

SERVUS SERVORUM

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“I am among you as he that serveth.”
Luke 22:27

OBSERVE, dear friends, that our Lord, in order to impress a great practical truth upon His twelve apostles, refers them to Himself. He very often does so, quoting His own doings as an example to His servants. Does not this fact give us a hint that there is someone greater than a man here, for no mere man, modest and true and right-minded, would continually make himself the object of imitation.

We would not consider it right if we found Abraham, or Moses, or David constantly pointing to himself as an example. Such a course is very proper for certain persons in certain special cases—as, for instance, Paul might occasionally allude to himself when he was addressing his own converts, even then rarely doing it—and doing it with extreme diffidence.

But our Lord acts thus very often and with the utmost possible naturalness. Neither did it ever suggest itself to anyone of His people that there was anything immodest in His so doing. Such an idea never occurred to us, because we have ever recognized in Him something which entitled Him to speak thus, something which rendered it quite right that He should so speak.

He is Master and Lord, He is very God of very God, He is perfect, He is out of the lists of ordinary men, He rises like a lone Alp above us all, and when He speaks as He does in the words before us, the very fact that He does so speak without our feeling any objection thereto proves that there is a something altogether unique about His character, and that something, I believe, is the existence of perfection, and the evidence of deity combined with His humanity.

At any rate, dear brethren, this is a matter of fact in our holy faith, that the best lesson for a Christian to learn is to be learned from Christ Himself. I am afraid that in these days, some are preaching in a lopsided way. Years ago, Christ was set forth almost exclusively as an example. “Concerning the Imitation of Christ” was the great matter of public discourse, and many books were written upon that important theme.

But inasmuch as in those days they forgot and undervalued the sacrifice of Christ and did not preach justification by faith in His precious blood, their preaching was but dim and inefficient, and Christ was not largely imitated after all, although men were bidden to imitate Him. Now, we preach His sacrifice—in many of our places of worship the atonement of Christ is very clearly proclaimed and the plan of salvation by virtue of His precious blood is very widely declared with more or less of clearness, for which I thank God.

But we must take care that we do not forget that Christ is our example as well as our atonement—and that, while by His death we live, the life which we live is to be conformed to the life of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. He did not merely come to save us from the guilt of sin, but He came to save us from the power of sin. He does not merely bring us pardon, but He brings us holiness, and He comes to make us like Himself. This, indeed, is the end of His life and of His death—that we might grow into His image and become truly *replicas*—repetitions of Christ according to our degree, among the sons of men.

I want, therefore to say to you who are Christ's people—As He has saved you, follow Him. If you are washed in His blood, be like Him. If, indeed, He is your Master and Lord, obey Him. In all that you do, ask yourselves this question, “What would Christ have done under these circumstances?” And then act according to the answer which God's Word and your own conscience give you. “As he is, so are we, also, in this world.” And if we fulfill our destiny to the glory of God and the honor of our Redeemer, we shall make men see in our own proper persons what Christ was when He was here—“holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

Christ always does point us to Himself. If He bids us trust Him, He also bids us follow Him. If He bids us hope in Him, He bids us also obey Him, and be like Him. And they who will not have His holiness shall not have His atonement. If we do not care to be like Him, we cannot be saved by Him.

The particular evil at which our Lord aimed when He uttered the words of our text was the evil which is so common in the church, even down to the present day, that is, each man seeking to be somebody. We are all born great the first time—it is only when we are born the second time, born from above—that we come to be little.

When we were born the first time, we were so great that we were really nothing—but when we are born a second time, we are so little that we are everything in Christ. At first, self seeks to gain the mastery. It has a head that must wear the crown and feet that must be shod with silver slippers. Self will wear no sackcloth, it must be clad in silk at the very least. Self always exalts itself above all its fellows—it even pines after the throne of God, for self has the ambition of Lucifer and will never be satisfied, however high it mounts.

Now, our Savior wants, in His disciples, that self should be crushed, that all desire to be great should be quenched and that, instead of all of us wanting to be masters, we should see which of us can be servants. If we are as Christ was, we shall catch the spirit which made Him say, “I am among you as he that serveth.”

I. To that point I bend all my strength just now, and first, I want to speak a little upon OUR LORD'S POSITION AMONGST HIS OWN FOLLOWERS—“I am among you as he that serveth.”

The twelve apostles came together to the last supper. There was usually a servant or slave in the room to wash the feet of the guests, but there does not appear to have been such a person on that occasion. Peter did not offer, even John did not think of it, Thomas was probably considering who ought to do it, and Philip, the arithmetician of the apostles, was calculating how much water it might take—but nobody offered to do it.

Everybody's business, you know, is nobody's business, so nobody offered to wash anybody's feet. They had already taken their positions, reclining about the table. Then, without any suggestion from anybody else, the Master Himself rose from their midst, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself with it, poured water into a basin, and went from one to another, and washed their feet. After He had done that, and was again reclining with them, He said to them in effect, “I am among you as the slave, the domestic who does the most menial work. You see that I am.” They could not contradict it, for He had actually and literally taken that position among them.

But dear friends, this act of our Lord's was no novelty. What He did literally that evening, He had been doing ever since they had formed a community. *He was always the servant of them all.* He was constantly looking out for their interests and laying Himself out to do them good. They did not come to Him to bring Him anything—they came to *receive* from Him. They did not come to teach Him, or even to comfort Him with their company. They all came for what they could get from Him—to learn the truth from His lips, some of them hoping to be led by Him to a kingdom which they did but dimly understand.

But they were all, as it were, sitting at a table all the time they were with Him, being fed with heavenly and spiritual food. And He was all the while their servant, washing their feet, bearing with their ill manners, sweetly correcting their mistakes, and ever patient notwithstanding their slowness of learning. He could truly say, not only of that supper night, but of His whole life, “I am among you as he that serveth.”

When Christ thus spoke, He called Himself not merely a servant, one that serves, but specially *the* servant—the deacon, the attendant, is really the word. “I am among you as the waiter. You are the gentlemen who sit at the table and I am the servant who waits upon you.” Our Lord meant to remind the apostles by this act that He had always taken among them the very lowest place. He had never exercised any sort of domineering authority over them, He had never been exacting in His demands upon them, He had never sought His own comfort at their expense.

But He was ever meek and lowly in heart, and seeking their welfare rather than His own. There was not one of them but knew that this was true. He was less than the least among them, although He was greatest of them all. As the old writers used to say, He was *servus servorum*, the servant of servants.

A servant, you know, is one who has to care for other people. When she gets up in the morning, it is not her work to look to her own comfort. The true servant in the house glides along quietly, watching to see what can be done for the comfort of all the inmates. Such a person forgets herself, or himself, in thinking of others.

This is just what our Lord Jesus did—He never seems to have given Himself a thought, He was only thinking of the poor multitudes that gathered about Him, and of the sick folk that He could heal, and of the humble few that came into His more intimate acquaintance, and called Him Lord and Master. Wonderfully unselfish was He whose whole care was for others and who could truly say to His disciples, “I am among you as he that serveth.”

A true servant ignores his own will. He does not do what he would like to do—he does what his master tells him to do. He is engaged as a servant and he lives as a servant, and obeys the will of him who has employed him. Was it not just so with our Lord in the whole course of His life? “I came not,” He said, “to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

From His childhood, He must be about His Father’s business, and until His last hour, when He could say to His Father, “It is finished,” He never had two businesses in hand. His one sole concern was to take upon Himself the form of a servant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Beloved, I cannot imagine a better picture of a servant than the full-length portrait of Him who is truly Lord of all. “King of kings” is a title full of majesty, but “servant of servants” is the name which our Lord preferred when He was here below.

A servant is one who bears patiently all manner of hardness. Many servants have had to endure a great deal of hardship, sometimes also much misjudgment and harshness. But this blessed Servant of the Father bore cold, and nakedness, and hunger, and even death in His servitude. And though He was despised and rejected by the very men whose good He sought, though He was maltreated, maligned, and slandered, yet still He never turned aside even for self-defense. He held on in His holy and sacred course as servant of all.

I do not know how to put this truth as I should like to, but I want you to recognize that He who this day sits on the highest throne in glory amid a hierarchy of angels, adored of blood-redeemed spirits, was among us here below as the servant of His own servants. Your Blessed Lord, whose face outshines the sun at noon-day, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who is this day Head over all things to His church—your Lord, who shall shortly come with myriads of saints and angels to judge the world in righteousness, was, when He was here, nothing more than this—“he that serveth.” That was His position.

II. I have entrenched upon what I meant to make the second subject of discourse, namely, THE WONDER OF THIS POSITION, for it is among the greatest of all wonders that Jesus, the Lord of all, should have become the servant of all.

Very briefly let me suggest to your minds that the marvel was all the greater as *He was Lord of all by nature and essence*. Our Lord Jesus was divine, He was “God over all, blessed for ever,” “Son of the Highest,” that eternal Word, without whom was not anything made that was made. Yet to His disciples He says, “I am among you as he that serveth.”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” Verily, it was a marvelous condescension on our Lord’s part.

Remember, too, that *He was infinitely wise*. There was never another teacher like Christ, for He could answer every question and solve every difficulty. Those piercing eyes of His looked through every secret place and revealed the darkest mysteries of human life. Then, surely, they set Him on high in the church of His day, they made Him professor, they paid Him every homage. But did they? No. He said, “Though I am Rabboni, the Great Master, yet I am among you as he that serveth.” Is this how you treat your wise men, O you gracious ones? Do you set them to wash the disciples’ feet?

Recollect, also, that *He was immaculately pure and incomparably good*. There was never such another man among all the sons of men. There can never be another character so charming as His. All perfections meet in Him to make up one perfection. All the sweets of the highest morality and spirituality are blended in Him to make one perfect and essential sweet. Yet He is among us as the one that serves.

There was a certain preacher, who cried out in his sermon, “O virtue, if thou wert once embodied, and shouldst come down among mankind, all men would worship thee!” But see, here is virtue perfected and incarnate—and down among us serving as a servant. This is how man treats the perfect One—and it is a great wonder.

Besides that, *the Lord was our superlative Benefactor*. He was here simply to bless us. Eyes, lips, hands, feet—all scattered benedictions. He was a sun in the midst of human darkness, His every thought was a beam of light and comfort for mankind. Yet He could say, “I am among you as he that serveth.” In order to be our Benefactor, He takes the very lowest place, and men were content to keep Him there, and let Him wash their feet. Oh, ’tis strange, ’tis passing strange, ’tis wonderful, yet true!

It is wonderful, too, that He should be a *servant among such poor creatures as they were*. I have heard of some who have been willing to wash the feet of saintly men, but these disciples were a band of poor sinners. I have heard of some who would have been willing to perform menial offices for great philosophers or men of high dignity. But these disciples were mainly a company of Galilean fishermen who had lately left their boats and nets, or peasants fresh from the soil of their fields, full of all the faults and infirmities natural to men of their class.

Yet our blessed Lord said to them, “I am among you—you fishermen, you countrymen, you poverty-stricken men—I am among you as he that serveth.” O gracious Master, You were humble indeed and it did well become You! You seem, despite Your ineffable glory, to be quite at home when You are acting as slave to Peter and James and John, taking their soiled feet into Your pure hands and washing them clean.

III. Now, in the third place, let us inquire, WHAT IS THE EXPLANATION OF THIS WONDER?

Why did our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was amongst the twelve, take the place of Him that serves? Why did He, who was Lord of all, become servant of all?

First, *because He was so truly great*. The little man is always jealous lest he should be treated as little. The little selfish being tries to wriggle himself into notice somehow. He wants to be observed and then he wants to do something for which he may have a vote of thanks—and he would like it to be proposed in very special terms.

Do you expect *him* to wash any men’s feet? Well, he might wash the feet of gentlemen, in a golden basin, with a crystal ewer, and rose water, and a damask napkin. Oh, yes, my lord would do it that way very prettily and think a great deal of his condescension! But actually to take the feet of poor men into his hands and to wash them—really to do some such service to those who need it—he could not manage that, he is so little that he could not rise to such a dignified position.

Brethren, it was because our Lord was so superlatively great that He could do little things, that He could stoop, and be lowly. It is in the nature of such a great heart as His to be willing to do any necessary thing for those whom it loves.

But the second answer to the question is this. Our Lord was among men as one that serves *because He had such immeasurable love*. Love is always happiest when it can do something for its object. It is no toil for love to labor for that which it loves—it would be slavery to it to be withheld from so delicious an exercise.

Look at the mother with her child—with all the many trials she has with it—it is so dear that she counts it a relaxation rather than a bondage to take care of her own beloved offspring. And have you never known a loving woman sit by the bedside of her sick husband? The nights have been long and dreary, but she has not left him whose life was ebbing away.

The candle has burnt low and the daylight has peeped in through the blinds, but there she is sitting still, and unless she verily faints away through sheer exhaustion, you cannot get her from that sick room, for love holds her there, and keeps those weary eyelids from dropping down and makes her feel it to be a sad joy, a grief but a pleasure, to be near him whom she loves.

And our blessed Lord was so full of love to us that nothing seemed a stoop to Him. “For the joy that was set before him,” the joy of blessing His people, “he endured the cross, despising the shame.” “Will I wash their feet?” He seemed to say, “that is very little. I will wash them altogether in my heart’s blood. I will bear their sins in My own body on the tree, and will be indeed among them as He that serveth to the fullness of a sacred service such as never was exhibited before or since.”

It was love, it was wondrous love, excessive love, that would not let Him stay in heaven amid the splendors of His royalty, but made Him come to earth, amid the sorry surroundings of penury and grief, that He might save us.

IV. Now, lastly, I am coming to what I have been driving at all the while, and that is, **THE IMITATION OF OUR LORD’S HUMILITY.**

I suggest to you at once the power by which you shall learn to imitate your Lord. If you get His love in your hearts, you will ever long and wish to take up a position like His and be among your fellow Christians as one that serves.

If we are to imitate Christ, it will involve, dear friends, that we who are saved by Him should *joyfully undertake the very lowest service*. If there is a door to be kept, if there is a path to be swept, let us aspire to that dignity. If there is a class of men more degraded than another, let us wish to go to them. If there is a rank of women more fallen than another, let us pray and labor especially for them.

If there are any members of the church that are more neglected and despised than others, let us be most attentive to them. If there is somebody who really is quite a worry when we visit her, let us visit her. If there is a person who really is so exceedingly poor, and perhaps, so very dirty that it takes a good deal of self-denial to go and sit by her bedside when she is sick, let us go.

If we are to be like Christ, we shall all be eager for the lowest work, we shall all be seeking which can take the lowest place. If you want this pulpit, dear friends, you can have it if you can fill the position better than I do. But then, perhaps, you might not. But there will not be much competition for the lowest place. If you become a candidate for that position, you will get it. There are not likely to be too many applicants for the post, and by degrees one and another will edge out, so I recommend you, if you really want the place that Christ would have you take, that is, the very lowest position in the church of God, to go in for it, for you will get it.

You have all heard of David Brainerd, the great missionary to the Red Indians. He was seen, one day, lying in his hut, teaching a little Red Indian child to say, “a, b, c.” Somebody said, “What, is this David Brainerd teaching that little dunce his letters?” “Yes,” he said, “I have prayed God that, as long as I live, I might be useful. And now I am too weak to preach, I am too feeble to do anything else but just teach this little child the alphabet. And I shall keep on doing something for my Master till I die.”

So, dear friend, if you cannot teach the thousands, teach two or three. If you could not even venture on two or three, yet teach your own child, or look after somebody else’s child, some gutter child, some Arab of the street. Be as your Master would have you be, “as he that serveth,” by seeking to fill the very lowest office in His church.

Show the same spirit, also, in being *at all times lowly in your esteem of yourself*. You know the gentleman who is always being insulted, I know him very well, indeed—you could not wink an eye at him but you would insult him. He has a very thin skin—you must mind how you think when you are near him—he is always being treated in a disrespectful manner. Nobody ever seems to treat him as he ought to be treated in the place where he now is.

If he were to get among people of greater sense and better education, he says that there he should be respected. I almost wish he would go—still, I must not say so, because, perhaps, we can mend him if we let him stay and all of us seek to do him good. But brethren, do not any of you be of that character, but be among those sensible persons of whom a disrespectful thing could not be said because they would not treat it as disrespectful.

Some time ago a man said a very unkind and untrue thing of me, and I felt quite pleased because I thought that, if he had known me better, he might have said something worse. But I was quite satisfied to take the bad thing as it was. I never told anybody about it and I do not intend to, for it really did not trouble me at all. As far as I remember, I slept as long that night as I had done before.

There is no use in believing that you are such an important person that the wind must not blow on you, because the wind *will* blow on you, and the world is, as a rule, regardless of assumed dignity. Do you not find it so? Well, suppose that we do not have any dignity, suppose that we each one say, “I am among you as he that serves. Now, then, find as much fault as you please.”

In wet weather, one of the most useful things in a house is the doormat—and a doormat never complains of persons wiping their boots on it—because it was put there for that very purpose. And if you are quite willing to let people wipe their dirty boots on you, you will come to feel, “What a capital mat I am! How beautifully that man cleaned his boots on me just now! He found great fault with me, but he was not finding fault with somebody else just then. It did not hurt me and it might have hurt somebody else, so I am doing good service in bearing what, after all, does not so much offend me now I have brought my mind to it.” So, have a lowly estimate of yourself, for then you will be like Christ, who said, “I am among you as he that serveth.”

Furthermore, brethren, may I earnestly inculcate upon Christians that we should *always be seeking to do good to others*, for that is what Christ meant. He made His disciples recline at the table, but He waited on them. It was His high office to be the lowest among them. Now, Christian people, look out for opportunities of doing good to others.

“I do not know,” says one, “that I get much good out of the church.” But that is not the point. The question for you to ask is, “How much good have I done to the church?” for after all, our being here is not with a view of getting so much out of it, but putting so much into it. The Christian man’s way of living is by giving out, for he realizes that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

If you really want to serve somebody, there is a wide field open to you. You need not go to Africa to do it. You can stop in your own house and serve somebody there. It seems to me that a Christian should be trying from morning to night what he can do to bless other people for their good. It should be the mother’s ambition to make the children happy and to train them for Christ.

It should be the father’s wish that all under his care in the house should enjoy being at home and should think that there never was such a home as he makes. It should be the girl’s wish that brothers and sisters at home should be glad to think that Mary is there, for she is quite a light in the house. And the brother should make it his joy to do everything that can minister to the comfort of his mother and sisters. In fact, this is the point wherein Christians would carry Christianity on to a greater triumph—if they each one sought the good of others.

But some are so grumpy, so snappy, that they cannot do even a good thing without doing it badly. If they do you a favor, you feel that it is just the same as if they had offended you. Let it not be so with us, dear friends. Let us seek to exhibit an amiable, gracious, loving spirit—not by pretending to have it—but by really loving others and desiring their present, their future, and their eternal welfare. This is what Jesus did when He said, “I am among you as he that serveth.” Let us do the same as far as in us lies.

In a word, dear brethren, let us imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in being willing to bear and forbear even to the end. The true Christian is the man who, when he is reviled, reviles not again—when he is falsely accused, scarcely thinks it worth his while to answer—who often foregoes his rights—and is willing so to do—who is not for self, not even for justice to himself, but is willing to bear and suffer wrong rather than inflict wrong.

Someone, perhaps, says that I am teaching you hard lessons. Yes, but if you are the children of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the kind of lesson that you will love and try to practice. And as you become proficient in it, there will be a peculiar sweetness stealing into your spirit. I pray God that we may have the mind of Christ, that we “may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”

If any treat you ill, love them all the more. If they make you angry, try to get over it as quickly as possible. “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Pay them off the next day by doing them some kindness which you would not have done if they had not treated you badly. Always try to speak as well of everybody as you can. When you hear anything against them, cut it in halves—and cut each half into two more halves—and then throw all away as if you had never heard it.

Go through the world with the full conviction that there are some good people in it and that if there are not, it is time that you should be one and should help to increase the number by exhibiting a holy, humble, gentle, gracious spirit. If you have this mind in you, your Lord will be glorified and men will say, “Is this a Christian? Then let me be a Christian, too.”

God help you to do so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 22:1-39

Verses 1-2. *Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.*

Dastardly fear often drives men to the greatest crimes. He who is not brave enough to be master of his own spirit and to follow the dictates of his own conscience may do, ere long, he little knows what. Because of the fear of the people, the chief priests and scribes were driven to compass the death of Christ by craft and to bring Him to His death by the cruel betrayal of Judas, one of His own apostles.

3-6. *Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.*

Was it not a sad thing that the betrayer of Christ should be one of the twelve? Yet deeply trying as it must have been to the heart of Christ, there is something useful about even that horrible transaction. It says to all the professing church of Christ, and it says to us who claim to be Christ’s followers, “Do not think yourselves safe because you are in the visible church. Do not imagine that even holding the highest office in the church can prevent you from committing the basest crime. Nay, for here is one of the twelve apostles, yet he betrays his Master.

Sometimes we have found this betrayal to be a source of comfort. I have myself desired, in receiving members into the church, to be very careful if possible only to receive good men and true. Yet, though pastors and elders of the church may exercise the strictest watch, some of the worst of men will manage to get in.

When that is the case, we say to ourselves, “No new thing has happened to us, for such a sinner as this marred the church from the very beginning.” Here is Judas, when Christ Himself is the Pastor, when the twelve apostles make up the main body of the church, here is Judas, one of the twelve, ready to betray his Master for the paltry bribe of thirty pieces of silver, just the price of a slave.

Yes, we might have been put out of heart in building up the church of God if it had not been for this sad but truthful narrative concerning Judas and his betrayal of our Lord.

7-8. *Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.*

Notice how carefully our Lord respected the ordinances of that dispensation so long as it lasted. The Passover was an essential rite of the Jewish faith and our Lord, therefore duly observed it. Learn hence, dear brethren, to esteem very highly the ordinances of God's house. Let baptism and the Lord's supper keep their proper places. You do them serious injury if you lift them out of their right places and try to make saving ordinances of them.

But in avoiding that evil, do not fall into the opposite error of neglecting them. What Christ has ordained, it is for His people to maintain with care until He comes again. And if He kept the Passover even when, in Himself, it was already on the point of being fulfilled, let us keep up the ordinances which He has enjoined upon us. If any of you have neglected either of them, let me remind you of His gracious words, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," and "This do ye...in remembrance of me."

9-13. *And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.*

Observe in this passage a singular blending of the human and the divine. No mention is made of either as a matter of doctrine, but incidentally our Lord's divinity and humanity are most fully taught. Here is Christ so poor that He has not a room in which to celebrate the most necessary feast of His religion. He has made Himself of no reputation and He has no chamber which He can call His own. Yet see the Godhead in Him.

He sends His messengers to a certain house and tells them to say to the goodman of the house, "Where is the guest chamber?" It all turns out just as He said it would be, and He is welcomed to this man's best room and to the furniture thereof. Jesus speaks here as did His Father when He said to Israel in the olden time, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."

All the guest chambers in Jerusalem were really at Christ's disposal—He had but to ask for them and there they were all ready for Him. Here we see the majesty of His deity, but inasmuch as He had no room that He could call His own, we also see the humility of His manhood.

14-16. *And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

This was to be His last meal with His disciples before He died, and He had looked forward to it with great desire. It was a most solemn occasion and yet to Him a most desirable one. May something of the Master's desire overflow into your hearts, beloved, whenever you are about to partake of the sacred feast which He instituted that night!

17-20. *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

Do you see how this new memorial was blended with the Passover, how it melted into that social meal which formed part of the paschal celebration? There was a cup, then bread, and then the cup after supper, so there was a gracious melting of the one dispensation into the other. We see our Lord's wisdom in thus leading His children on from step to step, without a break, conducting them from one line of service to another and a still higher one.

21. *But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.*

This was a sad and solemn fact, yet it has often been so since that night. The nearer to Christ, the farther from Him—so has it sometimes happened since. He who was in some respects the highest in the College of the Apostles became the lowest in the ranks of the children of perdition.

22-23. *And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.*

Let us also pass that question round among ourselves.

*“When any turn from Zion’s way,
(Alas, what numbers do!)
Methinks I hear my Savior say,
‘Wilt thou forsake Me, too?’*

*“Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless Thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.*

*“The help of men and angels join’d
Could never reach my case;
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in Thy boundless grace.*

*“What anguish has that question stirr’d,
If I will also go;
Yet, Lord, relying on Thy Word,
I humbly answer, No.”*

God grant us more grace, that we may be held fast by the records of love!

24. *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*

Let me read you these two verses together. They strike me as being very remarkable. Here are two questions—“They began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing,” that is, betray their Lord. “And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” What poor creatures we are! How we are tossed with contrary winds!

The new question comes up and yet the old question, which ought to have been smothered by it, still remains there. It is possible that Luke is here alluding to some dispute which the apostles had previously had, and now the Lord, remembering that even in the ashes of contention lived the wonted fires of ambition, would quench the last sparks of the evil fire.

25. *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*

The people are compelled to use sweet terms to express a very bitter bondage, so they call their tyrants “benefactors.”

26-27. *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?*

The guest, or the waiter at the table?

27-31. *Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

As our Lord Jesus looked upon His eleven apostles, He felt that their time of greatest trial was fast approaching. Beyond anything they had ever endured before they were now to be put into the devil's sieve, and Satan would toss them to and fro, and seek, if possible, to destroy them.

32. *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:—*

“I have made you, Simon, a special object of My prayer. all the brotherhood will be tried, but for you I have especially prayed, for you, who seem to be the strongest, are the weakest of them all, so I have prayed specially for you, that your faith fail not.”

32. *And when thou art converted,—*

“When you are restored,”—

32-39. *Strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.*

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