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THE NEW SHOFAR

Humility is a paradox. The moment you think you've finally found it, you've lost it. There are no books entitled, "Humility and How I Achieved It." But God demands an attitude of servant-like humility in His followers.

Kingdom love is what the Spirit builds

What is it about Jesus and breaking laws and traditions, particularly the Sabbath requirements? The Gospels speak of seven occasions when Jesus healed on the Sabbath day. In Luke there is the story of the healing of Simon's mother-in-law; of the man with the withered hand; and of the woman who was bent for eighteen years. John adds the story of the healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda; and of the man born blind. Mark adds one more--the healing of the demon-possessed man in the synagogue at Capernaum.

These are all actions that brought about radical changes in the lives of ordinary Jews and their families. Upon witnessing these miracles or hearing about them, most people would have been in awe of him, attracted to him and drawn into listening to him as someone sent by God. Perhaps even the Messiah. For the scribes and Pharisees however, these acts of love on the Sabbath made him both dangerous and irreligious, a threat to their organised religion that must at all costs be stopped. He broke the Law by doing something on the Sabbath God Himself had condemned – working. That is pretty much why he was crucified. However, what "Religion" condemned as work, God understood to be the fulfilling of the basic commandment to *love the Lord your God…and your neighbour as yourself*. They were so confident they knew the mind of God, they forgot to listen; so full of their own self-importance they no longer looked for the face of God in others.

Humility the Mother of all virtues

I love going back to some of our greatest spiritual writings to explore how they see some of the struggles with which we are faced today. Wisdom does not grow old and the Truth of the teachings of the Kingdom remain true today. **St. Augustine,** for example, wrote in one of his letters, *The way to Christ is first through humility, second through humility, third through humility* (Letters 118:22). He also said, *it was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.* **St. Thomas Aquinas** defines it this way: *Humility means seeing ourselves as God sees us: knowing every good we have comes from Him as pure gift* (*Summa* Q161*).* It is pride, more than anything, that tempts us to see ourselves through the eyes of the world and through the lens of others' opinions. If we want to see ourselves in the light of Truth, we must humbly seek to see ourselves *only* as God sees us. His understanding of our soul is all that really matters.

Pride however is a sneaky sin, harming us without us noticing. It is the sin of the Fall in the Garden of Eden. It creeps around seeking the ruin of souls. It seems like pride would be easy to recognize since it's considered to be the root of sin, yet it's surprisingly stealthy in its manifestations. One way we often see it is when we think to ourselves, "I can do this on my own." Or it could be, "I don't need God for this." Or even, "Look at all the good I've done." It's an easy trap to fall into—we want to be our own god. This was the sin of Adam and Eve, and it continues to be our biggest downfall. God didn't leave us without an antidote, however. There is one virtue that is a powerful weapon against the sin of pride: the virtue of humility.

The Gospel is very clear on this. Greatness is found in servanthood. Exaltation is enjoyed only through humility. The ideal life, the greatest life, the most exalted life is the life of the humblest service of others as is possible. There is no biblical way around this. There is no one greater than the "greatest," and the path to that greatness requires, without exception, that the greatest be a servant of everyone else. In many ways, this truth defies most human conceptions of greatness.

Jesus as the model of humility

Jesus was, without question, the humblest person to ever live. The Eternal Son of God did not become man because it somehow benefited Him in a self-centred way. He did it because He loved us and His Incarnation benefited us. The Son of God did not allow others to mock Him, ridicule Him and ultimately murder Him because it somehow benefitted Him. He did it so that He could enter death and destroy it so that we could rise with Him. He did it for us. This self-giving service our Lord offered every day was a fruit of the incredible humility that He lived. Jesus did everything He did out of His love for others and with humility so as to bring salvation and transformation to our eternal souls.

Wash each other's feet

In our lives, we need to make a fundamental choice. Am I going to live primarily for myself and what I consider to be my own, a part of me? Or am I going to live for others? If we realise that living for others is the path to our own greatness and ultimate joy, that it is a source of great peace and joy then it becomes much easier.

We are invited today, to ponder this invitation to greatness of which Jesus speaks. It is a greatness he lived, a greatness manifested through service. Christian service encompasses the actions and efforts of believers aimed at supporting one another and spreading Christ's teachings, motivated by love for their faith. It includes ministering to others selflessly and engaging in community service as an expression of devotion. This is crucial. True service is when we intentionally shape all we do as an act of sacrificial worship of God. Service is **The** gift that is always acceptable to God. It is the gift that most imitates the sacrificial gift of service of Jesus on the Cross. The true essence of Christian service lies in the persistent and transformative dedication to serving others in

Christ’s name, reflecting love and commitment to God through various acts of service.