

First Among Servants

Matthew 20:20-28

First Among Servants

- “A paradox is a statement that on the surface may seem absurd or contrary to conventional wisdom, but is actually a profound expression of truth.”
- G. K. Chesterton - “A paradox is truth standing on her head to get attention.”
- Matt. 20:20-28 is a paradox

“Whoever Desires To Become Great Among You, Let Him Be Your Servant”

- Matt. 20:25-26 - “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.”

“Whoever Desires To Become Great Among You, Let Him Be Your Servant”

- Conventional wisdom
 - The great ought to be those with the best pedigree, education, capabilities, etc. The servant appears to lack these qualities
 - Prov. 30:21-22 - “For three things the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up: 22 For a servant when he reigns...”

“Whoever Desires To Become Great Among You, Let Him Be Your Servant”

- Qualities of a servant
 - Matt. 24:45-51 - the contrast between the wise and foolish servants
 - Matt. 25:14-30 - the good servants take the Master's goods and increase them; the unprofitable servant does nothing with the Master's property
 - Luke 17:7-10 - Servants do not think that they deserve the good life for doing their job; they consider themselves unworthy, doing only their duty

“Whoever Would Be First Among You Must Be His Slave”

- Matt. 20:27 - “And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave”
 - Servant is diakonos, one who serves another by choice
 - Slave is doulos, one who is lowest on the social scale of humans
 - A servant had the freedom to choose to serve a certain person; a slave did not have that freedom, and his life was at the mercy of the master

“Whoever Would Be First Among You Must Be His Slave”

- We choose to serve others at our own expense
 - Phil. 2:3-4 - “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”
- We choose to serve the Lord and righteousness
 - Rom. 6:16-23

“Whoever Would Be First Among You Must Be His Slave”

- We will not sell ourselves as slaves to men
 - 1Cor. 7:22-23 - “For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”

“Whoever Would Be First Among You Must Be His Slave”

- We recognize that, as slaves, we have been purchased by the Lord
 - 1Cor. 6:19-20 - “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

“Even As The Son Of Man Came Not To Be Served But To Serve”

- Matt. 20:28 - “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”
- 1Cor. 11:1 - “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”
- Jesus' great humiliation led to His great exaltation
 - Phil. 2:5-11
- Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, work reserved for the most menial of slaves
 - John 13:3-16

“Even As The Son Of Man Came Not To Be Served But To Serve”

- What the Jews expected of the Messiah
 - Matt. 20:25-26 - “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.”
 - 1Sam. 8:5 - “...Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”
 - The Messiah was to overthrow any power oppressing Israel and would rule the world as absolute king from Jerusalem

“Even As The Son Of Man Came Not To Be Served But To Serve”

- Ancient kings did not act as servant to anyone and did not even serve themselves. Everything was done for them.
- Humility, meekness, compassion often run contrary to the exercise of authority.
- Whether at the individual or national level, any sign of humility, apology, or meekness would be understood as weakness and vulnerability

“Even As The Son Of Man Came Not To Be Served But To Serve”

- Jesus came to rule over a spiritual kingdom
 - John 6:15 - “Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.”
 - John 18:36 - “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

First Among Servants

- Matt. 11:28-30 - “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
- The greatest rulers of men depend on power to rule ineffectively, which ironically makes them arrogant
- The greatest in the kingdom of heaven depend upon service to lead extraordinarily, which paradoxically makes them humble