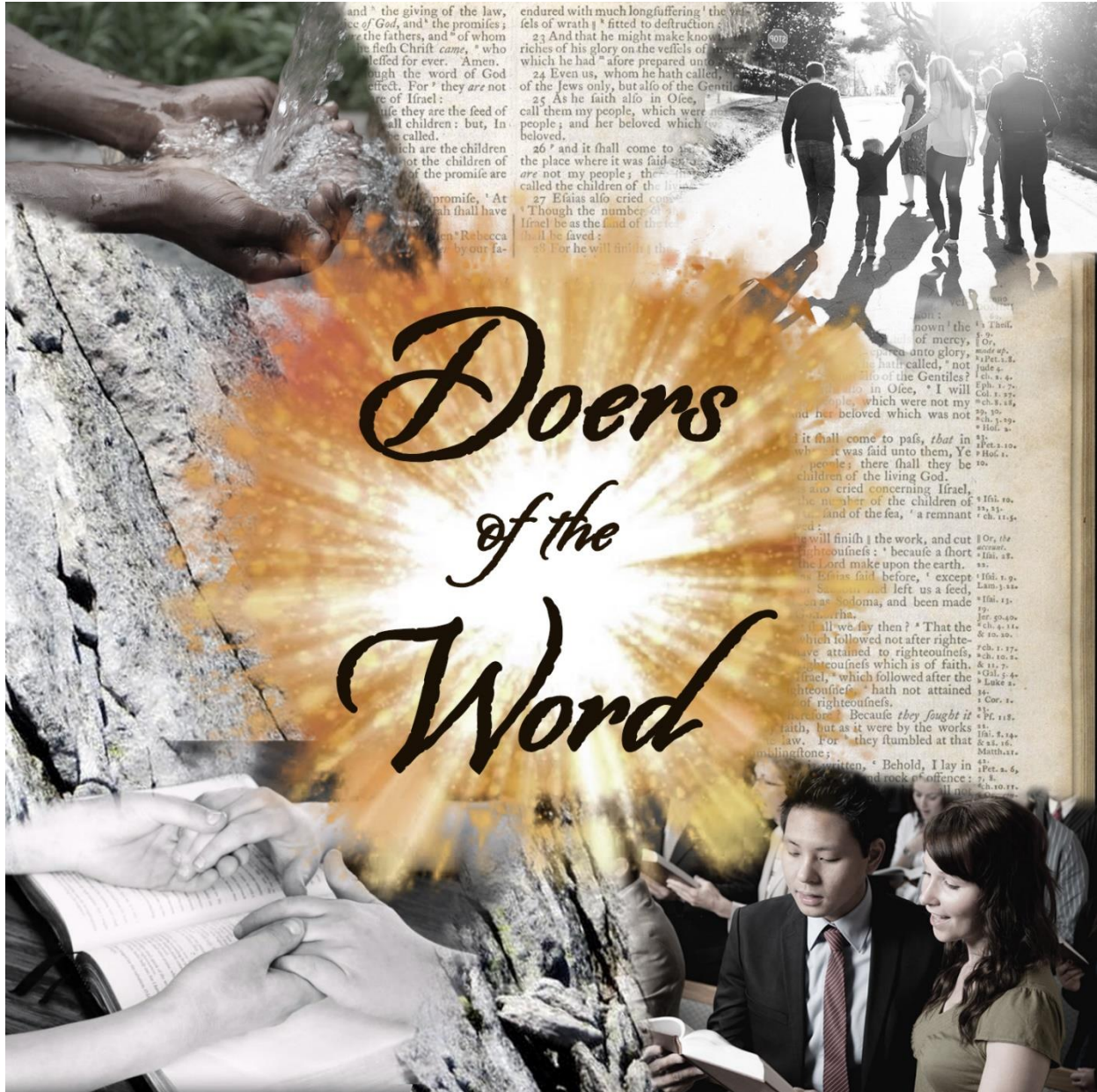

A CUP OF COLD WATER

Learning to Serve from the Master



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4th Quarter 2020

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INTRODUCTION

If we want to learn how to serve, who better to learn from than the Master Himself? This is the final quarter for our annual theme – “Each Day I’ll Do a Golden Deed!” We have considered the need for sacrifice. We have seen the attitudes and fruit we need in our lives. We have studied God’s instruction manual for living so that we can serve God and others more effectively and efficiently. Now we get to watch the Master at work.

Every aspect of Jesus’ life sets an example for us: how to teach, how to respond to temptation, how to pray, how to respond to abuse. But when we consider how *the one who is to be served* serves...we are left speechless.

These lessons will examine various aspects of Jesus’ life and other characters in the gospel stories. We will note what Jesus did and what Jesus taught. This, like everything we have studied this year, is not an academic exercise. It is about application. Each lesson will ask “How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?” I use the phrase “make yourself” because it takes work and we may not always feel like it. I initially asked how we could make ourselves better servants tomorrow. But that implies that it is ok to wait to serve. I do not think that is the example we see from Jesus.

This has been a strange year. As a congregation, the elders wanted to do some acts of service. COVID19 had other plans. But that has not lessened the need for service. In fact, it has increased. Maybe we cannot serve in traditional ways, but there is work to do if you really want to serve. Do not use change, oddity, or uncertainty to keep you from following the great example of the Master Servant!

Jonathan Caldwell

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this workbook is only for Wednesday nights.
My sermons on Sundays will cover the Beatitudes.

A Cup of Cold Water: Learning to Serve from the Master

Schedule of Lessons

Wednesday, October 7	1. The Formula	Matthew 16:24-28; Luke 9:23-26
Wednesday, October 14	2. It Starts in the Heart	Matthew 5-7; Luke 6:27-36; 17:7-10
Wednesday, October 21	3. The Greatest Commandment	Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34
Wednesday, October 28	4. Simple Obedience	Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-15; 2:19-23
Wednesday, November 4	5. Leaving Everything	Matthew 4:18-22; 8:18-22; 9:9; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:1- 11, 27-32; 9:57-62
Wednesday, November 11	6. Little Things	Matthew 10:40-42; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4; John 8:1-11
Wednesday, November 18	7. Are You Mary or Martha?	Luke 10:38-42
Wednesday, November 25	8. The Parable of the Talents	Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27
Wednesday, December 2	9. Who Is the Greatest?	Matthew 18; Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45; Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-30
Wednesday, December 9	10. The Greatest Servant	John 13; Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19
Wednesday, December 16	11. Warnings	Matthew 6:1-18; 23:1-36
Wednesday, December 23	12. The Coldest Cup of Water	Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; John 1:29, 35-51
Wednesday, December 30	13. Judged by Your Service	Matthew 25:31-46

THE FORMULA

Text: Matthew 16:24-28; Luke 9:23-26

If we are going to be the servants that God wants us to be, something must happen for that to be possible. It is not easy, it is not pleasant, and it is contrary to the advice our world and culture typically offer. We must rid ourselves of self. This is where we began the year—getting on and staying on the altar as living sacrifices.

- What three things must be done if we are going with Jesus?
- What does it mean to deny self? What does it mean to “take up your cross”? What does it mean to follow Jesus?
- How does Luke’s inclusion of the word “daily” affect your reading of this passage?
- In Matthew 16:25 and Luke 9:24, what is the potential cause of death?
- Everyday we must make a decision to serve Christ or gain the _____.
- Why would we be ashamed of Christ?
- Why would I refer to these statements as “the formula” for learning to serve?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

IT STARTS IN THE HEART

Text: Matthew 5-7; Luke 6:27-36; 17:7-10

If we are going to be better servants, we will have to change our hearts. This sounds extreme, but it is what Jesus started with and what he continued to teach through His ministry. Sometimes we may have to act even when we really do not want to simply because it is right. However, doing the right thing is so much easier when matched with a godly attitude. So, let us get our heart where it needs to be.

- Consider the beatitudes: are these physical or mental attributes? How do we come to be poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungry/thirsty, etc.?
- Matthew 5:20 – The scribes and the Pharisees were concerned with outward action, not attitude. How is our righteousness to exceed theirs?
- Of course, murder is wrong. But where does murder begin? With what attitude?
- Of course, adultery is wrong. But where does adultery begin? With what attitude?
- What kind of heart does it take to love your enemies?
- Consider Jesus' teaching on giving, prayer, and fasting: when we do godly things and good things for others, what is our intention?
- In a series on servitude, why must we remember this warning?
- Even if we spend every waking hour serving those in need, at the end of the day, what must we remember?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Text: Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34

If we are going to serve like Jesus, then our priorities must be correctly aligned. I heard Kris Emerson say that we talk about “priorities” when we should talk about “priority.” We only have one and it orders everything in our lives. Politicians talk about trickle-down-economics. I like to think about trickle-down-godliness. Putting God first affects everything else.

- Why include all these words? What does the heart represent? The soul? The mind? Strength?
- How is the second commandment like the first?
- How do the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments?
- How does love of God and neighbor trump “all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices”?
- If God comes first and neighbor second, where does that leave myself?
- Can we ignore the second command while fulfilling the first? How did the prophets respond when the Israelites tried to do this?
- Extra Credit: Who is my neighbor? Read Luke 10:29-37
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

SIMPLE OBEDIENCE

Text: Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-15; 2:19-23

To become better servants, we need to change our hearts. We must move from selfish to selfless. We must put God first, our neighbor second, and ourselves last. But what about when we simply do not feel like it. When the children complain about a task they have been given, we often say, “You don’t have to like it, but you have to obey.” There are times when we may not feel like it, but we still must do what needs to be done.” James 4:17 says, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” Do not misunderstand me. If we will change our hearts it will get easier, but some days we simply have to obey!

- I love Joseph as the example for this lesson. The poor guy barely had a chance to realize what was going on, but he still obeyed the Lord. List the ways Joseph simply obeyed.
- Who (throughout scripture) had trouble doing what God told him/her to do?
- What are some things that we may not WANT to do but we NEED to do?
- What attitudes may affect our desire to do what needs to be done?
- What attitudes push us on to do what we should be doing?
- Does Jesus’ prayer in the garden provide us an example of this issue?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

LEAVING EVERYTHING

Text: Matthew 4:18-22; 8:18-22; 9:9; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:1-11, 27-32; 9:57-62

We are not often asked to give up something. We are used to having our cake and eating it too. Maybe this is something that we have not considered enough. What if a job was interfering with our ability to meet with the saints? What if our friends are influencing us towards sin? With the many freedoms we have in our country, we have not had to give up as much as others, but would we be willing to leave everything?

- What did Peter and Andrew leave to follow Christ?
- What did James and John leave to follow Christ?
- What did Matthew leave to follow Christ?
- How does Jesus warn those who express a desire to follow Him?
- In what ways does the calling of the apostles differ from us?
- List some scenarios in which we might have to leave or quit someone or something in order to be faithful to Christ?
- What does this have to do with serving others?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

LITTLE THINGS

Text: Matthew 10:40-42; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4; John 8:1-11

We often feel as if we must serve in the realm of grand gestures, as if we must sell everything and give to the poor, or renounce all earthly blessings. But sometimes it is the thoughtful phone call, letter, hug, or plate of food that brightens one's day. In Micah 6, the people want to know what grand gesture God wants from them and Micah says that all God wants is justice, mercy, and humility. What three attributes better define a servant?

- What does Jesus mean when He says, "Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water"?
- How much did the widow contribute at the temple? Why is she praised for such a small amount?
- What is Jesus' attitude toward the woman caught in adultery? What should we make of Jesus' slow and methodical response to the accusations against her?
- How might forgiveness be a "little thing" to us but extraordinary to someone else to the one forgiven?
- It is not the cup of cold water or the two mites that impress God. What is it?
- There is a time and need for organized, thought out, sacrificial service, but what are some little things we can do to serve others?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

ARE YOU MARY OR MARTHA?

Text: Luke 10:38-42

This is an interesting story because Martha is doing something good. But we discover that her motive is anxiety. Let us think through this story. This lesson is to get you thinking.

- Who are Mary and Martha? What is their relationship to Jesus?
- What is Martha doing? What is Mary doing?
- Why is Martha upset? Do you have sympathy for Martha?
- What does Jesus announce Martha's motive to be?
- Are we to choose serving others rather than studying the word of God? Or are we to choose studying the word of God over serving others? Or is there room for both?
- What did Jesus regularly do with the twelve after a hectic or busy time?
- How well can you serve when you lack the knowledge, energy, opportunity, or desire?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Text: Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27

In my opinion, this parable speaks for itself. It is hard to read this parable and misunderstand it. This master has taken talents or money—a lot of it—and given it to the care of these servants. What are we to do while the master is away? The master expects his servants to use this money in a way that he would or in a way that benefits him or brings glory to him.

- How does the previous parable help us better understand this one?
- What did the master expect the servants to do with the money while he was gone?
- How did the master respond to the servant who did not use the money to the master's benefit?
- Use a dictionary to define *steward* and *manager*.
- List some of the various matters over which we have been made stewards.
- What does the master expect us servant to do with these while He is away?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

WHO IS THE GREATEST?

Text: Matthew 18; Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45; Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-30

In the honor/shame culture of the first century, everyone desired to climb the ladder. Everyone was interested in moving up. This is why the discussion of Jesus coming to earth in Philippians 2 is so powerful. Most of the apostles were nothing special in their community. But in this new movement, they saw the potential to change that, and to become a person of influence to whom people looked. But it is not about becoming special. It's about serving.

- In how many passages do we find the disciples debating which one is the greatest?
- How does Jesus respond to this question in Matthew 18 (and Luke 9)?
- How might the discussion of forgiveness in the rest of Matthew 18 impact the question of who is the greatest?
- In Mark 9:33-37, why do the disciples not answer Jesus?
- Why do James and John make the request they do?
- In Luke 22, what does Jesus command for his followers?
- How does Jesus' example show them the way?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

THE GREATEST SERVANT

Text: John 13; Matthew 26-27; Mark 14-15; Luke 22-23; John 18-19; Philippians 2:1-11

I believe it says something about the character of God that when He should be receiving praise and glory and honor, He comes to earth to serve, instead. We humans should have been lining up to serve Jesus and bow at His feet. And yet, Jesus says, “I did not come to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many.” I figure that when we get to heaven, we will wonder even more how Jesus could have left such glory to come and die for us. But we already know the reason—selfless love!

- What is the setting of the meal in John 13? What is most likely on the mind of Jesus?

- Who was supposed to wash feet? We do not like to think about washing feet today; why would it have been worse 2,000 years ago?

- Consider every movement from the upper room to the cross, how does Jesus show selfless love?
 - The upper room:

 - The garden:

 - The arrest:

 - The trial:

 - The crucifixion:

- What does Jesus mean when He said “Love one another as I have loved you”?

- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

WARNINGS

Text: Matthew 6:1-18; 23:1-36

While we strive to serve and learn to enjoy serving, there is always the temptation to want praise for it. Who does not like a pat on the back or having people mention your name when it comes to doing good deeds? But Jesus does not mince words when it comes to the motives for our actions. We see a lot of this in the age of social media. I believe some refer to it as the “humble brag.” This is when you talk about some good deed you have done while mentioning that you wish you could have done more or that it was not that big of a deal. Right hand...meet left hand!

- What three religious practices does Jesus address in Matthew 6?
- How could these things be done in such a way to receive the praise of men?
- How should we give, pray, and fast so as not to seek the praise of men?
- When we seek the praise of men, what will be our reward? What will we receive from God?
- Why does Jesus keep calling the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites”?
- What does Jesus accuse them of in 23:5?
- According to 23:11, instead of father, rabbi, and instructor, what should we be called?
- The scribes and Pharisees never changed their hearts. What were they seeking?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

THE COLDEST CUP OF WATER

Text: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; John 1:29, 35-51; 4:

How can we talk about learning to serve others and not talk about sharing the gospel? What colder cup of water could you give to someone in need? I know it can be uncomfortable. I know it can be scary. But remember, serving is not about comfort. Serving is about others. And what greater need is there than to share with someone the Gospel of Jesus Christ? But this requires a changed heart that places God first and others above self. Can you serve as Jesus and His disciples served?

- What was the mission given to the apostles at Jesus' ascension? We are not apostles, but how can we participate in that mission?
- What did John, the Baptist do when people came to him?
- What does Andrew do after he meets Jesus?
- What does Philip do after he meets Jesus? How does he respond to Nathaniel's objection?
- How does Jesus turn from a physical discussion to a spiritual discussion with the Samaritan woman?
- Consider John 4:39-42: What is our job when it comes to sharing the gospel?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?

JUDGED BY YOUR SERVICE

Text: Matthew 25:31-46

The New Testament speaks of numerous issues by which we will be judged: faithfulness, obedience, our judgment of others, and the level of mercy shown to others. Matthew 25 presents an interesting description of judgment that does not conjure up images of a courtroom but of a discussion with Jesus about what we did for others and, therefore, Him.

- How did those on the right feed, visit, provide, and care for Jesus?
- How would you describe their attitude in vv. 37-39?
- What commandment did those on the left claim to fulfill? But which commandment had they forgotten?
- Note how those on the right use the same language on Jesus, but those on the left summarize and abbreviate what Jesus said. Could this point to an attitude problem?
- What must we understand is included in serving God?
- What New Testament passages speak of being judged by our works and being created for good works?
- How can you use this to make yourself a better servant today?