

THE MOST IGNORED WORDS OF JESUS

by J. Guy Muse

I think some of the most ignored words of Jesus are to be found in Matthew 23:1-11, especially verses 6-11:

"They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. "But the greatest among you shall be your servant." (NASB)

I'll mail anyone reading this a s/.100 bill (not to be confused with US \$100 it's an old extinct Ecuadorian bill worth about \$0.004) if they can show me anywhere in the New Testament where servants of God are referred to by a title before their name, rather than by description of their giftings or functions.

For example, Paul never refers to himself as the 'Apostle Paul', it is always something like:

- Paul, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ (Rom.1:1)
- Paul, called as an apostle (I Cor.1:1)
- Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus (II Cor.1:1)
- Paul, an apostle (not sent from men...) (Gal.1:1)

You can look up the rest of Paul's epistles for yourselves. In every case he describes his calling, gifting, function within the Body of Christ--AFTER his name, not as a title proclaiming his accomplishments or importance.

In Christ's Kingdom we are all on the same level as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all "bond-servants" of Jesus Christ. The only thing that differentiates us is our gifting, or function within the Body of Christ.

If this is the biblical pattern, why do we continue to practice the use of honoring one another with titles such as Dr. So-And-So, or Rev. So-And-So? Why do we refer to servants as "Pastor John" or as they do here, "Licenciado Pastor Reverendo Pedro Gomez" (they tack on ALL of the titles they can think of to make sure everyone knows how important they are!)

In our own mission work we use only the terms "hermano" (brother), and "hermana" (sister) for everyone. We try to be very careful to not give the impression that some of us are somehow more important, or "more called" than others. In any of our meetings ANYONE is welcome, even those meetings of a sensitive nature. We don't want to do anything that would give an impression that some are more qualified or more important to deal with matters than others. As a result, our poorer, uneducated brethren are often used of God to accomplish extraordinary things as they are encouraged to use their spiritual

gifting, rather than something they have been made to feel inferior about through no fault of their own.

At first glance it may seem I am making a big deal about nothing. But is it a big deal? I think so. Allow me to put forth my case a bit more, I'm just getting warmed up!

Galatians 3:28 speaks of, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one** in Christ Jesus.*(emphasis added)" James 2 speaks about not holding an attitude of personal favoritism towards those more fortunate than the poor by making "*distinctions among yourselves.*" Are not titles a distinction amongst us?

All of us have heard introductions of fellow believers beginning something like...
"Today we have with us one of the most influential and respected pastors in America. His church has grown from 0 to 50,000 in just five years...certainly one of the most humble men on the planet...and one of the most insightful visionaries in the North American church today, it is a great honor for me to present to you Dr. ____ (applause)."

Why can't we simply introduce each other as, "John Jones, a dear brother serving our Lord in Oklahoma...?"

Am I against successful ministry, or education and learning? No, certainly not. I strive for these things in my own life. We highly encourage everyone we work with to get as much training, education, learning as they possibly can throughout their lifetime and within their means to do so. We rejoice in the victories and successes of those we co-labor with.

The problem comes that education, titles, ordination, recognition, and degrees have a way of separating us from one another. We unintentionally create religious castes amongst ourselves. We invite the pastors to come to certain meetings, or the "professionals" to a prayer breakfast. We single out "leaders" for certain events, and so forth. All of this has a subtle way of silently killing off the "priesthood of all believers."

Those without the public recognition of their "importance" begin to feel and *act* like second-class Kingdom citizens. They begin to expect Rabbis with the titles to do the work of the Kingdom. Since they are just "ordinary" Christians, the attitude quickly becomes one of mediocrity and complacency, and business as usual. I am not "called," so therefore it is not my responsibility.

Therein lies the reason that 2000 years after Christ gave us the Great Commission, we are no closer to fulfilling the task! Imagine what would happen if every single Christian really understood themselves as a "CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION..." Knew they were a front-line soldier in the advance of the Kingdom? That the Great Commission is not just for the Drs. the Revs. the Pastors, the professionals, but for ALL OF US!

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