

PARABLE OF THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT

Luke 17:7-10

Hearing Jesus teach on what is expected of a disciple of the Kingdom, *“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’”* [v5] The double burden of avoiding offenses against others while at the same time forgiving those who offended them seemed overwhelming. Jesus responded that simple faith, nourished by prayer, obedience and communion with God, would enable the humblest believer to accomplish great and mighty things.



Pieter Aertsen, *The Cook*

At this point Jesus used a parable to illustrate the importance of a proper heart attitude. Addressing the disciples, he asks if any of them having a servant would call him from the field at the end of the day and seat him at the table to be served a meal. Our Lord explains, *“Won’t he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink?’”* [v8] Of course he would!

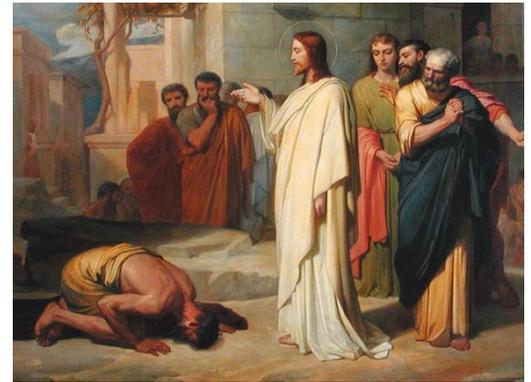
But earlier Jesus had assured his disciples, *“Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.”* [Luke 12:37] In both passages the Lord seems to be speaking on the dutiful obedience expected of all Christians.

In this parable Jesus says: *“Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?”* [v9] The slave in this parable behaves like the servant who buried his master’s talent. He obeys, but with no real love for the master or concern for his welfare. He does only what is asked, and nothing more.

While journeying to Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples are obliged to take a route along the border of Samaria. They encounter a group of lepers, who beg Christ to have pity upon them. The Lord directs the wretched men to show themselves to the priest as the law commands when lepers are made clean. As they turn to do so, all ten are healed.

One, realizing that his health has been restored, returns to shout praises to God and thank Jesus. The Lord asks about the others: *“Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”* [v17] These men – probably Jews who know how much God had given them – have all gone, doing what Jesus asked in perfect obedience to the law.

In our concern for faithful obedience, Kingdom disciples should live like the Samaritan leper, acting in praise and love! If we serve the Lord only because it’s what is expected, then he will regard us as unworthy, unprofitable servants. Always remember, *“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* [Rom. 5:8]



Jean-Marie Melchior Doze,
Jesus Healing the Leper