

Jesus Christ is our example of Lowliness and Costly Love

Let me start by asking what do each of you want in life? Where do you hope to be in 10 years from now? Some of you may be working at your first job, and maybe it's a starting point in finding the career of your dreams. Some of you may still be in school looking to finish your degree so that you can get a good job.

Let me ask another question: how many of you would be happy with working for minimum wage for the rest of your life? Anybody? Why not? First, we would have to work longer hours to get enough money to pay the bills. This leaves less time to do the fun things that we enjoy. Secondly, minimum wage jobs are usually looked down upon – the tasks are underappreciated, carry little social prestige, don't make use of a person's abilities or interests, and often involve being subordinate to demanding bosses.

This is why many of us are climbing the so-called “corporate ladder”. As we move up in the world, we find jobs that carry more prestige and a bigger paycheck so that we can pay our bills and have enough time and money to do what we want. As well, we can have more control over our own careers, perhaps giving orders instead of taking them.

This quest to move upward drives our society and many of us. It seems natural to us. We want more money and more control over our lives. After all, who wants to be spending all of their time doing menial tasks and taking orders from others? Once we reach the top, we can enjoy life and leave bothersome tasks to people beneath us. This is the way the world works.

However, according to Jesus, this is not the way God's kingdom works. Jesus said,

“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 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.” (Matthew 20:26-28)

Jesus is saying that if you want to become great in God's eyes, it is very different from how to become great in the world's eyes. In fact, he says the exact opposite of what we expect. Jesus says that if we want to become the greatest, we should become like the least. We shouldn't try to become more like leaders, but rather, more like servants, if we wish to be great in God's eyes.

What does this mean practically? I think most of us know what it is like to have a boss – or if not a boss, then hopefully we have had a parent that we have seen as an authority figure. We take what our boss says seriously – if he tells us to do something, we do it. If we're really keen, we may even go out of our way to impress them by doing whatever we can to help out even if they don't ask for it. This is what it means to be a good servant, using all our capacities to be helpful to our boss. The Bible clearly teaches that we are to submit to those in authority over us. However, Jesus says that if a person wishes to become great in God's kingdom, he must submit not only to his boss, but must become like a servant to everybody else, too. He must be a servant to ALL, not just to his boss.

Another example of when we take on a servant role is when we have guests at our house. Now imagine if we had a very distinguished guest, like say, Queen Elizabeth. We would try very hard to make them feel at home. Think about what you might do for them...clean the toilet for the first time in several months, vacuum, tidy up, give up the master bedroom... To be a servant to all means that you

would treat everybody like that, no matter how insignificant they may be in the world's eyes - even some dirty-looking kid. In one instance, Jesus took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to his disciples, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all - he is the greatest." (Luke 9:48)

According to the Bible we are to treat everybody, even some kid, as though they were more important than us. That means that their needs and their agenda are more important than ours. This is very difficult to do when our own needs are often pressing. Taking care of others sounds fine in theory, but is it practical or even possible?

The best thing about Jesus is that he lived out everything that he taught. Jesus was followed by crowds of people who wanted to hear him speak or to heal them or perform a miracle. Even though he might be exhausted or struggling personally, say with the death of a close friend, he would invite people to come to him. He took care of others to the extent that his own needs were neglected. On one occasion, he warned somebody about the cost of following him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (Luke 9:58). Here is a man whose talents would have allowed him to rise to the very top of society, and yet he chooses to live like a poor wanderer.

More than that, the Bible tells us that Jesus was more than just a man. He was the Son of God. This means that he had the power of God over creation and over the destinies of men. This means that he had legions of angels at his disposal. This means that he could do anything he wanted and would not even be bound by the laws of nature (which He himself put in place). This Son of God chose to become a servant to all, even to the point of being mocked and scorned and being put to death like a common criminal. This is how the Bible describes the way the Son of God was treated:

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. (Matthew 27:27-31)

Muslims have a different view of Jesus than Christians do. To them, Jesus was just a man, albeit a special man, a prophet of God. To them, it is unthinkable that a servant of God could be subjected to such disgrace. Thus, they believe that somehow Jesus escaped the agony of being nailed to the cross, that he was rescued by God at the last minute. However, this is not what the Bible tells us. Jesus bore the full agony of the cross. God did not rescue His Son, but rather abandoned him to the torment of mockers and murderers and devils. Why did Jesus allow himself to be treated so shamefully? The Bible says that God demonstrated "his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

At this point I need to make something clear so that you do not misunderstand me. God is not some kind of cosmic wimp who allows everybody to walk all over Him. He created the universe, and He sets the course of the planets and the stars. He created us to serve Him, demanding that we reject evil and do what is good according to His standard, and He has set a day that He will judge the world. He is an all-powerful God who rightly demands our worship, and we are to tremble at the very thought of Him.

When we consider the majesty and power of God, it seems unthinkable that He should send His Son to live like a restless wanderer and to die such a humiliating death. But this is what distinguishes the Christian God, the God of the Bible, from the God of Islam or other gods. As well as being an all-powerful God, a God of justice who reigns over us, our God is a God of humility who has the heart of a servant. This is another reason why we worship and adore Him.

The apostle John describes a vision of thousands of angels worshiping the Son of God for His humility: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” (Rev. 5:12) “You are worthy...because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” (Rev. 5:9) Everyone in heaven worships the Son of God because He was willing to be led like a lamb to the slaughter, because He was willing to be the perfect servant.

The Bible says, (Philippians 2:5-11)

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷but made himself nothing,

taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

and became obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

When we worship Jesus Christ, let us always remember about his humility. More than that, let us follow his example. To the Christians in the audience who have already committed their lives to follow him, “Are you following Christ’s example of humility? Are you taking up the cross daily for his sake? Are you forsaking the desires of this world to serve Him and to be a servant to all?”

If you don’t yet know the God of humility, I want to invite you to learn more. Jesus invites us to come to him:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)