

SERIES: “i Worldview”
“i-Serve” – Matthew 20:26-28

Syndicated columnist Deborah Mathis wrote about the time when she was at Union Station in Washington D. C. on a particularly busy day. The first thing she remembers about that experience was the noisy hubbub of sounds:

- The public address announcer calling out arrivals and departures.
- Scores of pagers, walkie-talkies, and cell phones crying out for someone’s attention.
- You could hear horns honking, machines clinking out change, and babies crying.
- A security guard yelled at a man who was about to enter a forbidden area. 3 women stood up from their bench in order to argue with each other more loudly.
- And a man in front of her was nervously pacing in a tight circle.

But then she heard someone singing. "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer." Slowly a change came over the noisy crowd. The voice continued: "O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." The quarreling women stopped their talking and quietly took their seats. People who’d been tense and hurried; seemed to slow and relax - and they strained to hear the voice singing the remaining verses of that old hymn.

And Ms. Mathis realized she was singing along. So were the three women who had been bickering. And a few others as well. The man in front of her, who had been behaving nervously, quietly said: "Nice, huh? I don’t even believe in Jesus, but that’s nice."

Music has a way of changing our lives. When we share it, it can affect the lives of people around us. Last Sunday we talked about iPods a bit. Now, iPods aren’t designed to allow you to share your music. As I mentioned last week, an iPod is a marvelous music machine capable of holding your entire musical library. It’s capable of holding 100s of Albums of music, 1000s of songs... all in a small little box you can put in your shirt pocket. But there’s no speakers on these things.

Granted, you can buy an adaptor to play the music thru your car sound system. OR you can pay \$100 or more for a unit that will hold your iPod and play music on external speakers. But for the most part, iPods are PERSONAL music machines. They’re designed for your PERSONAL enjoyment... not for that of others. As a result, folks who use iPods have a tendency to shut other people out. It’s THEIR iPod... THEIR music.

And when they’re listening to THEIR music thru those tiny earphones called ear buds they often spend that time shut off from others, in their own little world. Now, if you owned an iPod and you wanted to share your music with someone you could share your earbuds with them, or two or more people could plug their earbuds into one iPod.

Of course, this kind of practice (as you might imagine) isn’t for casual strangers or people you meet on the street. You gotta really like somebody to do this. It has to be somebody you REALLY WANT to share with.

Our Text this morning tells us about 12 men who aren’t into sharing. These are the disciples. They’ve been with Christ for about 3 years now... and the end is at hand. They’re gathered in an upper room to eat the Passover meal with their teacher but they don’t realize yet this is the “Last” Supper.

For 3 years they've lived together, ate together and learned together at the feet of Jesus. But a conversation comes up that tells us these boys haven't understood one of the main things Jesus wants them to understand. In fact, according to Matthew and Mark, they've had this conversation before.

The conversation always started with the disciples arguing over which of them would be greatest in the coming Kingdom. Jesus' answer was always the same: YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! My Kingdom is going to be different than the kingdoms of this world. In My Kingdom - My church – the greatest will be the one who is the best servant.

In Matthew 20 Jesus says it this way: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." V. 26-28

In other words – if you want great in the Kingdom of God you've got to be a servant. You've got to learn how to share your life with others. Servanthood lies at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian. In Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 Paul drives that home to us. Ephesians 5:21 tells us we need to "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Throughout the rest of the Ephesian letter, Paul tells us what it means to submit:

- Wives need to submit to their husbands by respecting them and honoring them.
- Husbands need to submit to their wives by loving them and giving to them and being willing to die for them.
- Children need to submit to their parents by obeying them in the Lord.
- Father's need to submit to their children by not "exasperating" them, but instead training them up in God's way.
- Employees (slaves) need to obey their bosses (masters) as if obeying Jesus Himself.
- And Employers (masters) must treat their employees (slaves) well – remembering that he and they both share the same master.

Servanthood lies at the heart of who we are as Christians. As we mentioned last Sunday, we have no better example of humility and servanthood than our Savior Jesus. As Paul reminded the Philippians and us, "...Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus surrendered His will to His Father, and through His death and resurrection, He brought us life and salvation.

Now we have the opportunity in our relationship with God and others, not to make it all about us, but surrender our will to the Father and love and serve Him and others. Jesus must increase in all things, and I must decrease. Servanthood determines how I treat others.

CLOSE: A few years ago, I read an article by a woman named Esther Peterson who told this story:

“My brother and 5 sisters and I had had our differences growing up. They festered into deep resentments in the years after we left home. I didn’t realize how deep until Mother died. After the funeral our grievances boiled over.

- George was upset that Mom had left Mary the antique black walnut bedroom set – “It’s worth a lot and Mary already has more than the rest of us put together.”
- I got the flatware.
- Evelyn would inherit the house because she had lived with Mother.
- Becky and Betty got the china and Mary the piano, which she’d bought for Mom.
- But Dorothy, Mom’s primary caregiver, resented that some of us were absent during Mom’s final days, and perhaps felt that she would receive more.”

Esther continued: “It was 5 years before we all got together again. The night before, Dorothy said, “If we can get through tomorrow without any major explosions, it will be a miracle.”

At first things felt awkward as we all struggled to behave. But by dinnertime it was better. We laughed as we told stories about our childhood. The memories were so sweet, but there was something missing.

Afterward, I took out a loaf of bread, and said “Since we’ve all been apart so long and since my husband is a preacher, I thought we might share communion.” Everyone agreed. We read Scripture and prayed.

Her husband said the words, “Do this in remembrance of me.” He broke the bread and gave it to us. Unbelievably, grievances and hurt dissolved. “We hugged,” she said “and became a family again, together in God’s grace, our missing ingredient.” (Esther Peterson , in Guideposts, 9/02)

The disciples were arguing about who would be greatest, but Jesus took the opportunity to teach them and us a powerful lesson. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Thank you, Jesus! Make me a servant! Amen!