



Luke 22:21-34, The Christian Comparison Disorder

Opening Discussion: How does Godly parenting illustrate what it is like to serve like Christ served the church?

- Opening Illustration: parenthood is servanthood. In most respects our life is consumed with serving our children so that they can have the opportunity to succeed in life. Our whole life becomes reordered and oriented around them.
 - You can't serve your children as effectively when you orient your whole life around yourself. (There are more and more books being written about Narcissistic Parents.)
- The disciples struggled to remember the example of Jesus as a servant. In Looking for Judas they were looking for justification to elevate themselves in position.
- **[21] But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. [22] For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" [23] And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this. [24] A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.**
- When you hear "Line up smallest to tallest", what do you feel? I can remember in PE, lining up that way and being chosen for teams for basketball. Unfortunately, if we are honest, we naturally process our place in our community the same way.
- Believers naturally struggle with a Christian Comparison Disorder.
 - This was the second sin recorded in Scripture in Genesis 4. Cain's question was "Am I as valued (or valuable) as my brother?"
 - The Christian Comparison Disorder looks up and down the line of fellow believers trying to assess where they belong in value, all the while forgetting that we don't even have a right to stand in the line on our own merit.

Question: did you grow up in a church environment where you were taught to compare yourself to others in order to feel more righteous? If you did, how did that affect your view of your relationship with God?

- The Christian Comparison Disorder is rooted in three causes:

- 1. We forget that a Christian is a “Christ-one”, and our identity is about him and not us.
- 2. We forget that the only comparison of value is our unrighteousness condition next to Christ’s righteous position. This comparison shows us our unworthiness.
- 3. We forget that the order of where we are in life is never earned, it is always assigned. When we try to move up the line, we “disorder” ourselves from God’s sovereign order.

Question: where do you find the “comparison game” most prevalent in your own life today? Is it with other believers or non-believers or both?

- [25] And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. [26] But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. [27] For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.
- Children are led by parents, and servants are directed by masters. Jesus was making a theological statement here: he was following the leadership and authority of His Heavenly Father.
- Philippians 2, the Carmen Christi.

Discussion: Pause and read Philippians 2:1-11 and talk about what it means to “have this mind” in us.

- **The Christian Comparison Disorder causes us to see greatness from the wrong perspective.**
 - Jesus taught them a lesson by washing their feet. (John 13)
 - The story of the fake foot washing.
 - Fake foot washing is an optical illusion. True servant-hood is 75% of the iceberg below the surface that no one sees.
 - Whenever you serve in tasks that seem menial, or beneath where you should be in life, you are practicing true foot-washing servitude.

- Whenever you continue to perform tasks of service consistently and faithfully without recognition, you are practicing foot washing servitude.

Discussion: Pastor Rob mentioned some quiet foot-washers in the Four Points Family. Take some time to mention silent servants in our church or some other place in your life who rarely get recognized but remain consistent and faithful.

- Do you understand why these people do what they do? They do it because God has assigned them these tasks; and because God has assigned them these tasks, they faithfully perform these tasks for a God who sees, regardless of who else sees or recognizes them. They are not fake foot-washers.
- **[28] “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, [29] and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, [30] that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**
 - **The key word here is “assigned”. Leadership and authority in God’s kingdom are not earned or deserved, they are assigned.**
 - What comes with “assigned” leadership?
 - A standard of expectation for holy living.¹
 - A target on your back.²
 - A standard of living that is based on charity, service and sacrifice.³

Question: what else comes with leadership in the Kingdom of Christ?

- Before the disciples could receive their positions in the eternal kingdom, they were going to suffer first in the temporal kingdom.
- One of the lies of the Christian Comparison Disorder is that God is unfair in how we are treated. We tell ourselves this lie because we compare our path to the paths of other people who seem to have more success and provision or less trial.
- Peter struggled with this issue after Jesus foretold Peter’s death. In John 21, Jesus prophesies Peter’s death as a martyr, and Peter asks God if John will have to

¹ 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 4:12; James 3:1; Acts 20:28;

² 1 Timothy 3:7;

³ 1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8; 1 Peter 5:2-3; 1 Cor. 13:1-3

suffer the same kind of death. Jesus' response was curt in verse 22: Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" Jesus wanted Peter to get his eyes off of what God was doing with others, and focus on what God was doing in his own life.

- God did have an incredible plan for Peter's life. Peter was going to be one of the founders of the church as a chosen apostle. Satan knew this too. He had been listening, and he was going to do everything in his power to thwart God's plan, not just through Judas' betrayal, but also through the potential ruling of Peter.
- **[31] "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32] but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." [33] Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." [34] Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."**
- Here are the encouraging take-away's from this significant moment:
 - Jesus prayed for Peter!
 - Peter didn't know his own weakness.
 - I'll speak more of Peter's "sifting" when we get to his denial in the next chapter. But Peter obviously learned that Satan understands our weaknesses. He stated in his first letter to the church (1 Peter 5:8) "[8] Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."
 - God had a plan for Peter that would result in ministry to other leaders (his brothers or fellow disciples).
- Here are the implications for you and me:
 - **The Holy Spirit prays for us.⁴**

Question: what do you need to know the Holy Spirit is praying about for you in your life right now? How often do you listen for his comforting Gospel encouragement to you?

⁴ Romans 8:26-27

- **We struggle to understand our weaknesses, so we may already be sinning sometimes before we realize.**

- Psalm 19:12–14 [12] Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. [13] Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. [14] Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (ESV)
- Presumptuous sins are easy to see. We willfully do them.
- Hidden sins are more difficult to see. They come from a will that is in conflict with God whether we willfully do them or not.

Discussion: are you willing to share a time when you didn't realize you were involved in sinful patterns, behaviors or attitudes and God had to reveal to you your sin?

- **God has a plan for our struggles to be used to strengthen others.⁵**
 - You can talk about your successes, and you can talk about your failures. Both are important, but both parts of your story are the most beneficial when they point to God's faithfulness.
 - In Heaven, there will be no celebrity pastors or musicians. There will be no "A" list and "B" list conference speakers. Those exist because we are fickle and confused people followers. In heaven, there will only be Christ followers, and the only celebrity we will be seeking out is Jesus.
- 1 Final Thought for us this morning: **When we play the Christian Comparison Game, we always lose because our focus becomes disordered.**
 - We used to teach an acronym when I was a child in Sunday School, and the acronym was to help us remember a proper focused order in life. JOY
 - Jesus>Others>You⁶
- Final discussion: Why do we receive more "true joy" from a life properly ordered towards God and other.

⁵ Galatians 6:2

⁶ Matt. 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31