

Service

Jesus Served

Foundation

Bible passage : Mark 10:45, John 13:1-17

The words “serve” and “service” have quite a wide range of meaning in English and in the languages of the Bible. Module 19 of these notes explores these in more depth but there are two strands, to “serve the Lord” which we is part of the next but one unit, and serving other people, which is part of the next unit.

In the ancient world, and still today, there are some people who are servants and have a master who they serve. It would have been difficult or the disciples when Jesus, who they referred to as their master referring to Himself said “the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve”.

He was training the disciples to be leader in the early church, and as missionaries to go and tell others about Him. But He made it clear that they were not to lord it over others, rather they were to see their future work as serving others.

We might therefore wonder in what ways Jesus acted as a servant. When we think about this it is not easy to separate what we think of as service from another value, that of compassion. Jesus showed compassion to people in such things as healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, welcoming those rejected by others, feeding the 5,000 and so on. But they are less clearly what we normally think of as serving.

There are however two things Jesus which He definitely describes as serving. First, at the Last Supper Jesus shocked the disciples when before the meal He took off His outer robes, put on a towel and did the job of a servant by washing their feet. He told them that He was setting them an example to follow. They were not

to do exactly the same, but it was to be their attitude of mind in the future lives as His followers.

The second action came the follow day, as His crucifixion. Jesus had previously told them that He was going to be put to death, which they did not believe. On one of He spelt out how His death would be an act of service, in words partly quoted above:

“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus’ death on the cross was not a mistake but God’s deliberate plan. It was an act of service by Jesus because it was “a ransom for many”. A ransom is a means by which a captive is set free. In this case set free from the power of sin, of the devil, death and the judgement of God. Jesus’ death was the price paid, it only becomes effective when people accept all this and so trust in Him.



Jesus told His disciples to serve, but also came to serve through His death that those who trust in Him might be set free.

