

This service is also a time of temptation. Our six days of labour: a state in which we are struggling to improve ourselves. A state in which we often wonder what is happening to us.

Recall an occasion when you have not known what to do. **Reflect** on the alternatives. Who would you be serving in each case?

Loving the Lord as a friend

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

John 15:15

This is our goal, our aim, our purpose. We still serve our Lord. Now we do so spontaneously. Loving the Lord and the neighbour has become so much a part of our lives that we can do so effortlessly and it gives us delight. Effortlessly because we know that all our strength is from Him who sustains every moment of our living.

This is the state in which we are able at last to love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

Reflecting on the above verse, what does it mean to you to love the Lord as a friend?

In this state we can rejoice with the psalmist as we read and meditate on Psalm 100.

Serve the Lord with gladness



Loving the Lord - as a follower, servant and friend



You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13:13-15

If you love me, you will obey what I command... Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. John 14:15, 21

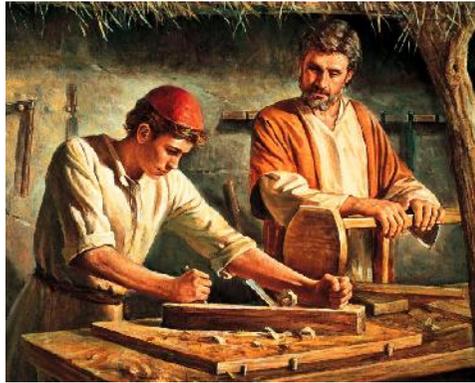
There have been religious and secular organisations of people with a common cause from antiquity in many civilisations. We are perhaps most familiar with these in the form of the mediaeval Guild. The training would involve all aspects of living, from the physical requirements of how to perform tasks, through the code of conduct or honour to the spiritual. Similar 'all life' practices can be seen in the Eastern schools of martial arts training which stem from, and which have their foundations in, an ancient spiritual ancestry. This form of association existed in Egypt and was familiar to the Israelites and Jews. Jesus would have recognised them from his own experience as a carpenter.

There is a parallel to be seen between the way these were organised and our own spiritual growth.

In the case of a craft, such as carpentry, the would-be craftsman would be apprenticed to a Master craftsman under whom he would study. After a period of apprenticeship he would become a bondsman who practised his craft under the overseer-ship of the Master. Finally he would be recognised as Master Craftsman in his own right.

Being a follower can be likened to the apprenticeship; a servant to

servant as a bondsman; a friend of our Lord to becoming a master craftsman. There are of course limitations to this parallelism for we are each finite recipients whereas our Lord and Master is the infinite supplier.



Our Lord calls us to follow Him and to become His disciples. A disciple is one who is undergoing teaching, training and discipline. Not an imposed discipline: for all these things are voluntary or self imposed. Looking in the Gospels we can see that being a disciple and a follower is a constant throughout all of them.

To begin with we are learning our discipline. We are at first apprenticed to our Lord, following Him in all that He does and says. Then as we become skilled in what we have been taught, we are able to serve. Finally we become sufficiently skilled to be set free to live the way we have learned. As we progress through these states our relationship with our Lord changes. The changes may be slow and subtle so that we are unaware of them happening. Or there may be times when we suddenly realise that things are different with us from how they used to be.

Pause now and reflect on how your relationship with the Lord changes. What states do you recognise?

Loving the Lord as a follower

When we are first called we are far from perfect. This is reflected in the Gospels where the first people to call Jesus 'Teacher' were scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 8:19 & 9:11) and the first people to call Jesus 'Lord' were a leper and a centurion (Matthew 8:2 & 6). We can only hope to improve.

When we are first called to follow Him we leave certain material attitudes behind - see Matthew 4:18-22

What, for you, are the nets, ship and father that are left behind?

Now read Matthew 8:21 & 22. What in your life is dead and can be left behind?

And when He calls Matthew - look at Matthew 9:9

In what ways are you called to leave a secular service to follow a higher one, to serve the Lord himself?

There is a lot of work involved between the call of the first disciples and the call of Matthew. The teaching and preaching of 'The Sermon on the Mount' is given and is followed by much healing. We learn, we are encouraged, we follow and our life is transformed. And we love the Lord for all that He gives us.

Pause and consider. Note the ways in which you have sought to follow the Lord.

Loving the Lord as a servant

Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander of peoples. Isaiah 55:4

If you love Me, keep My commandments. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. John 14:15, 21

The first person to call Jesus 'Master' was Simon Peter (Luke 5:5). The word that Luke uses literally means 'one set over' or 'one who stands over' and so 'an appointed leader or commander'. Luke is the one evangelist to use this word.

The word most commonly used for servant means literally 'bondsman'. It is important that we are careful to ensure that we are bonded to the right master.

Having become somewhat skilled in the spiritual life we are now able to serve. This means we can use at least part of our time in a state in which we think and do what we have learned to be right and good. We do what we can and we Love the Lord for enabling us to do so much. We recognise that He has given us all the knowledge and capabilities and power that we need in order to do whatever we are able to do and we love Him for all of that.