

.... *at your right hand* (Mr 9:30-37)

* Let's first pray, Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your constant attending to our physical and spiritual needs. Please give us the ability to observe your fatherhood in all things that we receive and all by which we are nourished. Also give in our hearts the wish to follow your example of nourishing and caring for *the little children* in your Kingdom. As much as you yourself are the Spirit of love, we ask you for this love, so that we can be successful in two our vocations as the servants in the royal priesthood. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

* Friends, would you please pretend with me that you are eight grade students while I pretend to be your teacher. Thanks for your willingness to play in *The Students and The Teacher* for a little while. We start the game by making a point.

* Dear young ladies and gentlemen, the lesson for today provides important knowledge on how to become a king, (Mr 9:35). Now I am drawing a horizontal line on the chalkboard placing on one side of the line the word "king" and on the other side the word "servant". The bipolar picture of this concept symbolizes the distinctive character between the two forms, the absolute autocracy and the absolute state of subjection. As you can see I posted a *king* and a *servant* separately, each one on the end of the endless scale. Amazingly by a magical way the servants have been given the power to turn into kings and queens, so to be royalty it is just a matter of your free choice. Children, those of you who want to be rulers and to be served adequately at this rank please raise your hand. It would not be surprised if all of you lifted up your hands. As your teacher I knew in advance that you wanted to be something important, if not kings or queens, or presidents, than, let's say, the number one in a kitchen. Amazing or not, I also knew that nobody wanted to be a dishwasher at the same kitchen.

* Friends, at this moment we stop our game. Remember, you are not students anymore of the middle school! You are mature Christians whom I was given to illustrate the Sunday lesson. It says, if you want to be something in the Kingdom of God you need to be nothing! (v.35). Doesn't this seem strange to you? It shouldn't. On the one hand, the Christians are the Leviticus of the New Covenant, a royal priesthood; on the other hand, they are servants to each other. It is inconceivable to separate the King from the Servant in the Heavenly realm. Our Lord Jesus Christ and many disciples after him demonstrated this principle in words and deeds.

* With this in mind I tell you a story. There was a two person team at a factory, Supervisor and his co-worker, Polo ---both of them were Christians. As a part of their jobs both were required to stack the heavy boxes on the shelves. Supervisor, however, wanted to be a king, even if just a very minor king. What does a king do? Of course he must rule over his people. And if it is so, Supervisor ruled Polo diligently hoping his efforts would result in a promotion. He played nasty tricks with a hope to be seen as a reliable manager. Supervisor kept a close watch on his poor worker Polo. He didn't even allow him to listen to the radio or

take a one minute break as the other workers did. Friends, believe me, it is hard to be patient working side by side with such a supervisor. Many times Polo was asked, *Why is it that you never smile. You should be happy and proud to be working for this company. You are, aren't you?* When the time for an evaluation came, Polo was suspended and ended up losing his job as a lazy and disgruntled employee. Immediately another man was hired to take his place. The new worker was unaware that the same destiny awaited him as soon as the time for his evaluation arrived. As result of that supervising, Supervisor became well-known as a valuable employee and manager of company resources. Over time he was promoted to vice president, second in charge, a great king at the factory and in the eyes of his fellow Christians at church. Dear Friends, Would you like working under supervision of such a king? I knew in advance, nobody wants to be under the power of an authoritarian king, especially me who is originally Russian.

* As an antithesis to this supervisor the history knows a man who became the very good “king” by virtue of his advanced service to the people of this country. Here I speak on behalf of the 1st President of the US, George Washington. He was a noble man, but he also was a servant to his nation. Americans love him not because he was a nobleman and the first president of the US, but because he served people’s rights very well. Now we have free choice and the democratic government. This country became well-known in the world by its civic and religious rights. Friends, do you mind if a person with qualifications as George Washington would be your president? I knew in advance, everybody likes a king who serves eagerly the needs of his countrymen as George Washington did.

* We believe and confess that some day people will rise from their graves. It is our hope that faithful Christians will be risen from their mortal beds to live in the Kingdom. By the way, have you ever seen a dream about the Heavenly Kingdom? For me it is hard to comprehend the Heavenly court because Scriptures provide little knowledge on this account. However, we are blessed with some prophetic visions from Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel as well as from John’s Revelation. When I reread those varieties, I noticed that they speak rather on the heavenly hierarchy rather than on the backdrop of the heavenly panorama. From those prophets we received the eye-catching image of the King of all worlds sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. Some prominent figures, like the winged Seraphim, come first and the four holy living creatures (Cherubim), after them. Next after them, the twenty-four elders with golden crowns on their heads; behind them a great multitude from every nation appears; then, the archangels and angels. The company of Heaven stands before the King and worship Him.

* Again we believe and confess that this King is also our Lord Jesus Christ; the Bible gives him a title the “Great King”, the one to whom Almighty God said: “Sit at my right hand ... until I make your enemies your footstool, (Mat 22:44). Significantly the King of the Universe revealed his greatness as the King also through His submission to the Law, suffering at the hands of a wicked generation, mocked, and crucified; all such horrible things he endured without complaint. Because of these he is titled as Almighty King,

the One who exercised his dominion above sinful flesh, the devil and the death. One more significance, He did it not by power of his kingship but the power of his serviceability. These qualities make him the Greatest King and the Greatest Servant in the universe. The endless gap between the King's absolute autocracy and his absolute state of subjection was nullified by the omnipotent nature of inconceivable God in Christ Jesus. He is the King and the Servant inseparably and simultaneously. As this kind of Person we should be conformed!

* Dear Christians, let's look at our vocation not only as members of the royal family of the King Jesus Christ but also as the servants in his Kingdom pursuing humility, compassion and love towards the King's little children. As for Christians who are looking to be in authority, it is good to keep in mind two types of kings --- George Washington and the wicked Supervisor. The history of the nations knows many kings but the best of them are those who showed their generosity, care and wisdom. With regard to Brothers and Sisters who hold position as managers and administrators, I want to recall the last words of Alben Barkley, former vice-president of the US, one minute before he died. He said, "I would rather be a servant in the house of the Lord than sit in the seat of the mighty." This is the wise advice of the person who knew in advance the Gospel lesson for today.

* Thinking back to this lesson, I came across with the idea of exceptional reward following after resurrection. The Scripture teaches that Christians who habitually serve the needs of each other will receive a higher rank in the future Kingdom, (Lk 19:12-27). The apostles learned from the Lord about exceptional rewards for faithful servants, that is why they argued among themselves for the higher position in the Kingdom. (Mr 9:34; 10:35). In Paul's writings we also found this in mind, (1Co 9:17-27). The apostle recommends us to be zealous in our vocation. The nature of his admonishing is to make us zealous to achieve of the exceptional reward.

* Friends do you mind about your rank in eternity, or Are you indifferent? Ask yourselves, why does the majority of the American middle class wish for elite status? The people from other countries wish for all the same. I served for seventeen years in Air Force; I learned how people long for the higher position, including myself; most of my colleagues dreamed to be colonels and even generals; I dreamed on having the Master's degree as a Chief pilot. In summary, the people from all cultures are the same; they force their physical, intellectual abilities and finances in order to possess the higher position or the higher rank. Take a hint, if people offer these and endure for a better life in a temporal world, then how much more energy and resources should people offer in order to get a better position in the eternal Kingdom? But contrary to this fact, they don't care.

* Before I close let's see the summary of this instruction. First, we've learned that in order to be rewarded with a higher rank in the eschatological Kingdom, the disciples needed to learn how to be faithful servants and to be zealous in their vocations. *If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all, (v.35).*

Second, though it is against logic it is a fact that people spend an incredible amount of energy in order to get the higher position in the social hierarchy. At the same time, they are not serious regarding their future placement in the life to come. Those who are wise among us and have ears to hear, let them understand and hear. Beloved, the mercy and love of Jesus Christ be with you all.

Amen.