

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us that what we do for the least of your brothers
and sisters we do also for you:
give us the will to be the servant of others
as you were the servant of all,
and gave up your life and died for us,
but are alive and reign, now and forever. Amen.

Thoughts about NLT:

Having a servant attitude is vital in Christian service, since Christians are all called to represent Christ, who came to serve and give himself as a ransom for many. Christians cannot pay for other people's sins in the way Christ did; but it is important to represent him by having the same willingness to serve others. One practical instruction, which is not easy to do, is found in Philippians 2:14, "**Do all things without complaining or disputing**". Paul wrote this immediately after describing how Jesus humbled himself and was obedient, even to dying on the Cross for us.

Please pray for all the staff of NLT, to serve others without complaining or disputing. Sometimes as many as 800 people per day come for treatment to Lalgadh; occasionally it has been more. There is always a lot to do, and conditions are often hot and sticky; so it is easy to be impatient or complaining!

Consider this: many people are called to 'hidden' areas of service, where they are not in the limelight. But God sees everything. Is it easier or harder to serve in the background; or does this depend on our personality or specific calling? Should it make any difference if we receive recognition from others, or not?

Mark's Gospel – Study Notes for Small Groups

Week 4 – Being a Servant

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

This is the key verse of Mark's gospel and highlights a major theme which we consider this week, i.e. that of **servanthood** and Jesus being portrayed as one who came to serve. "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (**1:1**) did not come as a conquering king, but as an active, healing servant who came to give his life for others, as his ultimate act of service.

Isaiah's 'Suffering Servant'

There are four 'servant songs' in the Book of Isaiah which focus on someone who is called the LORD's servant, or "my servant". We understand this to be an anointed (messianic) figure, who suffers and dies for the sins of Israel and the world. In the key verse mentioned above (**Mark 10:45**) Jesus alludes to this figure, most clearly seen in the well-known fourth song (**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**) which says the servant will suffer, be despised and rejected, and bear terrible punishment on behalf of others.

Read **Isaiah 53:1-12**. Does this make us think of Jesus? — in what respects? Isn't it amazing that this should be written by Isaiah some seven centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ? (We might be hearing a song from Handel's Messiah in our heads as we read these verses!)

[A note for possible personal study later: the four servant songs in the book of Isaiah are: (1) **Isaiah 42:1-4**; (2) **49:1-6**; (3) **50:4-9**; (4) **52:13-53:12**. Some scholars regard 61:1-3 as a fifth. The fourth song has been much debated by Jewish rabbis. Why?]

The passage at the heart of Mark's gospel

Read **Mark 10:33-45**. This passage gives us the context we need in order to understand Jesus' approach to servanthood as recorded by

Mark. It is the familiar story of James and John asking Jesus for special favours!

Discuss the following:

- (a) Do we think ambition (as exhibited by James and John) is always wrong? Can people be rightly ambitious?
- (b) In Matthew's account of the same incident (**Matthew 20:20-28**), it is the mother of James and John who asks on their behalf — so can mums be wrongly ambitious for their children?
- (c) Do James and John at this stage in the story have any idea of what they're actually asking? Do young people today have any idea of what God may be calling them to in their lives? — and how can we help them?
- (d) Are the other disciples just as guilty as James and John? (in **verse 41** it seems as if they want exactly the same thing!)
- (e) In **verses 42-44**, how does Jesus turn the whole nature of leadership and authority upside down? Do we value highly enough those who serve in background roles? How can people be 'servant leaders'? Do any examples come to mind (that may have been inspired by Jesus)?

Mark the servant

In his own life Mark, the author, served as a 'missionary assistant' to Barnabas, Paul and Peter. Is this why he sees Jesus in this way? Does our role in life or gifting influence the way we see God and relate to God? — or how we view others?

The Servant Church

To discuss:

- (a) How can today's church serve others and the community effectively?
- (b) What does my local church do in this respect?
- (c) What more could my local church or fellowship group do?

Consider the most appropriate way to communicate this to a pastor or leader of your local church or group, and pray about how you can carry out this mission to serve those around you.

A few quotes to think about:

"He who is not a good servant will not be a good master"

(Plato, Greek philosopher, 428-347 BC)

"As I develop and serve, be patient. God is not finished with me yet!"

(Jesse Jackson, American civil rights activist, 1941-)

"The pinnacle of the fulfilment I can ever experience for my spirit and soul is to hear from the Lord, when I see him face to face, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant' "

(Nick Vujicic, Australian Christian evangelist, 1982-)

"A great person is different from an eminent one in that he is ready to be the servant of his society"

(B.R. Ambedkar, Indian Social Reformer, 1891-1956)

"I stand here before you not as a prophet, but as a humble servant of you, the people"

(Nelson Mandela, 1918-2013)

"If we continue to develop our technology without wisdom or prudence, our servant may prove to be our executioner"

(Omar M. Bradley, USA WW2 Field Commander, 1893-1981)

"Government is the servant of the people, not their master"

(David Rockefeller, American philanthropist, 1915-2017)

"Being the master of the earth, man forgets that he is the servant of God"

(Abraham Heschel, Polish-born Rabbi, 1907-72)

"Jesus' life as a foot-washing servant would eventually lead to the adoption of humility as a widely admired virtue"

(John Ortberg, evangelical Christian, 1957-)

"A servant church must have as its priority solidarity with the poor"

(Claudio Hummes, Brazilian Cardinal, 1934-).