

**Date** : 24 August 2025  
**Theme** : Emulating Jesus' Servanthood in Mark's Gospel  
**Topic** : Aspire to be Great servants  
**Key passage** : Mark 9  
**Key verse** : *...If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. Mark 9:35 nkjv*

## Introduction

The disciples' discussion over who should be the greatest triggered the opportunity for Jesus' teaching on discipleship. They have been with Him for over 2 years. Before Jesus headed for Jerusalem, the theme of self-sacrifice and servanthood becomes even stronger, even as He Himself was facing His impending death and resurrection.

Great Christians are great servants. If we desire to be first, to be our very best as servants worthy of Jesus, we must grasp three things:

1. Who we are to serve?
2. How are we required to serve?
3. Why does it matter?

### 1. Who we are to serve?

We are to be *...servant of all...* Mark 9:35

- a) First of all the One we must serve is Jesus, our Master and Lord. We must recognise who He is. He is the Lord God Almighty. Mark 9:1-8 shows us Jesus in His glorious state. The overwhelming brightness of Jesus is consistent with descriptions of God's Presence (Shekinah glory). This is Jesus' eternal, divine glory and authority, as the King of kings.

The 3 disciples have been given a brief glimpse into Jesus' eternal and divine glory. John, one of the 3, later records *...we have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth... John 1:14*. The Lord Jesus, one day, will be our Judge. He decides our destiny; to make one great or cast into hell.

- The day will come when we shall stand before Him, what will you say to Him? In Mark 9:6, Peter basically panicked, not knowing what to say, speaks out of fear and makes big mistakes.
  - He addresses the Lord wrongly. Rabbi means teacher; but in eternity Jesus is Lord above all. Also, neither Peter nor the 2 disciples fall at His feet in worship.
  - Instead on focusing on the Lord whose appearance is more appropriate for the King of Glory than for a humble man, Peter proceeds with an unwise offer to build 3 tents to house the Lord and the 2 great Old Testament servants. God's voice from the cloud of glory *...This is my beloved Son. Hear Him!* ... makes it clear that Jesus is not on the same level as Elijah and Moses.

- b) Servant of All includes the helpless; those who can neither speak nor defend themselves. *Mark 9:21* tells of a helpless boy who, from childhood, has been demonized and humiliated. The disciples are unable to cast out the demon because of their lack of faith. The boy's father's plea to Jesus *...If You can...help us... Mark 9:22.* Jesus' answer? *...If you can? All things are possible if you (can) believe... Mark 9:23*
- c) Thirdly we are to serve ...little ones... *Mark 9:37.* We are to welcome, value and nurture them to be Kingdom members. The Lord equates our receiving them as if it is the Lord we are welcoming. In fact He sets such a high value on them that causing them offence or hindering them from entering His Kingdom is treated as a serious crime, worthy of capital punishment.
- d) Fourthly we are to serve the most helpless of all humanity — the unborn, referred to as foetus. (Some sectors of society consider them as not yet humans). As servants of Christ, we are obligated to do whatever we can to speak up for the voiceless. Millions of them are killed in cold blood every year. Even in Singapore, there exists a nonchalant attitude that the unborn can be dispensed with at will. Many doctors readily abort a human pregnancy and carry out the deliberate termination of human life without compassion.
- e) We must serve spiritual babes as well. This takes time and effort. We give much attention to birthing a new believer. Billy Graham once said that this is only 10% of our work, 90% remains to be finished to equip them till full maturity.  
(In the Book of Judges, the nation of Israel declined spiritually and economically because the new generation had neither been taught God's Word, nor had they seen the great works of God.)
- f) Lastly, an obligation is placed upon every true follower of Christ to serve His body, the Church. Our role and position in the church has been assigned by the Holy Spirit. If you are baptised into His body, there is an assigned duty to belong and to serve in this church.

## 2. How are we required to serve?

- a) With a servant heart — a spirit of humility. Only servants are honoured as great in His Kingdom. We 'get' the chance to serve. When we despise people needing our help, we have the wrong attitude and are deemed unfit for service. Our Lord describes Himself as *...gentle and lowly in heart...* *Matthew 11:28.* We are to take His yoke upon ourselves. The good news is that His yoke is easy, a light burden. This means being free from having to impress anybody when we serve.

- b) With a faithful heart, assured of His power, **we can**. In *Mark 9:23*, the desperate father of the demonised boy asks the Lord ...*But if you can...help us...* The Lord's answer? *If you can? All things are possible if you can believe....* A servant with faith must trust God's power. *We can*, not, *if we can!* The Lord Himself has clearly said that some of them will not see death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power *Mark 9:1*. His Kingdom is not talk but power. If this is so, we can!
- c) Serve with care. Do not offend the little ones! *Mark 9:42*. Specially little ones who trust in Him must be handled with care. They are weak and adults could easily take advantage of them. The Lord takes a strong view against anyone causing the little ones to sin. He considers those with such an attitude as deserving death by drowning.
- d) Value little children. Our Lord takes them into His arms. In our church there are many little ones. How should we demonstrate such a value? Perhaps greeting them by their names and blessing them by praying for each one of them could be some of the ways.

### 3. Why does it matter?

- a) Great servants are willing to **be last**. This is counter- initiative to all of us. Aspiring to be a great servant, one who brings glory to the Lord cannot be fulfilled without a change of mindset. We must move from *Me first* to others first. Putting God's glory first is a radical change. Putting others first for Jesus' sake is not simply doing so without purpose.

It matters because only God can make one great. Promotion does not come from men. He lifts one up or puts down; kills or makes alive *Psalms 75:7-8*. (Example: Joseph in prison prophesied the future of a baker and a butler. One got promoted and the other put to death.)

When we serve God God's way we attain the greatest we possibly can. There is no need for competition.

Therefore who is the greatest is not the right question. The right attitude is simply *I can when I press toward the mark to finish my assignment*. There is a reward for simply offering a drink in His name.

- b) What **severe consequences** could follow if we serve out of self-glory? The Lord uses a hyperbole in His warning *...If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.... It is better to enter into life maimed rather than having 2 hands to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched — where “their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. Mark 9:43-48*  
Jesus mentions *Hell* 3 times in these few verses.

Self serving “servants” will choose their own sinful desires and own purpose ahead of God’s will. The destiny of such people would be ‘Hell’. Avoidance of hell is so crucial that having to make the costliest sacrifices looks like nothing compared to hell. Of course it is better to stop sinning against God than losing one’s hands.

The message of Jesus is clear: knowing how terrible hell is, it is worth any sacrifice just to avoid hell. Therefore we cannot think of the Kingdom of God just in the context of reward; we must also think in terms of sacrifice.

We must choose whose servant we want to be. If it is Jesus, then we must follow His way, including being prepared to suffer for His sake.

## Application

- Does aspiring to be a great servant versus choosing mediocrity by default, matter to you? Why? ☐
- How does the alternative (living a self centered life and doing things my own sinful way) affect my future destiny? ☐  
Seriously consider Jesus’ forewarning of hell in *Mark 9:44, 48*