

MASTER OF SERVICE
Luke 22:7-8, 14-15, 24-27

"Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover meal for us, so we can eat it.' ⁴ When the hour came, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. ¹⁵ Then He said to them, 'I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' ²⁴ Then a dispute also arose among them about who should be considered the greatest. ²⁵ But He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles dominate them, and those who have authority over them are called "Benefactors." ²⁶ But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and whoever leads, like the one serving. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't it the one at the table? But I am among you as the One who serves.'"

INTRODUCTION

In 1973, Democratic U.S. Senator John C. Stennis, of Mississippi, returned one night to his home outside Washington, D.C. Two teens came out of the darkness, robbed him, and shot him twice. The shooting of the chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Forces Committee shocked Washington and the nation. For nearly seven hours, Senator Stennis lay on the operating table at Walter Reed Hospital. A Republican U.S. Senator heard of this shooting while driving home and went immediately to the hospital. Once there, he saw the overwhelmed staff could not keep up with incoming calls about the Senator's condition. He spotted an unattended switchboard, sat down, and voluntarily went to work. He continued taking calls until daylight. Sometime that morning, he stood up, stretched, put on his overcoat, and quietly told the other operator: "I'm Mark Hatfield. Happy to help out." He left without fanfare. His actions dumbfounded the press! Their bias made them think a Republican legislator would not give a liberal Democrat a tip of his hat, let alone generously donate hours of menial service with a "happy to help out" attitude. They should not have been surprised. As Oregon's Governor (1959-67), he became known for pulling his car to off the road and kneeling in prayer. Before the rise of the Religious Right, before Jimmy Carter popularized the phrase, "born-again Christian," Mark Hatfield was the most prominent evangelical in national politics. He spoke publicly not just about God but about **Jesus Christ's** saving work. He often challenged politicians and staffers alike with **I Corinthians 4:20** (KJV), "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" ("For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power," NLT). He stressed the superior power of a *life* in service to the Lord above the *lip* service to a noble cause popular in politics.

Today, we take up two themes: Our Master's Service toward Us and Our Service toward Our Master.

I. OUR MASTER'S SERVICE TOWARD US

This morning we celebrate the most life-affirming event in our world's history: the resurrection of **Jesus** of Nazareth as the Christ, the Messiah; God's foremost "anointed, chosen, royal representative" (as "Christ" in Greek or "Messiah" in Hebrew means). Someone wrote the following to a local newspaper advice columnist: "Dear Uticus, Our preacher said on Easter that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that His disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think? Sincerely, Bewildered." This wise columnist replied, "Dear Bewildered, Beat your preacher with a cat of nine tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross, hang him in the sun for six hours, run a spear through his heart, embalm him, put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours, and see what happens. Sincerely, Uticus."

Luke 24:1-8 (NASB) records that several women came to **Jesus'** tomb early Sunday morning and were startled when "two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing." **John 20:12** reveals these "men" were in reality "two angels." Hear now the electrifying news these women heard from the angels: "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful

men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' And," as the Bible describes the reaction of these women, "they remembered His words."

Many names given **Jesus** in the New Testament help us to grasp the vast significance of Him rising from the dead and by themselves point to the breadth and depth of His sacrificial service toward us. Some of the best known are found in **Luke 2:11** (ESV), "'For unto you is born this day in the city of David a *Savior*, who is Christ the Lord"; **John 6:35** (ESV), "'I am the *bread of life*; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst"; **John 10:11** (ESV): "'I am the *good shepherd*. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"; **John 1:29** (NKJV): "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The *Lamb of God* who takes away the sin of the world!"; and **John 11:25-26**, "'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah often gives Him a distinctive name: God's "Servant" (**Isaiah 42:1; 49:3-7; 50:10**). The most riveting description of the Messiah appears in **Isaiah 53**. Let's read **vss.5-6 & 11**: "But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds. ⁶We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the LORD has punished Him for the iniquity of us all. ¹¹. . . My righteous Servant will justify many, and He will carry their iniquities." **Jesus'** resurrection removes all honest doubt He is indeed the Son of God. His resurrection proves beyond doubt God the Father accepted His sacrifice to atone for our sins. His victorious return from death disproves the doubters who claim the grave is final, that humans are mere animals, and who dismiss that we are created by God's Spirit for Divine purposes.

II. OUR SERVICE TOWARD OUR MASTER

Christ's magnificent service toward us of rescuing us from the grip of sin's destructive clutches and restoring us to everlasting fellowship with our Heavenly Father would be more than enough to indebt us in service to the Lord **Jesus Christ** forever! Are we good at paying our debts? Or do we pay our debts in feeble ways that may make us feel good but do little good to God or to others? One day masked bandits held up a train traveling through the old West. Two friends on their way to California were passengers. "Here's where we lose all our money," one said, as a robber entered the car. "You don't think they'll take everything, do you?" the other asked nervously. "Certainly," the first replied. "These fellows never miss anything." "That will be terrible," the second friend said. "Are you quite sure they won't leave us *any* money?" he persisted. "Of course," was the reply. "Why do you ask?" The other was silent for a minute. Then, taking a fifty-dollar note from his pocket, he handed it to his friend. "What is this for?" the first asked, taking the money. "That's the fifty dollars I owe you," the other answered. "Now we're square."

Even if we don't offer Christ a feeble return on the debt we owe Him for all He's done in the *past* to bring us into right relationship with God, and for all He's doing in the *present* to elevate us to the quality of life God created us to enjoy, we will *never* be able to *pay off* in the future the staggering debt we owe to "Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord" (**Jude 4**). Yet, we can *pay on* our debt to the Lord in ways that most please our Savior by following the example He set while on earth of *how* He serves others.

Luke 22:24-27 records that at some point during the Last Supper just prior to **Jesus'** arrest, "Then a dispute also arose among them about who should be considered the greatest." By His response to this shocking display of prideful self-absorption among His closest followers during His crucial final hours with them, **Jesus** redefined for all time the definition of what it means to be a "great" man or woman. "But He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles dominate them, and those who have authority over them are called "Benefactors."²⁶ But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and whoever leads, like the one serving.²⁷ For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't it the one at the table? But I am among you as the One who serves."

Jesus probably chose this strategic moment to perform a supreme act of humility and service toward His Twelve main disciples. It's recorded in **John 13:4-5, 12-17**: "He got up from supper, laid aside His robe, took a towel, and tied it around Himself. ⁵ Next, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around Him. ¹² When Jesus had washed their feet and put on His robe, He reclined again and said to them, 'Do you know what I have done for you?' ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord. This is well said, for I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I assure you: A slave is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'" Foot-washers were at the bottom rung among the slaves and servants who filled society's lowest class in **Jesus'** day. His startling action reveals we rank among the "greatest" people on earth in His eyes to the extent we embody our Master's humble service toward others.

CONCLUSION

Jude 4 names "Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord." There are many ways we can extend the quality of our Master's service toward us in our service in our His name toward others: giving of our time, abilities, and finances to our church and in acts of ministry; praying faithfully for our community, nation, friends, and family; being a Christ-like spouse, child, or parent; or being a God-honoring good citizen to our community and to our nation. But the most vital and critically important way we can serve others in our Master's name is to be alert to opportunities to point them to and connect them **Jesus Christ** as their own Savior and Lord.

Georgia Cohen, a Christian nurse from Pittsburgh, has spoken in our Church. Her experiences in learning to be an effective witness for the Lord are retold in her book, *Nurse Georgee* (2013). Georgia honestly admits her fears, mistakes, and steps she needed to take to be used of **Jesus** to draw others to Him. The chief lesson we can draw from her is that she was willing to humble herself and risk rejection for His sake.

John was a big 40-year-old roughneck of a small West Virginia town when he collapsed from a major heart attack. While being transferred to one of Pittsburgh's main hospitals, his helicopter life-flight crew reported his heart stopped five times in-flight. But the CCU team, with the latest equipment and procedures available, soon had John resting as comfortably as possible with a stable heart rate and blood pressure. After several visits helping John with his daily hygiene, Georgia asked him, "Has anyone ever introduced you to Jesus?" John scratched his puzzled head and said, "No, I don't reckon anybody ever has." He asked her to continue, but after a few minutes of sharing her experiences of **Jesus**, John interrupted her saying, "I just don't know about this Jesus. I have never been in church. In fact, I have never seen a Bible." He'd been thinking he needed to make some big changes, including no longer beating up his wife and stopping the "terrible fights with the guys" he got into all the time. But he was not ready to hear about **Jesus**. She politely backed off until such time as John might tell her he was ready, but continued praying for him.

John slept for an hour; then his condition nose-dived. After his heart rate raced to nearly 200, his heart chambers went into fibrillation; quivering uselessly instead of pumping blood and cutting off the blood supply to his vital organs. All CPR methods, including repeated electrical shocks, proved futile. His heart monitor flat-lined for so long it appeared he was lost. Just as the hospital staff was ready to call it quits, John regained a feeble heart beat. He remained unconscious but began breathing on his own.

Georgia's shift was ending. She made her reports, took a final glance at John's monitor, and was just leaving the CCU when John's loud demanding voice began bouncing off the walls: "NURSE GEORGEE! NURSE GEORGEE! Get in here!" When she ran into his room, John told her, "I saw Jesus! I saw Jesus!" John brushed aside Georgia's questions about the color of **Jesus'** eyes and hair. "All I know," he said, "is that He is love." He added, "That devil is a mean devil." He said the devil had given him the toughest fight

of his life, trying to clutch him in death. John exclaimed, "I was sweating buckets full. That devil almost got me." Just when it seemed the devil would win, John asked **Jesus** if he "could come back for a little bit." John reported, "Jesus went through the gate to the Dad and asked the Dad if I could come back." John could not see the Dad, but His voice sounded "like He was talking through a great big megaphone." John then declared, "No one goes through that gate to the Dad unless Jesus takes them."

By her own admission, Georgia "froze in amazement." John, who'd never seen a Bible, nearly quoted her favorite Bible verse, **John 14:6**, where **Jesus** proclaimed, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John mistook her amazement as doubt and began shouting, "Nurse Georgee, I'm telling you the truth. No one goes through that gate to the Dad unless Jesus takes them." After she assured John she believed him, he began hollering through his open door, "Is there anyone out there who doesn't know Jesus?" All the CCU staff and even many visitors soon crowded into his room to hear about his encounter with **Jesus**. When the room cleared, Georgia asked if John was ready to surrender his life to **Jesus**. John answered, "I sure am. What do I need to do? I know that Jesus is for real. I want to be with Him forever." She encouraged him to "talk to Jesus just like you talk to me." This is how he prayed: "Jesus, it's John, the one you just saved from the devil. Don't leave me Jesus. Forgive me of all the fights I was in. Sorry I beat my wife up. Come live in me. Thank you for loving me. I'm Yours. Amen!"

You may think you lack Georgia's boldness. But there are many ways to be used of **Jesus** just as powerfully and wonderfully in drawing others to Him as Georgia has experienced. One way is through the Gospel Tract, *Your Life: A New Beginning*, prepared by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. We are asking each of you to take one now as they are passed out. More are available on the table as you leave Church today. Once you familiarize yourself with it, you will find this is a wonderful tool to help you draw others to **Jesus Christ** as their own Lord and Savior. Some people will be open to you reading it through with them. You can also find many ways to make them conveniently available to others, as by leaving them in public areas where you work or shop, or at restaurants, or whenever you travel. Let us pray now for God to use you so that others will soon gain "A New Beginning" by embracing **Jesus Christ**, who arose victorious over sin, death, and Satan on Easter Sunday! **Jesus** said, "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."