

CHRISTLIKENESS: A SERVANT HEART

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

As a young boy, James Irwin often pointed to the moon and told anyone who would listen that someday he would travel there. It's doubtful anyone believed him, because space travel was still found only in science fiction tales.

But Colonel James B. Irwin lived to see his childhood dream become a reality when he was a member of the Apollo 15 crew that made the successful moon walk.

He spoke of the thrill connected with leaving this planet and seeing it shrink in size. He mentioned watching earthrise one day and thinking how privileged he was to be a member of that unique crew.

He realized that as a result of his unique mission many would consider him a "superstar", for sure an international celebrity. Humbled by the awesome goodness of God, Colonel Irwin shared his true feelings, which went something like this: **"As I was returning to Earth, I realized that I was a servant --not a celebrity. So I am here, as God's servant on planet Earth to share what I have experienced that others might know the glory of God."**

God allowed Colonel Irwin to discover a basic truth about Christlikeness: We are called to be His servants.

The Apostle Paul reveals the servant heart of Jesus in Philippians 2:

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

Henri Nouwen writes in *Compassion: A Reflection of the Christian Life*,

“Our God is a servant God. It is difficult for us to comprehend that we are liberated by someone who became powerless, that we are being strengthened by someone who became weak, that we find new hope in someone who divested himself of all distinctions, and that we find a leader in someone who became a servant.”

But this is exactly what Paul is saying in this passage:

The New American Standard Bible translates verses 6 and 7 this way: **6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**

Philippians 2:6-7 (NASB95)

Here Paul uses the most vivid possible word to make clear the sacrifice of the Incarnation.

He **emptied himself**, he made himself of no reputation. The Greek is the verb kenoun (2758) which means literally to empty.

It can be used of removing things from a container, until the container is empty; of pouring something out, until there is nothing left.

The glory of divinity Jesus gave up willingly in order to become man. He emptied himself of his deity to take upon himself his humanity.

It is difficult to wrap our minds around this.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. John 1:1-5 (NIV)

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. 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 (NIV)

Jesus emptied Himself, He held nothing back.

Nouwen writes in, *Compassion: A Reflection of the Christian Life*: “To follow Christ means to relate to each other with the mind of Christ; that is, to relate to each other as Christ did to us – in servanthood and humility.”

pg 51

The disciples struggled to understand the servant’s heart of Jesus. We see this in Mark 10:35-45 (MSG)

35 James and John, Zebedee's sons, came up to him. "Teacher, we have something we want you to do for us."

36 "What is it? I'll see what I can do."

37 "Arrange it," they said, "so that we will be awarded the highest places of honor in your glory—one of us at your right, the other at your left."

38 Jesus said, "You have no idea what you're asking. Are you capable of drinking the cup I drink, of being baptized in the baptism I'm about to be plunged into?"

39 "Sure," they said. "Why not?" Jesus said, "Come to think of it, you *will* drink the cup I drink, and be baptized in my baptism.

40 But as to awarding places of honor, that's not my business. There are other arrangements for that."

- 41 When the other ten heard of this conversation, they lost their tempers with James and John.**
- 42 Jesus got them together to settle things down.**
- "You've observed how godless rulers throw their weight around," he said, "and when people get a little power how quickly it goes to their heads.**
- 43 It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant.**
- 44 Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave.**
- 45 That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not to be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for many who are held hostage."**

Henri Nouwen writes in his book, *In the Name of Jesus*:
“*The world in which we live – a world of efficiency and control – has no models to offer to those who want to be shepherds in the way Jesus was a shepherd. The leadership about which Jesus speaks is of a radically different kind from the leadership offered by the world. [It is] a leadership which is not modeled on the power games of the world, but on the servant-leader, Jesus, who came to give his life for the salvation of many.*” pg 45

Mother Teresa was an Albanian Roman Catholic nun with Indian citizenship who founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India in 1950. For over 45 years she ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned, and dying, while guiding the Missionaries of Charity's expansion, first throughout India and then in other countries.

By the 1970s she was internationally famed as a humanitarian and advocate for the poor and helpless.

She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna, in 1980 and the Kennedy Prize in the United States, for her humanitarian work.

Mother Teresa received so many awards, prizes, doctorates and citations, that she cannot keep count of them. She always said: 'It is for the honor of God and I receive this in the name of the poor and for their benefit.'

She was quoted as saying: "Tell them we are not here for the work, we are here for Jesus. We are religious, not social workers, not nurses, not teachers, we are religious Sisters. All we do, our prayer, our work, our sufferings is for Jesus...He gives me strength. I love Him in the poor and the poor in Him. Without Jesus our life would be meaningless, incomprehensible...We do it for Jesus."

Mother Teresa got it – she understood Christlikeness was a servant's heart.

VIDEO CLIP OF MOTHER TERESA

At the time of her death, the Missionaries of Charity, was operating 610 missions in 123 countries, including hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's and family counseling programs, orphanages, and schools.

The followers of John the Baptist came to him saying Jesus was baptizing and everyone is going to him. Sounds like spiritual pride?

Listen to the response of John the Baptist: **John 3:30 (NIV) 30 He must become greater; I must become less.**

F. B. Meyer once said: *"I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other; and that the taller we grew in Christian character the easier we could reach them. I now find that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other. It is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower; that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts."*

Henri Nouwen wrote: *"You don't think your way into a new kind of living. You live your way into a new kind of thinking."*

If we are to grow in Christlikeness, we must be willing to empty ourselves, to hold nothing back.

We must forget about polishing our image, saving face, or making sure that we look Christian enough.

To grow in Christlikeness means to be empty of any and everything that would hinder a servant's heart.

Dwight Lyman Moody: *God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves.*

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION – The Suitcase –

To empty out of suitcase:

- Pride
- Selfish Ambition
- Jealousy
- Unforgiveness
- Hatred
- Argumentative
- Temper Tantrums
- All-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants
- Small-minded and lopsided pursuits

Empty – now what?

To be filled with the Spirit of Jesus – the heart of a servant:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

So, in conclusion, I have just one question: “What’s in your suitcase?”

Have you become empty, so that you might be filled with Christlikeness and a servants heart?