

# Sit or Serve

#0078

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—October 27, 1972

Last Friday night, there were two men who had come from around a thousand miles, no connection with each other. One of them testified that this was the most spiritual meeting he had ever attended in all his life. He was not a member of this church. He's getting a tape of this meeting to present to his pastor, nearly a thousand miles from here. The other man, whose being here was a very unusual providence, 12 hours before the meeting, he had no idea that He was going to be here, but the Lord arranged it. He testified afterward that that same meeting was just for him, and that it was the turning point in his life.

Now I've said that to say this, dear friends: God has brought somebody else here to this meeting tonight. It could be you. Some of you have come from hundreds of miles to be at this meeting. Others have come only a few steps or a few miles. But what you and I get from a meeting like this, depends so much on what we bring.

It's been raining today. Some people have put out tubs and buckets to get some of that rainwater. Does it make any difference which end of the bucket is up? Oh, it makes all the difference in the world. It may rain and rain and rain, but unless the tub is turned *up* to get the water, it doesn't mean a thing. It just splashes off. And there are people who can come and go to a meeting like this, and it doesn't impress them particularly. They get no special blessing. But someone else, hearing the same word, their hearts are filled. Oh, I pray that God shall come near and anoint our ears that they may hear and anoint our hearts that we may appreciate the message of God for this hour.

We've been meditated on the theme of following Jesus in His life of humility and service. The picture was drawn for us of the descent of Christ from the throne to the manger, and then on to that awful death at the cross. At every point, He did not try to grasp that which was His by right, but rather He emptied Himself that we might be redeemed. In doing all this, He was but revealing the character of God, the character of the Father, as well as the character of the Son, for the two are one in thought and attitude.

This attitude was not something developed to meet the need of man in the condition of sin. This attitude has been the *eternal* attitude of God. This attitude of love, of loving service, of willingness to sacrifice Himself that others might be blessed. The plan of salvation has awakened nothing new in the heart of God. Rather it has given Him an opportunity to pour forth and reveal what has *always* been in His heart.

We need to understand this in order that we may appreciate God. God *is* love. He always has been, and He always will be. If it should be necessary again, in

the future, Heaven would empty itself, and God would give Himself in Christ as fully and completely to the death of agony and shame that He did 2,000 years ago. It will never again be necessary. The revelation has been made. Not only will the saints in this world, but the entire universe will have been convinced that God is love. That He is trustworthy. He can be *trusted* to guide and guard His people.

There is nothing in the character of God more foreign to selfish human nature than the subject in which we are looking at tonight. The amazing thing is that selfishness can be so mixed with the religious experience that it is scarcely discerned. There are multitudes who are glad that through religion, they have found the way to get away from liquor or tobacco. Why? Because they know those things hurt them. And I am so glad that there is power in the Gospel of Christ to deliver men from these vices and evil habits. Aren't you? There are many other habits that people desire to be delivered from, and they can be. They have been. They are being. But there is a *deep* hidden root of selfishness in every human heart. It is this that the Gospel of Christ seeks to reach and to cut. God wants us to be like Him. Not only loving but *love*. He wants us not only willing to give up the bad things so we can escape trouble but to give up even the good things so others may be saved. *This* is the spirit of Jesus.

Luke 22:27. Jesus is seated with His disciples around the table at the last supper. His disciples think that He is about to be crowned king of Jerusalem. Jesus knows that in less than 24 hours, He'll be hanging upon the cross. The Savior longs to give them words of courage, instruction and cheer, but as He looks into their faces and listens to their whispered conversations, He discerns that they have something upon their minds. They are so full of it they haven't much space for anything He might share. What was it?

"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" Luke 22:24.

It wasn't that they wanted to be great on the battlefield or on the athletic field, or some scholastic contest. They simply wanted to be great in Christ's circle. They wanted to be next to Him in His kingdom. Keep in mind that they had renounced and turned away from their ordinary lines of work. Peter and John, with their brethren had left their fishing nets; Matthew had forsaken government service. Others had come from other vocations and given their lives to Jesus, to work with Him and walk with Him. But within that circle, each one wanted to be first.

It is one thing to forsake the world and enter the church. It is another thing entirely to give up forever and completely the spirit of wanting to be above our brethren, the ambition to be first, to be noticed, to be recognized above others. This is inherent in human nature since the fall of Adam. And *this*, I repeat, Christ is seeking to eradicate.

And so as Jesus looked into the faces of these men and He saw there that spirit to be first, He said unto them:

"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them;  
and they that exercise authority upon them are called

benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth" Luke 22:25–27.

Which will you do? Which is your choice or desire? To sit or to serve? To be waited on, or to wait on? To be ministered to, or to minister to others? As long as this stays in the realm of literature and poetry and song, we all are for it. It's when it gets down to the practical application that it becomes difficult. This was the occasion when 12 men sat there doing nothing while a job needed to be done, and the equipment to do it was handy. There were 13 pairs of dirty feet with the dust clinging to them as they'd walked over the roads with sandaled feet. The basin and water and towel was there. But not a single one of those men would move to do anything. Why? Because that would put him out of the race to be first. That was a *servant's* job, and none of them was a servant. Each of them was a candidate for prime minister in the kingdom of Christ; church Elder if you please, or Sabbath School Superintendent, or Chairman or the Deacon, or Treasurer—some job that would give recognition or authority over others.

Christ washed their feet. He, the Lord and Master, went to every one of those 12 and did the servant's work. And 11 out of the 12 got the lesson. As the scenes of Gethsemane and the judgment hall and Calvary followed in quick succession, dreams that they had dreamed for three and a half years disappeared. Their ambition was swept away in the flowing tide from the cross. And when 50 days later the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, with that message of the cross and that experience of the cross, they went to the ends of the earth, and in a short generation, they filled the world with the knowledge of Jesus' love. Literally, millions of converts flocked around that cross and gave their lives to the Savior.

Something wonderful is going to happen very soon in what we call the Loud Cry as the Latter Rain falls upon God's people. But Pentecost will never be repeated until what happened in the upper room that night is repeated, and what happened in Gethsemane and on the cross is repeated in our hearts. Something must happen to break the spell of ambition, the desire to be first, the desire to have our way.

It's interesting how it shows up in little children. I remember when I was just a boy, a group of youngsters at the school where I was, at a certain season of the year, collected the seeds of a certain weed. We'd go around and hunt for this vine, and then we'd shell out those seeds. They were bright, shining seeds. They had no commercial value at all. But they had real value to us. Who could get the most? So as several of us would be walking along the road and see that vine, we would start running. Someone would say, "I saw it first, and I have dibs on it." Do you know what dibs on it is? You can guess.

I've thought of it more than once since, friends, what little things people can get excited about if possessing them means status, recognition. Some people need more than weed seeds. They need boats and automobiles. Sometimes two or three automobiles. Tape recorders. Hi-fi sets. And I could go on with the list.

Some people say, "I couldn't care less about that."

What is your pet ambition? What is it that sends the blood tingling? What is it that arouses your spirit to get and to hold? It may be nothing tangible or nothing material. It may be the thrill that comes as you are chosen as president of your class or valedictorian. It may be the thrill that comes as you see your name on the honor roll. It might be in school, or it might be in the ingathering campaign.

You say, "But Brother Frazee, don't you believe that everybody ought to aspire to get on the honor roll"?

Whose honor roll? There was One who *had* all the honors of the universe, and *left* all those honors and came down and took the shame. What for? So that He could get back on the honor roll? Was that it? If in any *sense* that had been moving Him, He would have stayed where He was, for He had it all. Didn't He? This is what we need to understand, my friend—the love that glories in leaving the honors and taking the shame so that others may be saved and blessed and helped.

If a man understands this, you can't buy him. You can't bribe him. You can't scare him. You can't frighten him. For him, there's doing only one thing—walking with Jesus, that narrow road of self-denial and self-sacrifice. What for? To *please* Jesus and to save others.

Many of you are students here. Many of you were told before you came, "Don't go to Wildwood for you won't get any recognition of any kind." They told you the truth. Why did you come? If *knowing* that you would get no recognition and you came, why does it bother you if you see someone with a degree or title getting recognition that you can't have? Bless your dear heart. If recognition is what you are seeking, you came to the wrong place in the first place. There are plenty of places you can go to get the training that will enable you to get recognition. And if this is what you desire, and this is what you think that God desires you to have, by all means, get on the bus that moves in that direction. And I say that sincerely, friends.

God has called thousands of people to do humble, simple work without recognition of any kind on earth. You must know in your heart not only *what* God has called you to do and to be, but *why*. The few individuals that God has called to be able to pass certain legal tests unless they have a very close walk with God and learn the lesson of the upper room and Gethsemane and Calvary, they will lose their souls as sure as can be. God will have a few people who, by His grace, will be able to have something of what the world calls recognition, and yet humble themselves like Jesus did and like Paul did. But for most of us, God knows that the easiest way to save us from those perils is to deliver us as far as possible from that which feeds that pride. But having said that, I quickly add: you cannot get into a situation where that temptation is no longer present.

If you were thrown into prison and went with a group of prisoners on a chain gang, if there's a bit of this selfishness left in your heart, you might find an ambition or awakening to be *under* the guard in charge of that chain gang. That's right. To be somebody, to get recognition.

Someone says, "Didn't Joseph get to be in charge of the prison in Egypt"?

Yes, he did. But he'd already learned this lesson, and it didn't go to his head. That's why some years later, when he was asked to be the prime minister of all Egypt, it didn't go to his head then either. On the throne of Egypt, he did the same thing he did with that position down there in the jail. He used his position to bless others.

Someone says, "But I want recognition to bless others, but I don't know why they don't give it to me."

It might be well to settle that God is the One who arranges things of that kind for those who let Him. It might be well to settle once and for all that the only ambition we have is to please Him. It might be well to understand that in Jesus' program, the greater your position and responsibility, the more you are in debt to minister to others. The man who uses his position, whether it comes to him by some degree or some innate ability, or some chance, the man who looks upon that position as the opportunity to make his own lot easier and add to his own riches or fame or recognition, that person does not understand the kingdom of Heaven. He is still walking by the principles of this world.

Whether you have a degree or whether you don't, whether you're in a position of responsibility or not, let us for Jesus' sake no longer be children. Let us grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. Let us, by our example, get through to the hearts of our students what Jesus sought to teach His students: that worldly recognition, and even recognition in the church, is not the goal of life. The goal of life is loving service. That's it. And if we need *any* type of recognition, God can and will arrange it. If He doesn't arrange it, let's just rejoice that we don't have to accept the responsibility for something that He has not given us. If our responsibility is measured in terms of money, whether we have a million dollars or ten cents, it is all stewardship. And the man who will allow the desire for money on the plea that he wants it to do the work of God. The man that will allow that desire for money to motivate his life doesn't understand what Jesus was teaching the 12. He doesn't understand it at all.

There is something to live for better than money or fame or position or anything of that kind. What is it? Service. That's it. All through His life, Jesus was watching for opportunities to help other people.

"Ah but," somebody says, "If I do that, I won't be ordained." Well friend, who said that you were to be ordained? No, no. Come. I deal with the question squarely: Who said that you were to be ordained? If *you* have settled it that you must be ordained, if that's your ambition, your goal, then, by all means, get on the bus that goes in that direction. But oh, if *Jesus* had called you to humble, sacrificial, selfless service, remember this: If God ever wants you to be ordained, He can arrange it without your pulling any wires or laying any plans in that direction. And oh, I thank God that there are men all around this world that have demonstrated that.

Anything God wants you to do He can arrange and anything you need to do it, He can arrange. But if you turn aside from the humble, self-sacrificing, selfless

service that He has called you to because someone has whispered in your ear that the only way you're going to amount to anything is to do this, do that, or to get this, get that, I tremble not only for your future usefulness but for something even more important. Oh, that we might enter into the fellowship with Jesus to be emptied of self.

There are those who have settled it that none of these things I have mentioned is to trouble them. But within the little circle in which you move, on the narrow stage where you are occupied, is there to any degree a jockeying for position? A moving to get recognition? A desire to be within charge of this or that? Does there ever come the thought, "Well look here. I've done this so long, isn't it about time that I was promoted?" May I ask you, friend, what is promotion? To me, there is no way to promote a man who is where he belongs. What greater position could I be in than the place God made me to fill?

I'm glad the wheels of my watch don't start jumping out to be promoted. I'm glad the parts of my automobile don't decide that it's about time they got some other kind of job to do.

Someone says, "But Brother Frazee, don't you believe in advancement?"

I believe in the advancement that Jesus Christ illustrated and demonstrated in His life. He stepped down from the throne and came down here as a man. And what did He do? Did He start working up until finally he became in charge of a whole string of carpenter shops, sitting at a desk and supervising? Did He? No. He began at an early age in that carpenter shop at Nazareth; He was a helper. And when God called Him down to the River Jordan to be baptized and enter upon His ministry, He was still a helper. He was still a helper.

Young men, with all your talents and strength and ambition, could you do that from age 10 to age 30? Could you be content to walk to work every morning and walk home every night? Could you be content to start as a helper, and carry on as a helper, year in and year out, summer and winter, spring and fall? And be faithful and sing as you work? Conditions weren't always favorable. Some of the people who worked at that carpenter shop tried to get at Jesus. They tried to irritate Him. Satan inspired them to try to make life miserable for Him there in that carpenter shop. That would have been a good opportunity to have gone to the personnel director and say, "I think for my own benefit, I ought to get into a more spiritual atmosphere." Wouldn't it? But more than once, friends, when they were talking to Him that way, He would simply start singing. And we are told by Inspiration that some of them, before they realized it, would join in singing with Him. Such was the power of that selfless life.

There are multitudes who would like to be good if they could have their own way in being good. There are many who would like to serve if living conditions were just the way they desired. But it is the glory of the Son of God in humanity that He chose the hard place and took the hard job in difficult surroundings, and there brought the love of God down to earth and demonstrated it.

It may be that if you have been in a favored situation, your promotion may come as Joseph's did from his father's tent to the life of a slave in Potiphar's house.

For ten years he worked there, and finally became manager in Potiphar's house. But then he got another promotion. He was promoted down in a dungeon. His feet were in the stocks. But because God had chosen Joseph to demonstrate what we are studying tonight, the light didn't go out. The light of love shone even more brightly down in that dark dungeon, and Joseph was ministering to those people.

If Joseph had died while he was there in that prison, his name would have been just as high on the records of Heaven as when later he sat on the throne of Pharaoh. *Men* came to appreciate his character as he directed the food conservation for a multitude. But *God* knew and loved him in the dungeon. Who is greater? "He that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as He that serveth." Which will you be? Which will you find your greatest joy in, serving or being served? Which is it?

"Talent is too much idolized, and station too much coveted. There are too many who will do nothing unless they are recognized as leaders; too many who must receive praise, or they have no interest to labor. What we need to learn is faithfulness in making the utmost use of the powers and opportunities we have, and contentment in the lot to which Heaven assigns us" Education, page 117.

Contentment where? "In the lot to which Heaven assigns us." But someone says, "I don't think Heaven assigned me where I am."

Well then don't be there.

Someone says, "I have to be there to make a living."

Oh, no, you don't. Wouldn't it be pitiful to sell your soul to get some money and not *know* that that is where Heaven had put you? Wouldn't that be pitiful, friend? That, to me, would be a supreme tragedy. What do you say? Oh, if you know that Heaven has put you where you are, then contentment is your privilege; I hope you have it. Paul had contentment in the dungeon. He sang praises to God at midnight. He had contentment in making tents as a part of his self-supporting missionary work. Jesus had contentment in the carpenter shop. He had contentment on the mountaintop and in the great city. He had contentment, dear friend, wherever God's providence put Him. That's your privilege.

Sixty-five years ago on October 30, 1907, the Lord's messenger stood on the Hill Beautiful in Southern California, on the campus where there was being laid the foundations of a Gospel medical training program, and spoke these words:

"Here we have ideal advantages for a school and a sanitarium. Here are advantages for the students and great advantages for the patients. I have been instructed that here we should have a school conducted on the principles of the ancient schools of the prophets. It may not be carried on in every respect as are the schools of

the world, but it is to be especially adapted for those who desire to devote their lives, not to commercial pursuit, but to unselfish service for the Master" *Medical Ministry*, page 75.

That's a sentence that will bear studying. I recommend it to you. May I read it again?

"It may not be carried on in every respect as are the schools of the world, but it is to be especially adapted for those who desire to devote their lives, not to commercial pursuit, but to unselfish service for the Master" *Ibid*.

Someone says, "Brother Frazee, don't you think the Lord has called some people to make money?"

I don't doubt it a bit. And if the Lord had called me to make money, I wouldn't be here. I don't think this is a good place to make money. But here is a school chartered to carry on this same assignment. And Heaven says that it is to be especially adapted to those who desire to devote their lives, not to commercial pursuits, but to unselfish service for the Master.

God can keep a lot of things rolling in this world without your help and mine. I'd hate to have to be in a business that the world could do just as well as I could, or maybe a little better. The fishermen kept on fishing on the Sea of Galilee long after Peter and John left their nets. The government of Rome kept on collecting taxes after Matthew turned over his books to the new tax collector and went with Jesus.

And I say to you on this campus, and I say to you off this campus, from far and near, whatever you're doing, be sure it is by the *assignment* of the nail-pierced hands.

If God has called you in government service like Joseph, very well; be sure you do it as Joseph did it. If He's called you to be the prime minister of Babylon like Daniel, very well. Be sure you do it as Daniel did it. But if He's called you, like He called Peter and Andrew and James and John, to leave your nets and follow Him in lowly service, if He's called you not to government service but away from it, like He did Matthew, then the sweetest call that has ever sounded in human ears has reached your ears. It's the call of the Master, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

And as someone has said, "The more you have to live *for*, the less you need to live *on*." It's that simple. There are some jobs in this world that if I had to do them, I think I'd want a pretty good remuneration. They deserve it. But oh friend, the job that God has called those to, that we're studying about tonight, the job *itself* has the recompense. There is no money, no fame, no notice, no recognition that could compare with the privilege of sharing in fellowship with Jesus in revealing the love of God and the character of God.



Something happened to those disciples by being with Jesus. Something happened when they left their nets and followed Him. Something happened in the upper room. Something happened, even though they were half asleep, in Gethsemane as they watched His agony. Something happened as they saw Him suffer in the judgment hall. Something happened as they beheld Him nailed to the tree and lifted up between the heavens and the earth. Something happened as He walked with them after His resurrection and led them out to Bethany.

They saw Him going back to Heaven for *them*. Something happened as they heard His assignment to give their lives in service and sacrifice, in witness and martyrdom, in telling others about that wonderful story. Not one of them asked about wages after that. Not one of them asked about position or notice or recognition or anything of that kind. Something infinitely higher filled their hearts—the desire to make *Jesus* happy. The desire to give *their* lives for Him as He had given *His* life for them.

I had walked life's way with an easy tread,  
Had followed where comforts and pleasures led;  
Until one day in a quiet place,  
I met the Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for my goal,  
Much thought for this world, but none for my soul;  
I had entered in to win in life's mad race  
When I met the Master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him, and blushed to see  
That His eyes full of sorrow were fixed on me;  
And I faltered and fell at His feet that day,  
While my castles melted and vanished away.

They melted and vanished, and in their place,  
Naught else did I see but the Master's face;  
And I cried aloud, Oh, make me meet  
To follow the steps of Thy wounded feet.

My thought is now for the souls of men,  
I have lost my life to find it again;  
Ere since one day in a quiet place  
I met the Master face to face.

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W. D. Frazee Sermons  
435 Lifestyle Lane, Wildwood, GA 30757  
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755  
[www.WDFsermons.org](http://www.WDFsermons.org)  
[support@WDFsermons.org](mailto:support@WDFsermons.org)