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Servanthood: No More Me First
Luke 22: 17-24

Here's some good news: if you're like most people, you're ***way above average***—at almost everything. Psychologists call this the state of "illusory superiority." (It's also called "The Lake Wobegone Effect," from Garrison Keillor's fictional Minnesota town where "all the children are above average.") It simply means that we tend to inflate our positive qualities and abilities, especially in comparison to other people.

Numerous research studies have revealed this tendency to ***overestimate ourselves***. For instance, when researchers asked a million high school students how well they got along with their peers, none of the students rated themselves below average. As a matter of fact, 60 percent of students believed they were in the top 10 percent; 25 percent rated themselves in the top one percent. You'd think college professors might have more self-insight, but they were just as biased about their abilities. Two percent rated themselves below average; 10 percent were average and 63 were above average; while 25 percent rated themselves as truly exceptional.

"Study: Self-Images Often Erroneously Inflate," ABC News (11-9-05)

As humans we are not humble. ***We are proud***. Very proud.

So proud that we can find ourselves proudly spouting off in cyberspace—
 for all the world to see.

Heard what happened to Gilbert Gottfried, and girl named Alexandra from UCLA? Both went down for their ridiculous remarks about our friends in Japan suffering after the tsunami.

A few years ago the NY Times interviewed a woman from Tampa who boldly declared that she 'ain't too proud to blog' about her life on the web. Her site is called [tampatantrum](http://www.tampatantrum.com). (www.tampatantrum.com; May 7, 2003)

A smart Christian at kenotic.net says it well:

We desperately seek to be significant.

Blogs give us this chance, and so does YouTube, and Twitter, and Facebook, and the rest. Suddenly we have things to say and — more importantly — people who are listening....But these ways of "reaching out" or "giving back" to culture are still predominantly about me. About how I find meaning by bouncing ideas off of

the wider web world. About feeling important, validated, useful, interesting. In times like these – when it's easier and more alluring than ever to be or feel important – Christians must remember that we're not called to be viral superstars, we're called to be living sacrifices. We're not instructed to make ourselves look as good as possible in front of the largest audience we can; no we are instructed to deny ourselves and humbly follow Christ. (www.kenotic.net; 1-22-09).

It's not easy though---we all have what Pastor James Harnish calls a '**me-first**' mindset. *You know you have it if you can relate to any of the following: you took the last piece of pie, last cookie, last slice of cake while no one was looking. You pulled into the parking space the guy in the Buick had been waiting for, for 5 minutes with his turn signal on. You passed along some gossip to make you look better. You accepted credit for someone else's hard work. You gave a gift that was something you really wanted for yourself.....need I say more?*

(Living with the Mind of Christ, James Harnish, pg. 19)

So, what can we do? Where is our *hope*?

Is it possible to set aside some of our pride and lead a life worthy of calling Christian? Of course—with God all things are possible.

Listen to this great story:

Most people haven't heard of the pro football running back named **Tony Richardson**. That's because his primary role involves helping other running backs succeed: he blocks so they can run. Over the span of seventeen pro football seasons, teams have often paired Richardson with some of the best backs in pro football. In 2001 he was slated to be the main running back, but instead he went to his teammate Priest Holmes and told him, "It's time for me to step out of the way. You need to be getting the ball. And I'm going to do everything I can to help you." Holmes went on to lead the league in rushing, but Richardson never grew envious or resentful. As Holmes would report, "He used to call me up and say, "I just saw you on SportsCenter! He was happier for me than I was for myself."

All of the running backs that Richardson helped succeed contend that his influence went beyond blocking for them. He would constantly talk to them through the game, advising, pushing, encouraging, and inspiring them. In a recent interview, Tony Richardson said, "I can't explain it, but it just means more to me to help someone else achieve glory. There's something about it that feels right to me."

Joe Posnanski, "Made to Last," Sports Illustrated (August 23, 2010), pp. 49-51

That's a WWJD kind of thing to do, isn't it?
 What could Jesus be doing in *YOUR life* to set aside your pride, if you allowed it?

I think if we get to the core of *what Jesus did for us*,
 It will help us understand what we can do, without our pride.

In our verse for this Lenten season, Philippians 2:1-11, there's a passage that says,
 Jesus Christ, though he was God, emptied himself, becoming a servant.....

That word '*though*' is tricky. You could also say '*because*'.
 Because he was God he chose to serve.
 Now think about that for a minute.
 The Almighty God of the world, in the form of Jesus,
chose to serve, not be served.

And here's another very very important point to make.
 What Jesus did—his life, death and resurrection.
 That wasn't just playing a temporary role on earth. All that was **WHO GOD IS**.

When Jesus surrendered himself in vulnerable weakness
 to all the evil power of the world and died...
 it was not a disguise of who God is:
 it was the revelation of *who God is*. (Living with the Mind of Christ, James Harnish, pg. 20).

Our God is a God of self-giving love.
 Our God is a *servant*. Serving us.

Our Savior Jesus emptied himself like a *servant*.
 In other words he gave us his whole self. Our God is a giver. The ultimate *giver*.
 That's why before Jesus died he promised his disciples he would give the Holy
 Spirit to live within us.
 Our God is a giver!

And in Luke 22 before the disciples start ridiculously arguing over who is greatest,
 Jesus gives them his own body and blood in the Passover meal.
 If you don't remember, the meal was to recall the sacrificed lamb's blood
 that was painted over the doorway of each Hebrew household
 in order to spare the oldest son's life.
 And here Jesus is, saying I am the body and blood now—not the lamb, but me.
 The lamb saved the people before, now *I am here* to save the people.

We are called to follow the One who *serves, gives, and saves*.

We cannot save, but we can *serve and give*.

When in doubt about our status, we should be *servants*.

When in doubt about what to do with what we own, we should *give*.

For our God serves us, gives to us, and saves us.

Ever wonder if you are the best at such and such?

Feel yourself thinking “me-first”?

Try being a servant of someone in your job, and remember Jesus calls us to greatness through *service*, not pride.

Serve and Give, that’s our way of life.

The famous humanitarian Albert Schweitzer said it well, “*the only ones among you who will really be happy are those who have sought and found how to serve*”

I wonder what this tragedy in Japan will lead us as a church to do in service?

What has it put upon your heart and mind?

Do you know how you can move *beyond* the ‘me-first’ mindset?

Have you found where *YOU* can serve and give?

Sheri Burnes gave us all a starting point if we walk out of here today and into a ministry meeting for just 30 minutes, 30 minutes to change lives.

May God give us all the courage and guidance we need

To empty ourselves for one another,

Because Jesus has emptied himself for us. Amen.

24 A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. 26 But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.