

The Following Servant

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in John's Gospel, chapter 12, and reading in verse 25. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Now, we've looked at this section from verse 20 before, so I'm not going to say too much, just a wee bit by way of background into that, because it's important with regard to what we're going to look at today.

And we see these Greeks who came desiring to see Jesus, and of course the desire that they had wasn't simply a desire to see what he looked like, or a desire to hear what he sounded like.

It was a desire to get to know Jesus. So if they were simply wanting to see him by what he looked like, or hear him, hear his words, and hear his teaching, well, they were able to do that.

[1 : 1 7] But they wanted, when they asked this desire to see Jesus, they wanted to meet with Jesus. They wanted a personal encounter with Jesus. And that, of course, is the greatest desire that any person could have, is desiring to see Jesus.

And I hope today, as you've come to church here, that that is your great desire, that you would see him. Because we know that faith tells us, because faith lays hold upon the word, and the word tells us that Jesus Christ is here today.

He has promised his presence where two or three of his people gather together, he says, that you'll be there in the midst. And he's there in the midst to bless. And that's a wonderful thing. Sometimes we forget just what the great privilege, the wonderful, wonderful privilege that we have as we draw here together and gather together today.

Jesus has said, you know, I will be here in the midst to bless. And so it is our desire to lay hold by faith upon Jesus even today.

And that we will see a little more of him. It's a great desire in the heart of the people of God. And it's one of the great things that you think about as you go on, is that in glory, that you will see him as he is.

[2 : 3 1] You will see him there as a glorified, majestic redeemer. You will see him as your king and savior. By faith you see him here.

There you will actually see him. As he is the resurrected, as he is in the two natures and the one person. But the body that Jesus rose in from the dead, that body he will always have in all its majesty and glory today.

But you'll see him. And so there is this, this is a great thing that those who see him here and long to see him here, they also are longing to see him there.

The two go together. And it's a growing desire within your heart. When you see him by faith, you're longing to really see him by sight.

So we find that this is, we have these Greeks who are deciding to see Jesus. And then Jesus says, after that, he said, the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified.

[3 : 40] And of course, God's glorious manifestation of his divine majesty. And the glory of God was revealed in the whole ministry of Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus Christ, throughout his whole ministry, was fulfilling the will of the Father. He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.

That's what Jesus kept saying. So to see the Father, one had to see Christ. It was through Christ that we are able to see the Father. And so this was what Jesus is saying here.

He's saying that the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified. And we find here that this is really the supreme moment in the world.

Now a lot of people find it hard to understand that they say, what is glorious about the cross? They say, yes, there's glory in the resurrection. The resurrection was splendid.

[4 : 40] It was amazing. There was glory in the ascension of Jesus Christ. But was there glory in the horrors of the cross? Well, yes. Because the cross was a pivotal moment where everything, that whole weekend that took place there, of course, everything, Christ's whole life was displaying glory.

But at this particular moment, when Jesus is paying the price, when Jesus is fulfilling in the most marvelous way the will of God on the cross, this is the moment where the glory of God has been seen in a greater way than anywhere else.

The creation of the world is something that's altogether glorious. And we often marvel at it. And we say, as we look at all the different aspects of this world's glory, and the whole planetary system, and the sun, the moon, the stars, and the great oceans, and the mountain ranges, and the blade of grass, and little flowers, and ourselves, the complexity of human being.

And we say, whoa, what handiwork, what power, what glory. We see the glory of God. The heavens declare the glory of God.

The Psalms tell us that. And yet glorious and all the creation is. And we've got to remember that the creation has been affected by sin, the whole, the moment, man's sin.

[6 : 09] It wasn't just human nature, the human being that felt the curse, the fall, but the whole creation. Because we're told that the whole creation groans.

The impact of sin was felt right throughout. But however great and wonderful the creation was, the new creation is even greater.

And this was a pivotal moment of the new creation. It was the death and the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ. And so that's why Jesus is saying, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

And then verse 24, Jesus says, Truly I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Now, of course, again, Jesus is showing here, he's taking the example of there's a grain of wheat.

[7 : 14] And if you keep that grain, it's, well, it's just you have it there all the time. But if you sow that grain of wheat, then something comes from it. And as you sow loads of grains of wheat, then you'll ultimately get your harvest.

You'll get your crop. But if you don't sow them and you just keep them on a shelf or keep them in a box or keep them in a bag, then that's all they'll remain. And Jesus, of course, when he says that, Truly I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. And Jesus is saying here, this is what is to happen to me. Not that Jesus was ever alone. He shared always in the second person of the Godhead and the glory of Father and Spirit, the three persons of the Godhead.

But with regard to his human nature, he would remain alone unless he died. He had to die in order for the great harvest to be seen.

And just as a sower deliberately sows the seed, so Jesus Christ was deliberately, as it were, sown into the ground. Jesus was deliberately put to death, although it was the work of evil men that did that at one level.

[8 : 35] It was why Jesus came into this world. It was to pay the price for sin. And so the actual work was a deliberate work. The sowing was deliberate.

And it was only through that that this great harvest could be seen. Now, when Jesus was in the world, there was only a small band following him. But there is now an amazing harvest worldwide.

There are not just thousands, but millions of people following the Lord Jesus Christ. In some countries in this world, the growth in Christianity is staggering.

The amount of people that are following, as is also the persecution of the Christian globally. But it is through this, through the sowing, this is what Jesus is saying, And this is how you can see me.

This is the only way to really see me. This is the only way to really grasp who I am, is in my death. And that is why it is so important that people come to understand the significance of purpose of Jesus' death.

[9 : 41] Because if we miss that, we miss everything. It is only through his death that we can discover life. It is only laying hold upon his death for us that we can experience his life given to us.

Because if we miss his death, we miss everything. And that's a sad thing that a lot of people, they almost look on a bloodless Christ. They don't see the significance of why he had to die and what his death achieved.

But Jesus is saying, if you really want to see me and understand me, this is where you have to see it. And so that's what Jesus is saying.

And of course today, if you today are a believer, you are part of this great harvest. This is part of what Jesus here is talking about. But then in verse 25, Jesus makes this very profound statement.

That must have baffled many people. Because he says, whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[10 : 50] Now, the greatest instinct probably that we have in life is self-preservation. We will do everything, normally speaking, everything to protect ourselves, to keep ourselves alive.

That it is one of the, it is, in a normal person, it is one of the great instincts that we have. Self-preservation. And although we don't sit down and analyze it, the basic thing is that we love ourselves.

We have a self-interest. And that's natural. That's, I mean, we're not saying that that's wrong. We're not trying to make out that that's wrong. But there is a, and you can see it in children, the me first syndrome.

You don't have to teach it to children. You will see that there is an instinctive me first sort of thing. And this sort of interest in self from a very, very young age.

Now, what the Lord is really teaching here is that when he says about hating, whoever loves his life loses, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

[12 : 03] We've got to remember that the word hating here is in a comparative sense. And it doesn't mean that we have to, if we're going to be a Christian, that we've got to go around hating ourselves and beating ourselves up and saying to ourselves every day, Ah, you know, I really hate myself.

I've got to work at this hating myself. That's not what the Lord is actually saying. Although there are times that we do hate ourselves because of our sin. And there are times we grovel.

And there are times we just feel such a sense of failure. And when God's Spirit really opens up our heart and opens our heart to ourselves, and we sometimes get a glimpse of the corruption and the deceit and the iniquity and the perversion that is there, sometimes we find it staggering.

And we can only say, like, the man in the Bible said, Oh, woe is me, for I am undone. There are times that's how we actually feel. We feel torn inside.

And so there is that one level we go to the Lord and Lord will say, Oh, forgive me, I'm just a worm. I'm just so, I'm so corrupt. And that's natural in the realms of grace.

[13 : 13] But that doesn't mean that when we say that, that we have an instinctive hatred of ourselves, but we feel just how much we're letting the Lord down. But what Jesus is meaning here when he says about hating is very simply that we don't put him above anybody or anything else.

It's the same word that he uses elsewhere when he talks about discipleship and where he's saying that unless a man will hate his father and mother and so on and follow me, he cannot be my disciple.

And again, it is an uncomparative use. Because that would be contradicting the word of God because we love our family. We love God has given us these. These are the great blessings of life.

And it would be a denial of all the great blessings that God has given if we were to start actually hating our mother and our father and our brothers and our sisters and our wife and our children and all that.

Of course, the Lord doesn't mean that. But he's putting it again in a comparative force. First and foremost, above anybody and everybody in this world, above yourself, has to be allegiance to me.

[14 : 28] And actually, it is in our allegiance to the Lord that we come to discover the real fulfillment and where we are able, at a greater level, to love those who have been given to us in life.

And so, faith in Jesus Christ really means hanging loose to the things of this world. It doesn't mean that we are to turn our back upon this world in the sense of turning our back upon all the blessings of this world.

God has given us, the Bible tells us, he has given us richly all things to enjoy. We've got to remember that. So we're not to live like those who might say, well, I'm renouncing everything in this world, every single thing.

I'm not going to have, I'm just going to live like a Trappist monk or something. I'm going to go and deny him and just complete isolation. The Lord doesn't ask us to do that.

Although there might be some people who feel compelled to do that. But that's not what, that is not what the Lord is saying here. But we're not to live for this world.

[15 : 36] This world is not to be our aim and our glory and to find everything, our whole life, ticking away in what this world is. Yes, in Jesus Christ as a Christian, we can enjoy living in this world.

And the Lord doesn't mean us to go through life sort of just down all the time. Yes, it is a wilderness spiritually. It is. But we can also find delight in the Lord.

And you look at the likes of someone like David, who is a man after God's own heart. Yes, there were few people who confessed sin at the level that David did. And there were few people who had an awareness of his own heart like David.

And you just go through his Psalms and you'll see that. But there were also few people who rejoiced in God and enjoyed life at the level that David did.

Even in the midst of the difficult times and the troubled times. So we've got to be clear that the Lord is saying to us, In this world, do not make this world your end.

[16 : 45] Do not make living in this world all it is. Do not seek to live for yourself only. You must put me first.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And then what does he say? All the other things will be added to you. So we have to hang loosely to this world.

Those who live only for this world. And their satisfaction is purely found in this world. They're distraught when they feel that their life is coming to an end in this world.

I remember reading one of the stars of the day and he was dying. And there's a great lamentation where I just don't want to die. Because I just, I love living life.

I've got so much going on. And that's a tragedy for so many people who are out of Christ. Is that they have nothing else.

[17 : 46] But for the believer, there is this deep rooted knowledge. I have Jesus Christ. And I know where I'm going. I know in whom I believe.

I know where my future lies. My hope is in Jesus Christ. And that makes a world of difference. And that's why Jesus is saying here.

That it is imperative. And he says that this is how it actually works out. The person who chooses this world over Christ.

Actually ends up losing everything. And the person who chooses Christ over everything else. Christ is the one who receives life. And holds on to eternal life.

But a life lived with Christ is, it changes everything. You have a daily companion. You have somebody you can lean on. Somebody who will guide you.

[18 : 47] Somebody who will show you the way to go. Somebody who you can trust with all your heart. You know, it's the greatest thing to have somebody that you can really depend on.

Somebody that you can trust. People will often say we live in a world where you can't really trust anybody. Well, I don't believe that that is true. Because there are many people that we can trust.

But you know, even the best of people can let us down. But the Lord won't. And it's wonderful to have somebody that you can share your worries, your concerns, your hopes, your fears with.

Because he is the Lord who has promised that he will help us in all these things. And then Jesus goes on to say, he says, Whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Well, we see here, if anybody serves me, he must follow me.

[19 : 54] And as people often say, we are saved to serve. And being a Christian, you really become a servant. And one of the questions that people ask, like the Apostle Paul when he was converted, What, Lord, what will you have me to do?

It's almost a natural response of the heart of gratitude. I'm sure we will. If you think back over your Christian life, and when you became a Christian, I'm sure you said that very thing.

Oh, Lord, what do you want me to do? What will you have me to do? What can I do for you? It's a natural response. The gratitude of heart.

Because of what the Lord has done for you, you want in turn to do for him. So, that is the way that grace works.

But at one level, everybody is called into service. And you will see here that service and following are inseparably linked. If anyone serves me, he must follow me.

[21 : 00] And where I am, there will my servant be also. The serving, the servant, it's a following. And we've said it before, it's a beautiful expression. Following. Following Jesus.

It's a term that we use here with when a person becomes a Christian. When did so-and-so start following? We use that expression. And it's so biblical.

That a person begins to, you might say of somebody, I didn't know he had started following. I didn't know she was following. And you don't add anything else. But people know.

They don't say following, following. But people may, some people may. But certainly within the church, you know straight away when somebody says that about following. That it is following the Lord Jesus Christ.

So it's a beautiful, it's a biblical expression. And so we follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Where I am, there will my servant be also.

[21 : 59] And where is Jesus? Well, Jesus is always in the word. And that's why the servant. You today. You are all servants. Every single believer is a servant.

You will be in the word. Because you find the Lord in the word. He is the word. And so it is something daily. You cannot but go there.

Because where he is, you will be also. So that's why you open the pages of his word. Because he is there, you will be. That is why you come to God's house.

Because as we said earlier, Jesus himself has said, where two or three are gathered together, I will be in the midst. So you come here because Jesus is here.

Where I am, my servant will be also. That's what Jesus is saying to us. You follow Jesus in obedience. That's what you seek to do.

[22 : 58] You seek to obey him. Which you find, you say, how do I obey him? Well, we find that in the word. The word tells us. Because the word is the only rule to direct us.

On how we may glorify God. And so we seek to obey the word. Because as we know, Jesus says this.

If you love me, keep my commandments. Now that hurts us sometimes. Because you and I know we so often fail in keeping God's commandments. And it's what causes us sorrow.

Why does it cause us sorrow? Because we love him. We don't want to hurt him. We know we have hurt him. That's what happens. And you know that when you do wrong.

When you, if you really love somebody. And you let that passion down. And you do things which you know is really going to hurt them. It hurts you as well. And the thing is that sin is something so powerful within us.

[23 : 58] And the desire towards sin. And the whole thrust within us towards sin. And there are times as we're sinning, we've lost sight of how we're hurting the Lord.

But then afterwards, when the Lord convicts us of our sin, we grieve. Because we know we have let the Lord down.

If you love me, keep my commandments. And so that is why there is a desire to keep the command. To follow the Lord. To live in obedience to him. And when we fail, there's sadness, there's sorrow within our heart because of that.

And again, we seek to follow the Lord by his example. Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. It is something that we seek.

We discover how Jesus lived. How he reacted. And it's radical. Jesus' lifestyle in the day he lived in was absolutely radical. And let me say, whether today that Jesus was to come into this world, the world today would equally find his lifestyle to be absolutely radical.

[25 : 09] Because it cuts across so often. It challenges who we are, where we are, what we do, how we react, how we live our lives. All these things.

Jesus' life was a constant challenge to the people. And in fact, it made the religious leaders so uncomfortable. And we've got to remember, it was those who were supposed to be the leading lights.

Those who were the religious people. They were the ones in the majority who couldn't stand Jesus. Because the holiness of his life and the goodness of his life and the righteousness of his life exposed the hypocrisy very often of their lives.

And so they had to get rid of him. They couldn't stand him. But the thing is that for you and for me, although his perfect life, as is revealed to us in the word, when we hold it up against our life, we see how far short we come.

But we still say, Lord, help me to become more like you. And that is a scriptural prayer. Because it is the great aim. That's the great aim of the father is to conform his children to the image of his son.

[26 : 27] And so don't ever think, I cannot pray, Lord, help me, make me more like you. Because that's the great purpose and the great aim of God for his children in this world to conform them to the image of Christ.

And so we follow Jesus. We follow Jesus as our teacher. He is our supreme teacher. And again in the word. And we say to the Lord, Lord, open up my understanding.

Help me to see what it is you're saying to me. Lord, be my teacher. Be the one who teaches me. Lord, be my guide.

We want to follow him. Because we know. What do we know? We know that he knows. He knows where he is going. It's a great, it's a wonderful thing.

It's like, I think I've told a story before about a young boy who was leaning against the wall of his house. And a neighbor came along and he said to him, what are you doing today?

[27 : 34] Oh, he says, I'm going on a wee trip today. Oh, he says, where are you going? I says, I don't know. Oh, he said, how can you go on a wee trip when you don't know where you're going? Oh, he says, I'm waiting for my friend to come.

And my friend knows where we're going. So I'm just going along with him. And in a sense, that's how it is with Jesus. Because so often, day by day, we don't know what a day or an hour may bring.

But Jesus does. And he is our friend. And we go with him. And we can fully trust him. Because if we, every day, put our hand in his hand and say, well, Lord, I really don't know what's ahead today.

I don't know how to go. But I know you know the way. And by faith, that is how we should travel every single day. With our hand in his hand. That is by faith, trusting in him.

Because he is our guide. So he said, he is our teacher. He is our guide. He is our Lord and King. We bow in submission before him. And the wonderful thing he says, if anyone serves me, he must follow me.

[28 : 39] And where I am, there will my servant be also. Not just for time, but also for eternity. Where I am, my servant will be also.

Isn't that wonderful? And here's the great question today for you, Sheldon. Because you'll have a great idea just where you stand today. If you say to yourself, you know, I can come to church for that.

It's all right. I can come to church on a Sunday and this and that. But I couldn't handle sort of worshipping the Lord just any more than that.

Or is it today you're saying to yourself, you know, you can, with all honesty, you can take away anything and everything.

My greatest desire is to be with Jesus. I want that. That is what I'm about. Yes, I have my failings, my failures, this and that and the rest.

[29 : 44] But my heart ticks and beats knowing that I love Jesus and I want to be with him forever. It's only the Christian that can say that.

Because those who don't love Jesus, the very thought, though people have this idea of heaven, they don't really know what heaven is. Heaven is living in the immediate presence of Christ with all his people forever.

And, you know, there are some people, in all honesty, who would say, I don't want that. There are people who say, I can't. I wouldn't like that kind of living forever and ever and ever in the immediate presence of Christ.

That's not for me. There are people who will say that. But there are many other people who will say, that's what I want. I just want to be in the presence of Christ forever and ever with his people.

If you can say that, then you're somebody, obviously, who loves the Lord Jesus. And that's what Jesus says. Where I am, there will my servant be.

[30 : 52] He will be. There's no doubts about it. If you love the Lord Jesus, and if you're following the Lord Jesus, and maybe even like Peter, you might be today following at a distance.

But you're still following. Even although it might be a wee bit back, you're still following. Jesus puts that word, will.

Will be with me. And what an assurance that is. That when the day comes, that's where we will be. We will be with him forever and ever.

Let us pray. Lord our God, we pray to bless us this day. We give thanks for your word. A word which teaches us and guides us. A word which shows us the way to go.

We give thanks, Lord, for the encouragement that your word is to us. And we pray, Lord, that we may seek to follow you more wholeheartedly. Forgive us our every sin.

[31 : 50] Take us to our home safely. And all we ask is in and through the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. We conclude singing in Psalm 100, the 100th Psalm.

Psalm 100. And we sing the first from the beginning. And the first two stanzas.

God El- They ■ painful. God El- Theyautres Church. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[34 : 17] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.