

The disciples had just heard that one of them would betray Jesus (22:22ⁱ). They began wondering who it might be and each asking, “*Is it I Lord?*” (Matthew 26:22ⁱⁱ). And then the conversation moved from who would betray their Master to who was the greatest among them. That is so typical of human nature. It reminds us that the disciples were people just like us. We go from trying to find out who the leaker is to who is the best one on the team, when Jesus’ point is that it isn’t about them. It is about Him and what He can do in and through us if we will just let Him (John 15:5ⁱⁱⁱ).

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. Luke 22:24 The disciples seemed to have heard only what they wanted to hear. They are still focused on an earthly kingdom and who is going to be on the throne at Jesus’ right hand. They had this discussion before (Luke 9:46^{iv}). At that time Jesus used a child as an illustration of the greatness of humility and service to others. Sometimes we must hear a lesson illustrated in several ways before it sinks in and becomes the way we see things. God’s ways are so different from man’s! It takes not only understanding, but also a heart agreement before we believe and accept heaven’s perspective.

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. Luke 22:25,26 The last time Jesus taught the lesson, He asked them to be like a child. This time He is using a contrast of what not to be like, specifically because this was what they were dreaming of becoming. This world’s rulers give themselves titles declaring their generosity while they selfishly benefit from their power and position. Jesus could have used the Sadducees as an illustration but using Gentile rulers made the desire for authority and power to benefit oneself seem even more vile.

Self-serving power was not to be the way of a follower of Jesus. In a group of disciples, the youngest was expected to be the one who did the dirty work. The older you were the more respected and honored. Jesus turned that upside down. He was saying the one who serves people is the greatest. They should act as if they were the apprentice regardless of their age or position in the group. Love serves. It looks for opportunities to be helpful. As the Apostle Paul said, *⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;* (1 Corinthians 13:4,5). Christians are to be known by their love (John 13:35^v).

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. Luke 22:27 Jesus then used an illustration that was right in front of them. They had been dining. Apparently, Jesus was serving them, passing the bread and the wine, making sure everyone had what they needed, even washing their feet (John 13:5^{vi}). He was using His own example to show them that the world’s way of thinking was not heaven’s way.

Jesus had been serving them the Word of God for three years. He was the one who was most tired, falling asleep in a storm (Mark 4:38^{vii}) and who sat at the well when He was too tired to go on (John 4:6^{viii}). Jesus’ humility only used Himself as an illustration when all other examples did not seem to sink in. There was no time left. He had to get the

point across, or the church would get off on the wrong footing. That is how important this lesson is. Do we have ears to hear and a heart to receive what Jesus was teaching? Do we really act as if we believe the greatest is the servant of all? How do we think of and treat our waiter at a restaurant or the man who picks up our garbage?

We can easily spot this lust for power in politics, but sadly it raises its head in the church too. Elders are to be the servants. They should deal in gentleness and love. When a church leader is harsh and demands to be served with an ever-burgeoning salary, the church needs to be reminded of Jesus' example. When a church chooses elders, it should look for men who are already humbly serving them with God's Word.

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.* Luke 22:28-30 I think instead of praising them for faithfully staying with Jesus, I would have said something like, "When are you ever going to stop thinking like the world and follow my teaching and example!" Jesus is infinitely more gracious. Even though the disciples were so slow to learn, Jesus encouraged them for sticking with Him. It was dangerous. Remember that there was a time when everyone but the disciples fell away (John 6:66,67^{ix}). Jesus knew they would desert Him that night (Matthew 26:56^x), and yet He assigned them a kingdom. What they were dreaming of would be fulfilled in the kingdom of God, and there would thrones and authority, but it would all be out of service and not for personal promotion or selfish interests.

³¹ *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,* Luke 22:31 The atmosphere in the room had turned from celebration to foreboding. First, there was Jesus' announcement that the Passover from that time on was to become a remembrance of Him giving his body and blood for our salvation. Then Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him. Sadly, the discussion among the disciples turned to who was the greatest. Sometime during that discussion Judas left the room. Then Jesus warned Peter that Satan will sift *them* like wheat. "You" is plural in both cases in this verse. The English reading can miss this important point. Satan demanded to have the disciples. He was sifting all the disciples, including Peter. That is not all bad, because wheat is sifted so that waste is blown away and the substance remains. The process can be hard on the grain, but it results in the benefit of mankind. It reminds us of what Satan did to Job, and yet we can see how Job benefited in the end.

Sometimes the only way forward is to see clearly how weak we are. Our over confidence in what we can do on our own, our own strength, our own determination, must be shown to be insignificant. Then we learn to rely on the Lord's strength. The lesson that without Him we can do nothing becomes clear. Our failure is a reality check, a fall forward. It is learning an essential truth, and our old nature is mortally wounded in the process. Finally, we say, "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21^{xi}). That was the purpose of Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7^{xii}) and Jacob's limp (Genesis 32:25^{xiii}).

I wonder what the disciples felt when they heard that their leader, the seemingly strongest among them, the senior disciple, was going to deny Jesus three times. I would have shivered at the thought, for if he would deny Jesus, what would I do? And they all

did desert him and flee when the arrest came (Mark 14:50^{xiv}). The room had quickly turned from the most glorious announcement of the new covenant to betrayal and denial. I can't help but think that in the midst of it, Jesus' heart was most grieved for Judas. It was better for him had he never been born (Mark 14:21^{xv}).

³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Luke 22:32 Though this process will result in Peter denying the Lord, Jesus has prayed for him and he will be restored (John 17:15^{xvi}). “You” in the original language is singular in both cases this verse. Jesus prayed for Peter to strengthen the others after they too were sifted. After his own restoration he was to strengthen the other disciples. Our failures can make us even more dependent on the Lord. We are less likely to run with our own ideas and lean on our own strength and efforts. How we need to discern the difference! Failure often helps us do that.

But even when we fail, we should know that Jesus prays for us. He is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25^{xvii}). He will turn our defeat into growth and greater victories in the future. Do not wallow in condemnation (Romans 8:1^{xviii}). The enemy of your soul wants to keep you there because he knows that in that place you will be unfruitful. Learn the lesson and go forward with greater trust in the Lord. Peter had a job to do after his failure, and so do all of us. The grace of God does not beat us up and tell us we are too unworthy to serve God. Instead, grace assigns us even greater tasks because we have been humbled and are more likely to look to God. We know that in us, that is in our flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18^{xix}). But Jesus is alive in our spirits. He has forgiven us and wants to help us lay up our treasure in heaven. Get up and march on (2 Timothy 2:3^{xx})!

³³ Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” Luke 22:33 Can you see how cocky Peter was, how self-confident in his own ability? He was just sure that for Jesus’ sake by sheer willpower he could go through anything the world threw at him. This self-confidence is what needed to be broken in him. It needs to be broken in all of us. The more broken we are the more we depend on the Lord and look to Him, and that is what bears fruit that lasts (John 15:16^{xxi}). Your will power is unreliable, but Jesus is completely trustworthy! He can and will see you through whatever comes if you will trust in and lean on Him. And Jesus did see Peter through imprisonment (Acts 12:4^{xxii}) and death (John 21:19^{xxiii}) by the power of the Spirit in him. Matthew tells us that all the disciples said they would die for Him (Matthew 26:35^{xxiv}). Yet, they all forsook Him.

³⁴ Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.” Luke 22:34 Jesus predicted what would happen in detail, so that when it came to pass, Peter would remember Jesus' words and have hope that he was not lost. The Word of God does the same for us. Remember God’s promises and know that our failures are not the end (2 Peter 1:3,4^{xxv}). Yes, our failures are horrible and pathetic, but God's not done with us. We stumble. Get up in the power of the Spirit having learned our lesson and march on with that new insight. If you fall, fall forward!

³⁵ And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.” ³⁶ He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no

sword sell his cloak and buy one. Luke 22:35,36 Previously, Jesus had sent them out without taking any supplies (Luke 9:3^{xxvi}; 10:4^{xxvii}). They were received so well that they had lacked nothing. The public was looking forward to a Messiah. But everything was about to change. There would be little receptivity for a dead Messiah. They would still operate by faith and trust God for their needs, but not in the same manner as before. Now they are to take money to buy food, and a bag of supplies. Jesus emphasized the point that the public would even be hostile by telling them to buy a sword. I believe Jesus told them to get the sword as a deterrent, not that they were to physically resist persecution. We will see in a following passage that they missed the point (22:50,51^{xxviii}).

If the Messiah they proclaim died as an outlaw, they too would be considered outlaws. They were going to proclaim a gospel that was rejected by the religious leaders who told the public what to believe about Scripture. That opposition would make things difficult for them. That night Jesus told them they would be thrown out of the synagogues and be killed by those who thought they were doing God's will (John 16:1,2^{xxix}).

³⁷ For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." Luke 22:37 Jesus declared the reason for this change in how they would carry out their mission. He had to fulfill the Scripture that said He would be 'numbered among the transgressors.' He was quoting a portion of Isaiah 53:12^{xxx}. The Greek version (LXX) of the Isaiah verse has been translated, "and he was classed among the outlaws." It is the summary verse of a suffering servant song that began in 52:13. When a rabbi quoted part of a verse, his disciples were to consider context of the passage. That prophetic song explained all that was about to happen and why.

Jesus introduced the verse by saying the passage had to be fulfilled in Him. He followed it by saying it was written about Him. Jesus was certain He was the suffering servant whom Isaiah had written about 700 years earlier. The line before tells us, "*He poured out His life unto death.*" The two lines that follow and end the song say that "*He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.*"

I would encourage you to listen to my two sermons on this prophetic song written by Isaiah.^{xxxi} It clearly tells us Jesus' mission and the results. In that message I told of a conversation I had on a plane coming back from Israel. One Christian young man was trying to tell three young Jewish men that Isaiah 53 was about Jesus. They told him their rabbi taught that the song was about Israel. Some of the suffering servant songs in Isaiah do point to Israel, but in this Psalm the servant is called "the righteous one" (Isaiah 53:11^{xxxii}). Reading through Isaiah you can see that Israel was never righteous. This righteous servant justifies many and bears their iniquities. Israel has never done that. The language is of a male individual. His life is a guilt offering. He dies and yet He sees the light of life. That is resurrection. Quoting the line from 53:12 should have shocked the disciples to the core because it speaks of the servant dying with the wicked but buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9^{xxxiii}). Instead, they ask if they have enough swords.

³⁸ And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough." Luke 22:38 The disciples had missed the whole point of what Jesus was trying to tell them. The passage started with Jesus saying He had eagerly desired to share this Passover meal with them. He established communion, forever advancing the meaning of

the Passover meal to a greater fulfillment. He explained the bread would remind them of His broken body and the wine was His blood poured out to establish a new covenant (22:20^{xxxiv}). It was an intensely profound moment, but it quickly turned to the discussion of betrayal, denial, and arguing about who was the greatest. And now when Jesus pointed to the verse that made it all clear they responded, "We have two swords."

Jesus' response is translated in ESV as "It is enough." It could mean that was sufficient. The fact that He did not mean for them to use swords to resist violence is seen a few verses later (verse 51^{xxxv}). Some translators say it was an expression of exasperation, "Enough of this!" or even "I give up!" That was the end of the upper room Passover meal. Jesus tried to get them to understand, but He knew they would need the Holy Spirit to make it all clear.

Do we see greatness in the way Jesus taught us to see it, that it is to be the servant of all? Do we realize that without Him we can do nothing? And when we fail, do we wallow in self-pity or do we rise and carry on knowing Jesus is praying for us? Those are the lessons from the first paragraphs. In the last paragraph Jesus is teaching the foundation of the Gospel that He has come to take our sins upon Himself and die the death we deserve. He was willing to be tortured among thieves and buried in a borrowed grave because He loves us. That was an illustration of the greatest servant of us all. It is the greatest humility ever witnessed. It is the greatest love ever demonstrated. What are we to do about it? Jesus told them that same night, ¹² *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* John 15:12,13

You say that is impossible? You are right. In our own strength and will power we can't do it. But with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26^{xxxvi}). I am talking about supernatural life because of the presence of the supernatural One who lives in us. He is the source of the love that flows from us to others. He is the life within us and the strength to persevere. He serves others through our hearts yielded to Him. By His grace we can be the servant of all, for He is the greatest. ¹ *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!* Psalm 115:1 This was the first line of the psalms that ended the Passover meal.

Questions:

- 1 What had the disciples just been discussing?
- 2 What did Jesus say about greatness?
- 3 What was His illustration?
- 4 How does failure mature us?
- 5 Who was to be sifted?
- 6 Why can't we trust in our own strength?
- 7 What did they misunderstand about swords?
- 8 What shocking verse did Jesus share?
- 9 What did they miss? Their response?
- 10 Why is that song about a man and not a nation?

ⁱ **Luke 22:22 (ESV)**

²² For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”

ⁱⁱ **Matthew 26:22 (ESV)**

²² And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?”

ⁱⁱⁱ **John 15:5 (ESV)**

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

^{iv} **Luke 9:46 (ESV)**

⁴⁶ An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.

^v **John 13:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

^{vi} **John 13:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

^{vii} **Mark 4:38 (ESV)**

³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”

^{viii} **John 4:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jacob’s well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

^{ix} **John 6:66-67 (ESV)**

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?”

^x **Matthew 26:56 (ESV)**

⁵⁶ But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left him and fled.

^{xi} **Philippians 1:21 (ESV)**

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

^{xii} **2 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV)**

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

^{xiii} **Genesis 32:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

^{xiv} **Mark 14:50 (ESV)**

⁵⁰ And they all left him and fled.

^{xv} **Mark 14:21 (ESV)**

²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

^{xvi} **John 17:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

^{xvii} **Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

^{xviii} **Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

^{xix} **Romans 7:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

^{xx} **2 Timothy 2:3 (ESV)**

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

^{xxi} **John 15:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

^{xxii} **Acts 12:4 (ESV)**

⁴ And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people.

^{xxiii} **John 21:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

^{xxiv} **Matthew 26:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.

^{xxv} **2 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV)**

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

^{xxvi} **Luke 9:3 (ESV)**

³ And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.

^{xxvii} **Luke 10:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.

^{xxviii} **Luke 22:50-51 (ESV)**

⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

⁵¹ But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

^{xxix} **John 16:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

^{xxx} **Isaiah 53:12 (ESV)**

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

^{xxxi} Exalted Servant Parts 1 and 2 on www.bible-sermons.org

^{xxxii} **Isaiah 53:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

^{xxxiii} **Isaiah 53:9 (ESV)**

⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

^{xxxiv} **Luke 22:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

^{xxxv} **Luke 22:51 (ESV)**

⁵¹ But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.

^{xxxvi} **Matthew 19:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."