

# Service and Servanthood of the Lord - Part 4 of 8

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of servanthood as central to God's purpose, illustrated through Isaiah's prophecies and the role of worship in our lives.*

**Duration:** 1:03:36

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:26, Isaiah 41:10

**Topics:** "Servanthood"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the concept of servanthood and the central role it plays in the universe. The law of service was established at the creation of the world, and man was given the responsibility to develop everything for God. The speaker emphasizes that true service to God may not always be popular or easy, as many people may not receive the message. However, worship should be the foundation of our lives, with every aspect of our existence dedicated to God. The sermon also mentions a vision from the book of Isaiah, where the servant of the Lord is called to go and deliver a message to the people, even though they may not understand or receive it.

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## Transcript

We continue in the matter that has been laid on our hearts for this time, that is, the servant of the Lord. We are gathered around that little fragment in Isaiah's prophecies, chapter 41, Behold My Servant. We have seen the law of service as being central to everything in this universe.

This universe exists to minister to God. We have seen that that law was established at the creation of this world and man, when immediately upon his being constituted, he was given a trust to hold everything, develop everything, for God. A ministry, a trust.

And that law, being established at the beginning, is seen to run right through the Bible, and at last is seen in the eternal state, where and when his servants shall serve him and they shall see his face. A long story of service and servanthood, ministering to the pleasure and glory of God. Then we have seen the method and means of service.

We saw a nation chosen and separated, particularly, specifically, to minister to the pleasure of God, the Lord saying to Pharaoh, Let my people go, that they may serve me. A whole nation at the center of the

nations, to be the embodiment of this universal principle of service, and to lead the nations to it. And we saw that that nation, elect for that purpose, as a whole, failed.

Failed, sadly and terribly. And then, God moving in. And in these prophecies of Isaiah, in a large section, that servant being introduced and presented, who completely and perfectly fulfilled, in every respect, that law of service, that satisfaction to God.

The servant of the Lord. One referred to in our passage, Behold my servant. And having foreshadowed, predicted, pre-visionsed, that servant, the next movement, in the time of the whole nation's failure, was to deposit the principle of service in a remnant.

And so we come on, the very many references in these prophecies and others, to the remnant, as being God's repository of the service of the servant of the Lord. That is, to take character from him, and to carry forward this great responsibility, and privilege, and trust, of ministering to the Lord. That is the Old Testament, a figure of the divine thought.

Passing into the New Testament, that nation set aside, that servant, not now in prediction, but in presence. Right here, on the spot. Fulfilling his ministry, his servanthood, and perfecting it.

Then, the bringing in of the nation, to take the place of that nation that has failed. Fulfilling of the word of the Lord, the kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation, bringing forth the fruits thereof. A new nation brought in, Peter calls a holy nation, that is, the church, and then, too soon, a repetition of our general failure, and a repetition of the Lord's method, and means, the appeal to those within the general body, who will form for him this remnant of this dispensation, to take up and carry forward, and represent the principle, the law, of God's satisfaction.

God's pleasure, for which everything was created. Now, that has occupied us for quite a time, in this conference. We must not take more time in retrospect.

This afternoon, we come back to Isaiah's prophecies, to a part which you may think has been worn red bare, but it is a cameo of this whole subject, or matter. I refer to the sixth chapter. Words are so familiar to you, and yet, I feel quite sure that the Lord wants something said about this, at this time.

The year that King Isaiah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim, each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, with twain he did fly. One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. The foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried. The house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a living coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips. Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin parched.

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go, tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, make their ears heavy, shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed.

Then said I, Lord, how long? He answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without men, and the land become utterly waste, the Lord hath removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. If there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be eaten up, as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stalk remaineth when they are felled, so the holy seed is the stalk. I say that this is a cameo of the whole subject.

In this, we have the whole history of the nation embodied, and we shall try as quickly as possible with so much ground to see the outline at least of what is here. First of all, then, we are in the presence of the tragedy of a great epoch. The reign of King Uzziah had been one of the most glorious in Israel.

Outstanding. Indeed, a very bright spot in a long, dark, troubled period. Uzziah had come to a great eminence and a great glory.

And like humanity, so commonly unable to carry the responsibility of prosperity. And like the great enemy of God and men, his heart was lifted up. And when that happens, that's the beginning of the end of that glory, of that epoch.

Disaster is not far away. And so, in the uplifted heart, in his pride, Uzziah presumed upon his heritage, his position, and the blessing of God. Presumed upon it, and took the holy things into his own hands.

And you know the story. He was doing it. He was suddenly smitten with leprosy.

Went out from the presence of the Lord, and for the rest of his life, lived in the seclusion of a leper, and then died. That is the story of the nation. The nation had come to a place of great eminence among the nations, great prosperity, power, riches, and influence.

And then, began to presume upon it, take it for granted, think that because, because of so much of the blessing and prospering of the Lord, well nothing mattered, nothing mattered, do as you like, and the hands of men took hold of the holy things. To use them for their own ends. That is the story of Israel.

I suggest to you, dear friends, that that is very largely the story of the church. What great days. We're always looking back upon, and today, this day commemorating Pentecost.

We're always looking back to the great days of the church. What days they were. What power, what blessing, the presence of God, so manifestly in their midst.

And then, whole thing taken into the hands of men, manipulated and changed, and used for human glory. The introduction of a whole system of people with high-flown names and titles, and all that, and men coming into prominence, and the church becoming a sporting ground for the flesh, in that form of human glory, and the days of the church's blessing were numbered. And, do we say too much if we say it was smitten with leprosy? Well, maybe.

But, nevertheless, tragedy at the end of a glorious epoch, just as with Isaiah. It was at that point, at that point, God intervened with Isaiah. And, through Isaiah, with the servant of the Lord.

In Isaiah himself, his experience and his history, very much of what was true in the case of the great servant, his master, our Lord Jesus. That is why I have called him a cameo of the whole. That situation, if you will accept what I have said as true, I think it is, called for, demanded a heavenly intervention, a heavenly intervention, when the athlete fell into tragedy, and had to be left so largely.

At least without its primal and pristine glory. And, Isaiah became the figure, the type, of the heavenly intervention at such a time, at such a time. I need not, I think, make the correspondence on every point.

It is so patent, that it was when the fullness of that tragedy was reached in Israel, that heaven intervened with the greatest prophet, the Lord Jesus. Heaven broke in, in a great reaction against that tragic state, and produced the servant of God to deal with it. The Lord Jesus came at a time like that, a time of terrible tragedy, in the realm of the people of God.

And here is heaven's breaking in, and Isaiah. Now it is just there, that we have so much enlightenment and instruction, the year that King Isaiah died. You could put that in various other ways.

In such and such a time, in such and such conditions obtained, I saw the Lord. Against the dark background of failure, breakdown, tragedy, a heavenly vision is given. A heavenly vision.

Let me underline one word, a heavenly vision. Because here is a transition from the earthly to the heavenly. Heaven takes charge, heaven breaks in, and that is the way of recovery, the way of salvation.

What Paul called the heavenly vision. And what was it? What were its components? First of all, I saw the Lord high and lifted up. High and lifted up.

Now you know that that is a phrase that is used immediately in the context of the servant of the Lord, my servant, in chapter 53. Behold, my servant shall be high and lifted up. And it is surely very impressive, that John, John, in writing his gospel, we have it in chapter 12 and verse 41, refers to Isaiah 6, these words, and says, these things said Isaiah when he saw, who? Jesus.

When he saw Him. These things said he when he saw Him. Who was it that Isaiah saw high and lifted up? Well, John says it was Jesus.

And that's always the beginning of a great change in the situation. It is always God's new beginning to see Him high and lifted up. Isaiah and all that he represents may have fallen like a fallen idol, as he had been.

But there's one high and lifted up to save the situation. His exaltation, the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. We know, mean, firstly, that a work has been accomplished and finished, upon which the future rests with certainty.

It's finished. He never was high and lifted up, exalted and glorified, until he had finished his servant work. And upon that, the whole future was founded.

Work was accomplished. His authority universal was established. All authority in heaven and in earth given to Him, as He took His place at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

His name is enthroned above all rule and authority, and every name that is named. Not only in this age, but in that which is to come. His name enthroned over all.

From that, God begins again. He did with Isaiah, for whatever there was to be of recovery, even though it but be in a remnant, and that, so imperfectly, nevertheless some recovery, to which the Lord referred with not a little pleasure, my peculiar treasure, He called the remnant, that issued from this vision, the Lord, high and lifted up. And, dear friends, that is true.

Mark you, if it is as true of the Church as it was of Israel, that there has been loss and tragedy, and those first glorious conditions have faded, as everybody recognizes and acknowledges, without any criticism, or unwarranted criticism of Church, it is true. We all look back to those days as the heydays of the Church, don't we? If the Church has, speaking quite generally, followed in the train of Israel, lost its great vocation as the servant of the Lord, God will begin, as He has always begun, by someone or some people, a remnant, if you like, a corporate person, getting a new conception and revelation and apprehension of the greatness of Christ. It's the only way.

It's the only way, but it is the sure way, it's God's way. The greatness of Christ, the overlordship of Christ, the absolute supremacy of Christ, Christ over all, in all, through all, high and lifted up. That is God's method, the whole purpose of the dispensations.

It's His method with every individual life. If you have fallen into tragedy, if the earlier days, the glow and the glory of Christian experience, faded into shadows or even darkness, if you, in your own spiritual life, were a tragedy, what will save you will be if only you can get a new apprehension of the greatness of Christ. And that is God's way.

Turn your eyes from your tragedy, from yourself, from your desire, from all things around, and lift them up, and see Him high and lifted up. Great enough to cope with your tragedy, and great enough to cope with the tragedy of a universe, as well as of a church. I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple in the heavenly vision.

Things passed from the tragic temple in Jerusalem to the temple in heaven. As I saw a heavenly temple substituting the earthly, which had failed, a heavenly house of God. It's the second move in the way of recovery.

You notice how true to principle this is? According to the New Testament, firstly, always firstly, the greatness of Christ. The exaltation of Christ, that is always the beginning. And then the greatness of the church.

The greatness of the house of God. The greatness of that conception and that reality of a place of God's dwelling. But now we know that the earthly thing is in tragedy.

And you're not going to rebuild that. You're not going to recover an earthly thing. The church now is a heavenly thing.

It's a heavenly thing. So may as you and I get onto a heavenly ground that we can be a true expression of the church, its unity, its life. Touch this earth, and you touch everything that divides, everything that brings strife, everything that is a contradiction to that divine idea.

Get off the earthly ground of things and people onto a heavenly ground. And at once, a new kind of church comes into evidence. It's a heavenly thing.

How much time we could and would like to spend on this. But you see, first the head of the church, and then the church. First the Lord, high and lifted up, and then the temple of the Lord, which he fills.

Substituting the earthly for the heavenly. Lord, deliver us from our earthly ideas and our earthly limitations and conceptions, our earthly bondages. Oh, how contradictory the earthly church is.

It's not the church, according to God's mind. And his skirts fill the house, symbolic language. Here in this heavenly temple, or house, or church, Christ is all-pervading and all-inclusive.

Here, he fills all things. There's no room for anyone or anything else. His filling his house just does mean that there's no place for anything earthly, persons or things.

There's no place for what is of this world. He is, in the eternal counsels of God, appointed and destined to fill all things. And the first place of his filling is his own house, the church.

That is very testing, isn't it? Because, after all, men have come into the house of God and things have been brought in. There's very much today that corresponds to the condition in the days when the Lord was here in the flesh, concerning which he could repeat his words, Take these things hence. Take these things hence.

They don't belong to my Father's house. Take these things hence. They don't belong to my Father's house.

They are not in keeping with the place of the dwelling, the habitation of the Lord. Take them out. This heavenly, heavenly house is filled with Christ.

The garments or the skirts are only symbolic of himself and his fullness, all cup-feeding, so that man is deposed and has no place here as man. Just as Uzziah was driven out, the priests took him and drove him out, forced him out from the temple. So, room has to be made for the Lord in his heavenly house.

And then, the next thing in the vision, the heavenly vision, is of the heavenly servants and their service. Here, called the seraphim, I saw seraphim. Above him were the seraphim.

Heavenly servants, fulfilling heavenly ministry, each had six wings. And their wings had different kinds of features of their heavenly service. With two, they covered or veiled their faces.

This service, this service, which is going to bring God his satisfaction and reach his end and fulfill his purpose and be according to his original intention, this service is carried out and carried through in a spirit of deep reverence, humility, and awe. How contrary to the flesh! I suppose these seraphim were themselves beautiful and glorious beings. In other places, you find that is so.

But they covered it in the presence of the Lord. Whatever they were in themselves, they covered it in the presence of the Lord and in the service of the Lord. They hid themselves.

They hid themselves. That is just different, isn't it, from a very great deal of what is called Christian work. It is used to bring people into prominence.

How many there are that uncover themselves! And you only see them, you encounter them, they are in view. But these who fulfill the true heavenly ministry to God cover themselves. It is in a spirit of deep reverence, awe, humility that it is fulfilled.

With two, they covered their feet, feet symbols of their goings, their walk, their ways, their work. And this was all very much undercover, under government. All very much in subjection to their throne.

There before the throne, there in the presence of the Holy God. And all their ways, their walk and their work is governed by this sense of holiness and reverence. It is a subject life, isn't it, under the Lord's government.

These are not just running hither and thither, doing this and doing that, according to their own whims and fancies and impulses and ideas. It is all governed under the restraint of heaven. They cover their feet and with two they fly.

Their flying is only at his behest. All their goings are in obedience to him. It's obedience, they fly to do his will.

Their flying will be very swift and very immediate. To discern intuitively his mind about any matter will find them instantly off to do it. This is the nature of the servant of the Lord.

Obedient, governed, restrained, humble, reverent, yet swift to do his will. When it is known, with twain they did fly. And one cried to the other, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

What is that? I think that is the essence of everything. The essence of all their ministry. The essence of heavenly ministry.

When you come to get a look into heaven at any time in the Bible, what is it that you find that is going on in heaven? Worship. Worship. Unceasing worship.

That is the great thing that comes out in the Confirmation, isn't it? The book of the Revelation. The Lord's table this morning, we picked out three of the instances. This is the end.

Things now are at the end, the confirmation of the ages. God is in the possession of the realization of his purpose through the Lamb. And heaven is just filled with worship.

It's worship, worship, worship. That's heavenly ministry. And what is worship? What is it? Worship, of course, is the service of the Lord.

Because worship is God having his rights. God having his rights. Everything coming back to the Lord.

Everything being drawn God-want. That's worship. From the earth, from all things, held for him.

Directed toward him. He is the center and every stream flows toward him. That is the meaning of worship.

And that is the ultimate and supreme service. They worship the Lord. Worship should characterize everything in our lives.

Our homes should be held for the Lord. So that they become not just places where we have five, ten minutes or an hour or two of prayer, worshiping the Lord. The things should be for the Lord.

All of it for the Lord. And everything that we have should be a matter of worship. We hold it for God.

Everything. Our whole lives should be God-want in every matter. That is service.

That is servanthood. To see that God has his place and his rights and comes into everything. One cry to another saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

Next. What you might expect. What we might expect.

And what would certainly happen if this did come to us as a vision. If ours was an open heaven like this. The servants undoing.

The servants undoing. Woe is me. Woe is me.

With all that could be said to profit on that matter. Let me sum it up by saying this. You'll never, never be a servant of the Lord according to Jesus Christ.

On his principle of service. Until you have come very low at the feet of God. That's one way of putting it.

Oh how he honored the Father. How he honored the Father. However and always and in all things.

He was the slave of the Father's honor and glory. And while it was never his of himself to say that he personally was unclean. The man of unclean lives.

For us, dear friends, let there be no mistake about it. The way of servanthood is the way of the shattering of this self life. The exposing of our own corruption.

Does that bring you some hope? I struggle to take some hope out of that. The Lord certainly does take infinite pains to shatter us. To break us.

To empty us. To bring us down to the dust as his servants. But if this has anything to say of encouragement and comfort.

It says this. This is the way of service. This is the way of the greater service.

The way of being able to minister to the Lord. Shall we put it the other way? Here to begin with in this universe somewhere. We don't know, don't know where.

There was one great glorious being who was a minister of God. A minister of God. The anointed cherub that covereth.

Glorious being. And when he became self important. And sought to have the root of the matter in himself and be self sufficient.

He lost his ministry for all eternity. He lost his place in the glory. As that great servant.

And that is ever true. Any pride. Any self esteem.

Self sufficiency. Self confidence. Self centeredness of any kind.

Any selfishness. The way of ruined usefulness to God. No mistake about it.

So. It was necessary in the reaction of God to the situation. Both in Israel and in the church.

The vessel should come into being. For his recovery purpose. And is very empty.

Has been thoroughly emptied and weakened and broken. And brought to the place where there is nothing to say but woe is me. That opens a prospect when we get there.

As it did with Isaiah. The servants undoing first. And then.

Through the undoing. The anointing. The anointing.

For what I see here. Is. The feature of the anointing.

The living coal from the altar. Blood soaked with the sacrifice. Alive with the fire in it.

Living coal. The blood and the spirit together. The twin symbols.

Of cleansing and empowerment. Back in the Levitical system it was like that. Wasn't it? The blood.

And the fire. Of the altar. That was for the cleansing of the priesthood.

And that was for. The. Constituting them.

The servants of God. Divine unction. So the servants anointing.

But mark you. He had to know the power of the blood in his own experience. All true service to God has got to come from.

A personal knowledge of the virtue of the blood. A tremendous effectiveness and efficacy of that blood. Has got to be deeply rooted.

Not in our doctrine and theory. But in our experience. In our history.

Oh the infinite value of the blood. And. Correspondingly the infinite power.

Of the spirit. Must know that. In our experience.

The fire of God which purges. Which cleanses. But which also energizes.

And vitalizes. That's the servants equipment. And when you get there.

The servants call. I heard the voice of the Lord saying. Who will go for us and whom shall I send.

And that sounds very much like a contradiction of what I said last night. There is nothing voluntary about this service. It's compulsory.

But it's not a contradiction. Think a little more. Below the surface.

No. This. This service is compulsory.

It's the service of the bond slave who has no option. No alternative. And no rights.

Yet here it is. Suspended so to speak in the air. Whom? Waiting for an answer.

Waiting for a volunteer. Think again. Maybe.

And yet. See how everything had been very personal with this man up to this point. First of all he had a name.

Isaiah. The salvation of the Lord. By his very birth.

And name his ministry as implied. There's a sense of destiny. In the very title that he has.

Perhaps most of you don't understand that. But some of you may do. Some of you may do.

But right from earliest days you had a sense. Though you were not saved. You didn't know the Lord.

But you had a sense of there being something more than just this life and this earth and this world bound up with your existence. Like this. Might I illustrate my own experience? I don't mean to imply that I am any good as a servant.

But I happen to be in the Lord's service. Is that the wrong way to put it? But there is something sovereign about it. I remember when I was a little fellow of about five, six or seven years of age.

A relative of mine took me to see one of those old Scottish divines. The old type. The Andrew Bonner type.

Dr. Bleck. Then he was the aged 82 year old minister of the great Wellington Church in Glasgow. And I remember I never thought anything about this in my little life.

It occurred to me. She took me into his room to study. She sat down and he put his hand on my shoulder and drew me to his side and he looked at me.

He said, my boy, when you grow up you're going to be a minister. I said, no such idea had ever occurred to me, to be a minister. Of course it shouldn't at six or seven years old.

But I remember that something stared in me when he said that. And old, without knowing what I was saying, I simply said, I would like to be. He put his hand on my head.

God bless you, my boy, and make you one of his servants. And I have to say that though years came in and there was not very much of the Lord's service or the Lord's glory in those years, that never left me. It held something in me, like a sense of destiny.

Now is that worth saying by way of illustration? It may be true with you or it may not be true. You see, Isaiah had something like that by his very name. By his very name.

It was there. And then as I have said, all this, all this was so personal to him, wasn't it? He had been given a heavenly vision with all these wonderful aspects and features. He had been touched, the living coal, and he had heard the voice of the seraph.

This hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is pardoned. What more do you want to make a servant? And to convince any man that he's a man with a call. That he is, before he has committed himself, he is apprehended of God.

Apprehended of God. Well, there's nothing voluntary about that. That's all sovereign from God's side.

But what about this, this suspended call, whom shall I send and whom will go forth? Why that seeming optional element of it? I think for this, not to make him a servant, not to make him Isaiah the prophet. That

was all settled in the sovereignty of God. But look at what he'd got to do.

You read the last part, the last section of the chapter? My word, my word. He was called to no popular work. He was called to nothing that was going to make him pleased.

Nothing in this that was going to give him personal gratification. No, this was no popular, no pleasant work, so it was called. Could ever a man be called to anything more heart-breaking and more distressing? Look at it again.

Go! Go! Tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not. How do you like that, minister? That is the failure of your ministry right at the outset. That's failure written over it from the beginning.

See ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy. Shut their eyes, lest they see and hear and understand.

Well, what about it? The Lord doesn't leave us in any doubt on this matter. Look here, if you are going to do me true service, you're not going to be a popular preacher. You're not going to get anything out of this for yourself.

You're going to have a difficult time. They indeed, for the more part, will not receive your word. They won't like what you say.

And if tradition is true, Isaiah was the man who was thorn asunder in the end. Martyrdom lay in the line of this ministry, this service. Will you accept it? Will you? Will you? Not will you be a prophet, not will you be a servant, but will you serve me though you get nothing out of it? That's perhaps where the voluntary element comes in.

The Lord is not going to force this on us. He looks for cooperation. He wants us to know what we're involved in.

He wants us to face this thing quite squarely. Look it right in the eyes. Say, this kind of ministry of the remnant standing for God's full thought is not what all Israel will take too kindly.

Indeed, every kind and form of rejection will be met. You'll be despised and rejected of men. The prophet was well mixed up with that language.

He entered into the experience of the one whom he saw. The one of chapter 53. Despised and rejected of men.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Isaiah knew a lot about that. And be sure, don't have any illusions about this.

I know the ideas of young men wanting to go into the ministry and the service and the Lord's work and become a great evangelist or a great preacher or something else great. No. That's not it.

The nearer you get to the heart of God, the more deeply you are baptized into the full thought and purpose of God. The smaller will be your following and clientele. The narrower will be your way of acceptance.

The less popular will your ministry be. That is what is said here. Unless, dear friends, you after all this may be thinking in personal terms only.

A prophet. Here we are, a number of sisters, a number of brothers, a number of young people. That all may be alright for a prophet like Isaiah, but where do I come into that? Have you not heard what I've been trying to say? That this service and ministry is the ministry of a company as well as of individuals.

A remnant. That you can fulfill this very service and ministry, not individually and separately, but by reason of your relatedness to a remnant. To a body of the Lord's people who are standing for him in this way.

Fulfill it just as truly. Collectively or corporately as individually. And you'll know this.

You'll meet all this by reason of your relationships and association. You'll meet it. Not because of yourself, but because of that.

Well, I need say no more about that. But here we are. I think the situation is clearly defined as to servant and servanthood in Jesus Christ.

All this was true of him, the great servant. And if the Master went that way, we, his lesser servants, surely succeed. Here am I. Send me.

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