- **Father's need to submit to their children by not "exasperating" them, but instead training them up in God's way.**
- **Employees (slaves) need to obey their bosses (masters) as if obeying Jesus Himself.**
- **And Employers (masters) must treat their employees (slaves) well – remembering that he and they both share the same master.**

Yes, Servanthood lies at the heart of who we are as Christians. And communion reinforces this for us.

The early church took part in that lesson every week when they took the Lord's Supper. And when they did that right – it was a beautiful thing.

But now, there was a church, at a city named Corinth, that didn't do it right. In fact, they messed up the Lord's Supper so much that Paul writes and says **“In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good”** 1Co 11:17

What were they doing wrong?

I Corinthians 11:20. **“When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.**

Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.”

What was the problem? Well, in the church at Corinth they'd eat a potluck meal before they took of communion. But there was a twist to their pot-lucks. If you came to church and didn't have a pot... you were out of luck. The rich would bring their steak... and the poor brought their beanies and weenies... and nobody shared with anyone else.

And then they took communion.

Or at least – they thought they did.

Do you remember what Paul tells them?

“it's not the Lord's Supper you eat.”

Their communion time had become a time of ritual.

It was a PERSONAL thing between themselves and God... and they didn't need anyone else. **They didn't want to be a servant of anybody.** They didn't want to share their food (or much of anything else) with others within church.

As a result, no matter what they had been eating and drinking, they weren't partaking of communion... they were partaking of judgment.

Paul writes: **“That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep”** 1Cor 11:30

ILL: Years ago, in a congregation of some other church, there were a couple of sisters that had gotten mad about not having gotten their way. They'd come to church, take communion, and then leave feeling they did the right religious thing.

They thought they were partaking of communion

What they were actually doing was partaking of judgment.

The pastor prayed they would change their hearts before they died.

The Lord's Supper is more than just a personal thing.

It's a time when we gather with Christian brothers and sister and eat together communing with and remembering Jesus.

Communion is a time when we're reminded that Jesus gave us a powerful **example of servanthood.**

And when we learn that, it makes all the difference in our faith.

A few years ago, I read an article by a woman named Esther who told this story:

“My brother and 5 sisters and I had had our differences growing up. They had deep resentments that festered throughout the years after they left home. They really didn’t realize how deep until the Mother died.

After the funeral their grievances boiled over.

- George was upset that Mom had left Mary the antique black walnut bedroom set – **“It’s worth a lot and Mary already has more than the rest of us together.”**

- Another got the flatware.

- Another would inherit the house because she had lived with Mother. • 2 others got some china and another the piano, which she’d bought for her Mom.

But Dorothy, Mom’s primary caregiver, resented that some were absent during Mom’s final days of suffering.

It was 5 years before they all got together again. The night before, Dorothy said, **“If we can get through tomorrow without any major explosions, it will be a miracle.”**

At first things felt awkward as they all struggled to behave. By dinnertime it was some better. They laughed and told stories about their childhood. The memories were so sweet, **but there was something missing.**

Afterward, one took out a loaf of bread, and said **“Since we’ve all been apart so long and since my husband is a preacher, I thought we might share communion.”**

Everyone agreed. They read Scripture and prayed.

Her husband said the words, **“Do this in remembrance of me.”** He broke the bread and gave it to each. Unbelievably, grievances and hurt dissolved. **“They hugged,” she said “and became a family again, together in God’s grace, our missing ingredient.** You see, Jesus designed communion to be a time where we would **think about each other.** It would be a time when **we’d examine our attitudes towards one another.** And when we finally get communion right... it’s a time when we learn to love each other so much that we really want to be servants of one

another. **Examine yourselves today**, avoid judgment, and reconcile with anyone you may have a grievance with **BEFORE** you partake.

Psalm 139:23-24

²³ **Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:**

²⁴ **And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**