

Humble Leaders

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of servant-leadership, as exemplified by Jesus, who taught that true greatness comes from serving others.

Scripture: Mark 10:37

Topics: "Servant Leadership", "Church Governance"

Description

Anton Bosch discusses the balance between serving in ministry and the need for proper oversight in the church, emphasizing the shift in leadership dynamics from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Jesus challenges the disciples' pursuit of greatness by introducing the concept of servant leadership, exemplified by His own humility and servanthood. He emphasizes the importance of humility, service, and obedience, contrasting the world's view of greatness with the Kingdom's perspective. Jesus' actions, such as washing the disciples' feet, serve as powerful lessons on servant leadership and the true essence of authority.

Transcript

That God has placed in the church various ministries to provide for the many needs of His people is, by and large, undisputed. How these men relate to the rest of the body, however, is the problem. Clearly they have responsibility, and yet at the same time they are not in positions of authority. How then does one balance the heart of a servant with the need for proper oversight in the church?

Authoritarian leaders as well as the proponents of hierarchically structured churches often refer to the way in which leaders functioned in the Old Testament as support for their views on leadership. Men like Moses, Gideon and David become role models, and modern leaders emulate the leadership styles of these men. Others will refer to the pyramidal structure suggested to Moses by Jethro for the administration of the people of Israel. While Old Testament leaders are to be admired, and we can learn much from them, we do see a clear shift of emphasis in the New Testament.

Jesus' disciples, steeped in the Old Testament style of doing things, jockeyed for position and status in the Kingdom. In Matthew 20, responding to Salome's request for positions of authority for her two sons, Jesus announced a change in the whole dynamic behind leadership:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your

servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

This statement is pivotal to understanding leadership in the New Testament because the whole relationship between leaders and followers, as well as the measures for evaluating greatness, was in the process of changing. Concerning John the Baptist Jesus said: "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." On another occasion the disciples, obsessed with the issue of greatness, asked Jesus who the greatest is in the Kingdom. Setting a little child before them, He replied: "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." With this statement Jesus turns the world's concept of greatness and leadership on its head and introduces the concept of the servant leader.

During His first coming Jesus came not as the King but as the suffering servant, and sets an example for us to follow. The Jews had the two comings of Jesus confused and could not understand the difference between His first coming as the Son of Joseph - the Servant - and the second, when He will come as the Son of David and the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the same way some Christians are confused between their role on earth today and their future positions of authority and power during the millennial kingdom.

For the first thirty years of Jesus' life He served in menial tasks in the household and workshop of His earthly parents. He was completely obedient to Mary and Joseph and did their bidding doing mundane chores around the home, serving His apprenticeship, serving His customers, etc.

Once His ministry started, He still did not call upon His Divine prerogative to order people about and to wield His authority. Instead He quietly went about ministering to the needs of people, acutely aware of their frailty, hunger and suffering. He was not aloof from the people, living a life of privilege and of social elevation. Instead He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

As they came to the upper room for the Last Supper, not one of the twelve disciples was prepared to wash the feet of the others. Each felt he was superior to the next and none was prepared to be seen as weak and a servant of his peers. Even at this late hour the question of ascendancy was still not settled in their minds. Jesus then laid aside His garments and girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples' feet. This was one of the last interactions with them and was intended to make a very deep and lasting impression upon them. In concluding this object lesson, Jesus said:

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

He emphasized that understanding the concepts about servant-hood and putting them into practice are two different things. It is not recorded that He ever taught the disciples how to handle authority or how to act as great men. Instead there is much recorded about His teaching them how to suffer and to serve.

The foregoing does not mean that Jesus was weak and had no authority. The mere fact that people followed Him reveals that they recognized that He was a true leader. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, they said of Him that "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (To be continued)

This article is taken from Anton's book Building Blocks of the Church. p79ff

Exodus 18.

Mark 10:37.

Matthew 20:25-28.

Matthew 11:11.

Matthew 18:4.

His obedience to His parents can be deduced from the fact that He had fully kept the Law of which the honoring of parents is part. (Exodus 20:12).

Philippians 2:7,8.

John 13:14-17.

Matthew 7:29.

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