

Discipleship – Summer 2012 – Week beginning 9th July

Home group / study notes: Master and Servant

Feel free to use as much or as little as you wish. Don't rush the discussions in order to 'finish' the study, and make sure you allow time for prayer ministry.

Think of a drama, documentary, or modern situation in which there are people with household servants. Describe some of the benefits of being a servant in a well-to-do household in the past or today. Are there some qualities lacking in the life of many people at work today? Is our society more egalitarian and therefore better? Or do we lack some of the benefits of servanthood?

Read Luke 12:35-37 A shocking reversal! Can you think of other similar instances in the New Testament? *Look in John 13, Matthew 20 and Philippians 2.* This is one aspect of the 'servant king'. How might we apply some of this teaching?

Jesus is Servant but also...

Read Luke 17:7-10 We need to read this through the cultural eyes of the time as far as we can. It's not making a point about unfairness, but about the normality of a proper servant / master relationship. *NB the meal was normally taken in the late afternoon, not the evening, so it does not imply unreasonable ceaseless toil. The situation also implies an ordinary household – not particularly well off – same slave / servant doing different duties.*

In what ways could we be offering more loyalty, obedience and hard work to God?
In what ways could we be receiving more benefits of meaning, worth, security and relationship?

How does your translation read at the beginning of verse 9? Many use 'thank', and we are led to wonder why the master should not 'thank' the servant. But it really means something like, 'Does the servant have special merit because he did what was commanded' – ie is the master in some way indebted to him? (The word $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$ (karis) – grace – is used here as it has been in past studies).

Understood in this way, what is the parable saying about earning and receiving grace?

In what ways do people feel they deserve special merit for doing their ordinary work? What should our attitude be to work?
More importantly, are there (subtle?) things we do that make us think we deserve special favour from God?

Read Mt 20:20-24 Where do your sympathies lie? What human emotions are displayed, and how does Jesus deal with them?

How are we doing as a church when it comes to the balance between 'My Jesus, my Saviour' and 'Immortal, invisible, God only wise'? Are there ways in which the 'Master' needs more acknowledgement? Or the 'Good Shepherd'?

Pray for issues raised tonight, for people in need, and finish by saying the prayer of Ignatius Loyola together:

Lord, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that I do your will.
Amen