A GREAT SERVANT

(Matthew 11:9-11)

I. John was selfless.
   a. John always knew that his work was not about him but of One greater.
   b. He was quick to mention this:
      i. John 1:26-27;
   c. The reference in John 1 is from the early part of his ministry, before Jesus began his.
      i. He was drawing great crowds.
      ii. Multitudes of people were coming to hear him.
      iii. So much so, the council sent out representatives to question John (John 1:22f).
      iv. He could have tried to draw people to himself but he didn’t.
   d. The reference in John 3 is later in his ministry, when the crowds were dwindling and there were more following Jesus than him.
      i. His pride wasn’t hurt.
      ii. He knew this was what God intended to happen.
      iii. It could have been very difficult for John to accept his lessening in popularity if he hadn’t been the man he was.
   e. As Christians, this is a quality that we must possess.
      i. Philippians 2:3.
   f. There is a song that is not sung as much as it once was entitled “None of self and all of thee”.
      i. This hymn, by Theodore Monod, starts out with “all of self and none of thee”.
      ii. It moves to “some of self and some of thee”.
      iii. The third stanza deals with “less of self and more of thee”.
      iv. Finally, in the fourth stanza we sing the title of the song.
   g. I wonder why we don’t sing this song like we once did?
   h. I honestly believe that it is because that song hurts many of us because we live in and are affected by such a selfish society.
   i. The Christian life is one of “none of self and all of thee”.
   j. John the Immerser vividly portrayed this noble characteristic during his ministry.

II. John was soul conscious.
   a. Nearly every mention of John deals with his preaching.
      i. He knew his role was that of a preparer of souls.
      ii. Only through his preaching could he do this and that is what he did.
   b. He knew the groups that came to him and he addressed their spiritual needs.
I. Luke 3:10-14 bears this out for us.
   ii. But notice the verses previous to this (Luke 3:7-9).
   iii. He knew his audience well.
   iv. He knew what they each needed to hear and he made sure they heard it.

c. He was tender with the ones who needed tenderness and he was harsh with those that needed harshness.

d. John knew each soul who heard him needed to be ready for the Messiah so he constantly pointed them to Him.
   i. Matthew 3:7-12.

e. He knew that peoples only hope was the Savior so he always spoke of Him.

f. We need Christians who are soul conscious.

g. We meet people every day who are on the road to destruction.
   i. Each person has a soul that is going to spend eternity somewhere.
   ii. Are we concerned about their souls the way that John was?

h. I read that William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, once told some students, “If I had my choice, I wouldn’t send you to school, I would send you to hell for 5 minutes and you would come back real soul winners.”

i. Remember what the rich man wanted Lazarus to do after he had spent time in torment?

j. However, I believe if we could go to heaven for even less time, we would come back real soul winners, after seeing the glory that awaits.

k. The great commission has been given and we need Christians who are soul conscious to be able to fulfill it.

III. John was steadfast.
   a. It did not matter who came to John, he would not stop preaching.
   b. It did not matter the station in life of his audience, he was going to tell the truth.
   c. When the Pharisees came, he preached what they needed to hear.
   d. When he had the opportunity, he told Herod what he needed to hear (Mark 6:16-18).
   e. John was going to preach the truth no matter who was present to hear it and he was not going to change the message or soften it.
   f. This morning, we discussed the need to stand fast in the gospel.
      i. We can’t cede one tenet to Satan.
      ii. We must stand in and stand up for the gospel message.
   g. The Hebrews writer said... (Hebrews 3:14).
      i. The beginning of our confidence refers to when we first obeyed the gospel.
      ii. When one first obeys, he or she believes it all and wants to do all of the commands of God.
iii. Sadly, as we age and things get more difficult, that is when we tend to not stand the way we once did.
iv. If we want to be partakers of Christ, enjoy the benefits, privileges, and presence of Christ, we must stand like we did in the beginning.

h. I recently talked with a preaching friend and he told me of another preacher who said, “If I could get five brethren to really stand with me, we could get things changed at this congregation”, referring to the congregation where he preached.

i. We need brethren who are steadfast in the gospel.

IV. John was sacrificial.
b. We never read of a wife of John the Immerser.
c. His parents were older when he was born so by this time, they were probably dead, so it seems he had no family.
d. Everything John did was to fulfill the role given him by God.
e. Ultimately, he sacrificed his life because of the role given him by God.
f. John was willing to sacrifice comfort, status, and his life for God.
g. John had great crowds as mentioned earlier.
   i. He was willing to sacrifice those crowds to Jesus.
   ii. His pride hindered him in no way whatsoever.
h. You and I are called to take up our crosses and follow Jesus.
   i. We are called to sacrifice for the kingdom.
   ii. What sacrifices have we or are we making for the Lord?
i. I know some have sacrificed friendships, and even family relationships, because of obedience to the gospel.
   i. For that sacrifice you are to be commended.
   ii. That took courage.
j. There may be some who have sacrificed a job or position because of a refusal to do something unethical or illegal.
   i. That took courage to do that.
   ii. It’s called for by God, but it is still sacrificial.
k. We need to be sacrificial in our giving.
   i. The Macedonian brethren gave out of their poverty.
   ii. Jesus gave it all for us.
   iii. We should be willing to sacrifice of our finances for Him.
l. We need brethren who are sacrificial like John.