SO YOU WANT TO SERVE JESUS?

(John 12:20-26)

I. The request.
   a. “If any man serve me” carries the idea of a person requesting to serve Jesus.
   b. How many people do we know who would answer yes to the question: “Are you serving Jesus?”?
      i. The number would be very high wouldn’t it?
      ii. Most people who have any idea of spiritual things have said they wanted to serve Jesus.
   c. So, in essence, this request has been made by most people.
   d. The reason for this is that many people give lip service to the desire to go to heaven.
      i. There are few, if any, who say that they want to go to hell.
      ii. So, people say they want to serve the Lord.
   e. The word “serve” here is not from the same Greek word found as servant in Philippians 2.
   f. This is from the word which we get our word “deacon”.
   g. One Greek work says this of the word for “serve”: ““Diakonos is especially a servant in attendance, at table or elsewhere; a doulos may serve at a distance”.
      i. The diakonos servant, serves up close to the one being served.
      ii. A doulos may serve up close but can also serve out in the field away from his master.
   h. The idea is one who serves Jesus as a diakonos servant serves by the side of Jesus, is in close proximity to Him.
   i. One can be close to Jesus only by coming to Him in His way, not our own.
   j. Jesus invites us to come to Him (Matthew 11:28-30), but it has to be on His terms.
   k. When this request is made, we need to understand that for which we are asking.
   l. We are asking to be up close and personal with the Lord.
      i. This is a life of service and sacrifice as we’ve noticed the last few weeks.
      ii. It’s a life of dedication to another and not to self.
   m. Most do not understand this aspect of service to the Lord.
      i. At best, many want to be part time servants.
      ii. Coming to worship when it is convenient, or coming to worship but doing nothing else.
   n. Jesus knew that and that is why He used an “if” to begin the statement.
   o. Jesus would then go to describe what it means to serve.

II. The requirement.
   a. Jesus said if you make the request you must follow me.
   b. That sounds simple doesn’t it?
i. We’ve all followed a path before.
ii. We’ve all followed someone who we believed knew where they were going.

C. The problem is, most don’t know who they are following or where the one they are following is headed.
   i. I read of a man who found a couple of caterpillars known as processional caterpillars going around the base of a plant holder on his porch.
   ii. These few caterpillars were simply following one another around the plant.
   iii. The man saw some more nearby and picked some up and put them in the processional line going around the pot until all the gaps were filled and there was a near full line of caterpillars touching nose to end all around the plant.
   iv. The man said that those caterpillars didn’t break rank for over five days, just continually following one another around that pot.
   v. They blindly followed the one in front of them, never looking up to see where they were going.

D. This is how many people are who claim to be followers of Jesus.
   i. They are letting someone else do their study for them.
   ii. They are letting someone else lead the way and they have no idea where they are headed.

E. This is not being a follower of Jesus.

F. It is not as simple as just heading in the direction we believe leads to Jesus.

G. Thayer wrote of this word’s meaning the following: “to cleave steadfastly to one, conform wholly to his example, in living and if need be in dying also”.

H. This is the requirement of serving Jesus.

I. This is exactly the point Jesus was making to those Gentiles.
   i. Jesus knew He was going to die and makes mention of that.
   ii. If they wanted to truly serve Jesus, they had to understand the cost.

J. Being a follower of Jesus, which one must be in order to serve Him, involves a conforming to Jesus’s character and following in His suffering.

K. That’s a game changer for most people.
   i. You mean I have to give up everything, including possibly my life, to serve Jesus?
   ii. You mean I have to put down all that I may want to follow Jesus?
   iii. You mean I have to be willing to die physically for Jesus?
   iv. Yes, to all of the above is the answer.

L. This is what is involved in serving Jesus.

M. How many of us, including me, are really serving Jesus this way?

N. We sometimes sing the words “Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me”.
   i. One can’t sing those words correctly if they are not truly following Jesus.
ii. There is still self in there and people won’t see Jesus.
iii. This doesn’t just happen with a request to serve Jesus.
iv. It takes effort and work to remove self and replace it with Jesus.
v. Just like playing basketball takes more than just shooting, serving Jesus takes much more than a willingness to go to worship.
vi. It is a complete transformation (Romans 12:2).

III. The reward.
   a. Why meet this requirement?
      i. The life we are being told to live is difficult.
      ii. The words sacrifice, submission, obedience, are not words we generally like when being applied to ourselves.
   b. Jesus told those that make the request and are willing to meet the requirement that there is a reward.
   c. and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.
   d. The Father honored the Son by allowing Him to ascend back into heaven.
   e. This is what awaits the one who is willing to serve the Lord.
   f. We will be rewarded with a home in heaven.
   g. Something that must be noted about this is the tense in which the phrase “if any man serve” was written.
      i. It’s written in a tense that indicates continual action.
      ii. This is not a one-time act of service.
      iii. It is a lifetime of service until death.
      iv. We don’t ever stop serving the Lord.
      v. We don’t ever stop following the Lord.
   h. The reward is tremendous – giving us the glory that awaits us in heaven.

Sermon idea from an unknown source