

An MBA in Servanthood – Matthew 20:20-28

Introduction: We are all saddened to learn this week of the death of one of our church's most valuable members, Someone Else. Someone's passing created a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. Someone Else has been with us for many years, and for every one of those years, they did far more than a normal person's share of the work. Whenever there was a job to do, a class to teach, or a meeting to attend, one name was on everyone's lists, "*Let Someone Else do it*" It was common knowledge that Someone Else was among the largest givers in the church. Whenever there was a financial need, everyone just assumed Someone Else would make up the difference. Someone Else was a wonderful person, but a person can only do so much. Were the truth known, everybody expected too much of Someone Else. Now Someone Else is gone! We wonder what we are going to do. Someone Else left a wonderful example to follow, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things Someone Else did? Remember- we can't depend on Someone Else anymore!

Here at Sonoraville, we have a Sunday School mission statement that says that we exist to:

- Teach the Bible to Change Lives
- Reach the Lost with the Good News of Jesus Christ, and
- Care for People through Prayer, Ministry and Fellowship.

We can't do any of those things if we're not willing to serve. It's time we faced the fact that if the job is going to get done, we're going to be the ones to do it. There are no more "*Somebody Else's*" out there.

The truth is, everyone is called to serve. Thankfully, there are a few in the church who have heard that call and are faithfully using their spiritual gifts in serving God through His Church. But, sadly, there are many who have heard the call to serve, but they've hung up the phone, or they've let it ring and ring, or they've been too busy talking on the other line to answer. And the result is, they are not serving.

You see, when you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, you committed your life to serving Him. So, today, we have come to a passage in Matthew that helps us learn how to do that.

Read Matthew 20:20-28. Contrary to popular belief, serving Christ doesn't require a degree in Theology, but it does require an MBA. What is required in earning a MBA in Servanthood?

1. Understanding Your Purpose.

When I worked as a Produce Manager in a certain grocery chain, I was required to set up displays which would be entered in contests. Once, they made me set up a strawberry display using at least 50 cases of strawberries. Well, I protested and told my supervisor that I couldn't sell 50 cases of strawberries in a year at our little store, but they made me do it anyway. Needless to say, was stuck with about 40 cases of rotten berries that cost me my several weeks of profit margin. Obviously, somebody lost sight of what the purpose of a retail store was.

By the same token, if we are not careful we can lose sight of the real reason that we serve. In our passage, the mother of James and John did just that. She came before Jesus asking that her two boys be given a seat beside Christ in the most honored places in His Kingdom. Now, Mark's gospel tells us that it was James and John who did the asking, but no matter whom it was, the problem was not so much the request as it was their purpose in asking it. They just wanted the prestige. They wanted to look good.

You see, back then, the seats to the right or left of the king was a highly honored position. The irony is that this request came just after Jesus had spoken to His disciples for the third time about the cross. Jesus was speaking about a cross, but they only wanted a crown. They completely misunderstood their purpose for serving beside Christ. They wanted to do it for their glory instead of for the glory of God. The best servants understand their purpose in serving. It's not for their glory, but for the glory of the one being served.

Let me put it this way: Guys, when you do something for your wife – such as help out around the house, watch the kids, or buy her that special something – do you do it for her, or do you do it to help your cause?

What about when you've messed up and you say you're sorry? Do you say it to avoid sleeping on the couch, or do you do it because you realize you've hurt her. If you do it just to get out of the dog house, then it's done selfishly. I'm talking about doing things for the right reason. And when it comes to our service for God, it should always be for His glory and nothing else.

Jesus asked them a question to help them see the problem. He asked them "*What is it you want?*" I believe He asks us the same questions today. "*Why are you serving?*" A truthful answer can help us understand our purpose in servanthood as well. A second requirement in earning an MBA in servanthood is:

2. Drinking the Cup of Suffering

Jesus response was “*You don’t know what you are asking.*” And indeed they didn’t. Their purpose was wrong so their understanding of the job was wrong as well. That is why Jesus asks them the next question: “*Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?*” The cup Jesus referred to was the cup of suffering of death. Jesus would talk about that same cup in the garden before His arrest and death praying that it be taken from Him. Jesus was saying here that you can’t have a position of high honor in my kingdom without taking up your cross and following Him. He had just talked to His disciples about this very thing, but as Luke’s gospel records, they didn’t understand a word of it.

One of the evidences of their misunderstanding is in the answer they gave to Jesus’ question about drinking the cup. They said, “*We can.*” Maybe they were just trying to be macho, or maybe they were just plain ignorant. But the fact is, they were not ready to follow Jesus whatever the cost, for later on in the Garden of Gethsemane they ran when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus.

What does this say to us about our service to the Lord? It says that it’s going to be difficult. When you commit your life to service to the Lord, people will misunderstand what you are doing. You will be tempted to quit. Other things will come up that demand your time and attention.

Being a servant is going to be difficult but it will also be a blessing. Whatever you do in service to the Lord is worth the effort and sacrifice. And when you feel like giving up remember **1 Cor. 15:58 (NIV)** which says, “*...Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*”

The third requirement for earning an MBA in servanthood is:

3. Maintaining an Outward Focus

Notice what vs. 24 says: **Matthew 20:24 (NIV)** “*When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.*” In other words, they were ticked off. Have you ever lost out on a promotion because someone had used some connections to get what you felt you deserved? That is what was happening here. The other disciples were mad because they thought these two brothers were trying to use their mother to beat them to the promotion. In essence, their attitude wasn’t any better than the other two, but it made them mad. Why is it that we condemn in others what we excuse in our own lives?

The point that I want to make is that their selfish attitudes led to dissension. When we only think of ourselves, unity is broken and is replaced with division. That's why one of the best things we can do as a church is to serve together. A church that serves together stays together.

But look at what Jesus did next. In vs. 25: "*Jesus called them together...*" He got them back together and tried to gently and patiently explain to them the difference between the kingdom they were looking for and God's Kingdom.

Jesus told them that in the world, the greatness is measured by having an ability to boss others around and be in control. But Jesus says in His kingdom, it is not that way (vs. 26). In the Kingdom of God, if you want to be greatness is measured in terms of service. Greatness is not found in having others do things for you; it is only realized in doing things for others. It is found in having an outward focus rather than having an inward focus. This is completely opposite of the worldly way of doing things.

If the disciples wanted to be leaders in God's kingdom, they first had to become servants. The intent of their heart had to be solely on God's will and His way and nothing else. If we want to become great then we must give up our desire to please ourselves, and focus on pleasing God by serving others. This leads us to the overall requirement for earning an MBA in servanthood:

4. Be Like Jesus.

Jesus knew the importance and the demands of being a servant because He did it Himself. His mission was to serve others and to give His life away, and He said so in vs. 28. If there ever was a statement that describes who Jesus is, this is it: "*...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" **Matthew 20:28 (NIV)**

We like to talk about being like Jesus, but it boils down to having a servant's heart. Phil. 2:5-7 tells us the attitude that Christ had and that we should have. It says that our "*attitude should be the same as that of Christ who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness.*" Jesus served our ultimate need when He gave His life to bring us into a right relationship with God.

Conclusion: You may be wondering what an MBA is. Well, it's not a Master of Business Administration Degree, because having that will not make you a servant of Christ. Here is what an MBA in servanthood means:

Once Dave Thomas, the founder of Wendy's, appeared on the cover of their annual report dressed in a work apron holding a mop and a bucket. He said: *"I got my M.B.A. long before my G.E.D. At Wendy's M.B.A. does not mean Master of Business Administration. It means Mop Bucket Attitude."*

In preparing for this message, I read a sermon by Chris Carroll, Pastor of the Castalia Baptist Church in North Carolina. He told of hearing an explanation of what he called Bucket Theology while in seminary. I think it helps us understand what having a mop bucket attitude means.

When Pilate had the opportunity to free Jesus, he asked for a bucket and washed his hands of the whole thing. He said that he was innocent of this man's blood and that Jesus was somebody else's responsibility.

But on the night of Jesus arrest, Jesus also called for a bucket and instead of washing His hands of His disciples He proceeded to wash their dirty and dusty feet. It all comes down to bucket theology. Which "bucket theology" will you use?

As Christians, we have been called to the responsibility of service. It's not a matter of not knowing what needs to be done, but rather will you do it? Are you going to be like Pilate and pass on your responsibility to others and take the easy way out, or will be like Jesus and take the towel of service and get on your knees and get your hands dirty?

If Jesus can humble Himself and serve by washing dirty feet, then why can't we get humble ourselves enough to teach a Sunday School class or go out on visitation or work with these precious children? If we call ourselves Christ followers then we won't be looking for ways to pass along our responsibility of service. Instead we'll be standing in line to sign up for duty. Where will you serve?