

## E TU TANGATA # 2 – OTHERS MATTER

We started talking about 'tall poppy syndrome' last week - so I want to start today by talking a little bit about Et Tu Tangata and its origins - its a movement that grew out of our 24-7 YW movement, Jay Geldard, the national director was away on sabbatical in the UK, and time after time had these conversations that went something like this; 'wow, you're so lucky! NZ is beautiful place - this must be the best place to do youth work!' Jay found himself thinking about the beauty of the place we live, but also the tremendous juxtaposition of how NZ is one of the worst places in the OECD for suicide, self harm etc.

So when he came back - he asked other kiwis, why is this? And the tall poppy issue raised its head, obvious maybe, but significant (Jono), in fact he found this to be true in most every place he talked to - except one.

There was one place in NZ where tall poppy syndrome wasn't an issue - and it might surprise you. It was the all blacks environment. Jay is well connected, I'll give him that - and eventually managed to sit down with Steve Hansen & he got to ask the question - why is tall poppy not an issue for the all blacks? The reply was pretty clear, cos we'll never win like that!

Early on in his tenure he'd found that ego's and money and all the things that come with being a top sportsman were getting in the way, becoming unmanageable - so he and his team decided to change the culture, first by emphasising the value of each player (not just for their on field skills, but for their character), secondly by building a team culture where everyone plays a part in the success of the team, even if you're not playing that week, and lastly by making sure that as a team they understood that success came from not one or two players being exceptional, but by all of them working as a unit.

Now Steve Hansen isn't a Christian - But all of these values that he articulated very much are!

Which is why we're talking about them this morning...

So we started by talking about our value, this morning we're going to talk about the value of others

Undercover boss story - there's a number of versions of this reality show, the american one is hilarious, i never start out looking for it but the episodes seem to find me! The premise is simple - a CEO of a big company goes 'undercover' in their own business to find out

what's going on with the people that engage and interact with actual customers, they find the general levels of no compliance etc and generally speaking employees who are absolute gold - I'm sure the whole thing is a setup & the people are well chosen & then they're promoted etc

Except this one time - this CEO of a milkshake company is placed in a store as a new hire to be trained, really bad fake wig it starts off well, but then we meet the manager of the place, whose meant to train him - small store, 3 workers max, this guy is just a horrible to work with, makes inappropriate comments to staff, demanding - eventually goes off on a 10 minute tirade with one of the staff, a teenager, in front of the CEO for something really small - and you can almost see the cogs turning in this CEO head as he realises, he has to do something NOW, he can't let this go one any longer

So in a story that seems quite biblical - he wrenches off his wig and fires the manager.

He later explains to camera - this is not who we are as a company, this is not how we treat employees, good managers don't do this, we should respect our employees - etc, etc.

We've all been in situations like this, right? Maybe not as bad, but we've all be in the CEO's position, watching someone we've trusted with authority mess it up, or even more likely been like this teenage girl - on the receiving end of really bad behaviour by people in authority. We can sympathise, right? There's a certain powerlessness that comes from being in that position - how we treat people is important, it speaks volumes about who we are, and what we value.

Our text is from Luke this morning - Jesus has some advice for us on how to treat people.

Luke 22: 24-27

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves \*Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I



am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

*\*Benefactors would typically offer financial support or other forms of assistance to those in need, in exchange for social or political influence or recognition. In some cases, benefactors would provide financial support to entire cities or communities, sponsoring public festivals, building temples or other public works, and providing loans or grants to individuals in need. In the culture of Jesus' time, social status and honour were highly valued, and one's status was often determined by factors such as birth, wealth, and occupation. There was also a hierarchical social structure in place, with the wealthy and powerful at the top and the poor at the bottom. They may have been jockeying for positions of power and influence, or seeking recognition and honour from Jesus.*

#### **Context:**

The context of Luke 22:24-27 is the Last Supper, which is the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion.

During this meal:

- Told them repeatedly that he was about to die
- Jesus predicted that one of his disciples would betray him,
- Communion, where bread and wine represent his body and blood.

In the midst of this intimate setting, the disciples began to argue about who among them was the greatest. They were likely expecting Jesus to declare one of them as the leader or the greatest, as was common in their culture and society. However, Jesus responded by saying that the greatest among them should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.

In many ways, the desire for social status and recognition is still present in our culture today. We continue to value success, wealth, and achievement, and we often measure our worth in terms of these factors. The pursuit of power and influence is also evident in various areas, such as politics, business, and social media.

He then goes on to explain that he himself is among them as one who serves, and that they should not be like the rulers of the Gentiles who lord their authority over others.

In essence, Jesus is teaching his disciples about humility and servant leadership, and he is challenging their cultural expectations about greatness and leadership. He is reminding them that true greatness is found in serving others, and that they should strive to serve and love one another rather than seeking positions of power and authority over each other.

So what does servant leadership look like? Lead by example, develop your team, create a supportive environment

This text has 3 things to tell us about how to treat others:

**Being great is not about being the boss, it's about being the servant:** There's this great picture of a number of Springbok rugby players cleaning out the rubbish from their dugout after a match - totally used this to annoy you, it's not just a SA thing, I know NZ do it to - but I do think this is illustrative of a good culture within a team, right? These guys are superstars - when you think of the odds of being 1 of the 15 chosen to represent your country, it's staggering, let alone the money & the people that idolize you - this speaks volumes about the culture of a team that expects them to do the nitty gritty jobs, despite their apparent status.

Jesus challenges his disciples to reject the idea that greatness comes from having power and authority over others. Instead, he encourages them to adopt a servant-hearted approach to leadership, in which they use their power to serve and empower others.

This point is at the heart of Jesus' teaching in this passage, and it challenges us to rethink our ideas about greatness and success. In the world's view, greatness is often equated with power and authority - the one who is in charge, the boss, the CEO, etc. But Jesus turns this idea on its head, and instead calls us to see greatness in terms of service and humility.

To be a servant is to put the needs of others before our own desires for power and recognition. It means using our resources and influence to help and empower others, rather than seeking to control or dominate them. This kind of servant-hearted leadership is powerful because it creates a culture of



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trust and collaboration, where everyone is valued and respected.

When we adopt a servant-hearted approach to leadership, we also become more attuned to the needs of those around us. We listen more carefully, we show empathy and compassion, and we seek to understand the perspectives and experiences of others. This kind of leadership is transformative, because it allows us to build deeper relationships and to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

#### How do we practically do this?

1. **Practice gratitude:** One way to shift our focus away from ourselves is to cultivate a habit of gratitude. This involves intentionally focusing on the good things in our lives and expressing thankfulness for them. When we are grateful, we are less likely to be self-focused and more likely to be aware of the blessings and needs of others.
2. **Listen actively:** Another way to shift our focus towards others is to practice active listening. This involves truly listening to what others are saying, without interrupting or formulating our response in our minds. When we listen actively, we show that we value and respect the other person, and we may learn something new or gain a fresh perspective.
3. **Practice empathy:** Finally, another way to shift our focus towards others is to practice empathy. This involves putting ourselves in another person's shoes and imagining what it must be like to be in their situation. When we practice empathy, we become more attuned to the needs and feelings of others, and we are more likely to respond with kindness and compassion.

**Humility is a powerful virtue:** The Kingdom of God is topsy turvy place, right? There a whole genre of historical novels that image what would happen if the 2nd WW had been won by the Nazis (man in a high castle etc.) they are almost disconcerting to read - as they flip the world we know on its head. Jesus is in essence doing the same thing here – turning the world on its head, in the KOG its different, so be different!!

Jesus reminds his disciples that the greatest among them should be like the youngest, and the one who rules should be like the one who serves. In other words, he is calling them to embrace the virtue of humility and to reject the desire for status and recognition.

Humility is a powerful virtue because it challenges us to let go of our egos and our desire for recognition, and to instead focus on the needs of others. It involves recognizing our own limitations and weaknesses, and being willing to learn from others and seek their input.

In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples that the greatest among them should be like the youngest, and the one who rules should be like the one who serves. He is calling them to reject the idea that greatness comes from having power and authority over others, and instead to embrace the virtue of humility.

When we are humble, we are more open to feedback and constructive criticism. We are willing to admit when we are wrong, and to make changes when necessary. This kind of humility can be especially powerful in leadership, because it allows us to build trust and credibility with those we lead. When we are willing to admit our mistakes and seek the input of others, we demonstrate that we are not driven by our own egos, but by a genuine desire to serve and empower those around us.

Humility also allows us to recognize the value and worth of others. When we are focused on our own desires for recognition and status, we may overlook the contributions and perspectives of others. But when we approach life with humility, we are more likely to see the unique gifts and talents that each person brings to the table, and to work collaboratively with them to achieve our shared goals.

#### How do we practically do this?

1. **Practice self-reflection:** Regularly reflecting on our thoughts, behaviours, and attitudes can help us become more self-aware and identify areas where we might need to grow in humility.
2. **Seek feedback:** Asking for feedback from others can be a valuable way to gain insight into how we are perceived and identify areas for improvement.
3. **Learn from others:** Being open to learning from others, especially those who are different from us, can help us develop a more



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humble perspective and broaden our understanding of the world.

### **We are called to love and serve others:**

Jesus tells his disciples that they are to be different from the rulers of the Gentiles, who lord their power over others. Instead, he calls them to be servants who love and serve others. This message is a powerful reminder that we are called to prioritize the needs of others, and to use our resources and influence to make a positive impact in the lives of those around us.

Loving and serving others is at the heart of Jesus' message in this passage, and it is a central theme throughout the Gospels. Jesus calls us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to put the needs of others before our own desires and priorities.

This kind of love involves more than just feeling warm and fuzzy emotions towards others. It is a deliberate choice to put the well-being of others first, even when it may be inconvenient or uncomfortable for us. It means seeking to understand and empathize with the experiences and perspectives of others, and to use our resources and influence to help them in tangible ways.

Serving others is also an essential part of our call as Christians. When we serve others, we demonstrate the love of Christ in action, and we show that we are committed to following in his footsteps. Service can take many different forms - from volunteering, to mentoring a young person, to helping a neighbour. Whatever form it takes, service is an expression of our love for others and our desire to make a positive difference in the world.

As we love and serve others, we also cultivate a sense of gratitude and humility. When we recognize the ways in which we have been blessed, we are more likely to want to share those blessings with others. And when we serve others, we are reminded of our own limitations and weaknesses, and we become more aware of the ways in which we depend on the help and support of others.

### **How do we practically do this?**

1. Look for opportunities: Be intentional about seeking out opportunities to serve others. Look for ways to help those around you, whether it's a friend, family member, or someone in your community.
2. Be kind: Small acts of kindness can make a big difference. Look for ways to brighten

someone's day, whether it's through a kind word or gesture.

3. Be generous: Whether it's your time, talents, or resources, giving generously can be a powerful way to show love and support to others.
4. Pray: Finally, pray for others and ask God to guide you in how you can best serve and love them.

### **Conclude - so what is God asking us to do?**

I believe that God is asking us to shift our focus away from ourselves and towards others. We live in a culture in which it's so easy for us to be wrapped up in our own selves and our own worlds -

We are called to embrace humility as a powerful virtue, recognizing that true greatness is found in serving others rather than seeking power and recognition for ourselves.

God is also calling us to love and serve others, just as Jesus did. We are called to treat others with kindness, compassion, and respect, and to be willing to put their needs ahead of our own. This may involve acts of service, such as volunteering or helping those in need, as well as a willingness to listen to and learn from others who are different from us.

Ultimately, I believe that God is calling us to see the value and worth of every person, recognizing that we are all created in God's image and that each person has inherent dignity and worth. If we are going to change the culture of NZ, change how we see the world – where others success threatens our own, where other peoples talents and skill make us feel threatened – then we need to radically change our perspective, and embrace Jesus perspective on people.

## **REFLECTION + DISCUSSION**

1. Have you ever been in a position where you've appointed someone to a position of authority and they've let you down by treating staff poorly? Have you ever worked for someone who treated others poorly? What happened? How did you deal with it? Would you deal with it differently now, with a bit more perspective?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you were in competition with others



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for status or recognition? How did that feel, and how did you respond?

3. In what ways do you think our culture values power and authority? How does this compare to the way Jesus describes leadership in this passage?
4. How do you think we can balance our desire for success and achievement with a focus on serving others and putting their needs first?
5. How can we cultivate a spirit of servant leadership in our workplaces, families, and communities? What are some practical steps we can take to put this into action?

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