

Matthew 20:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Analysis

Jesus intensifies the servant leadership principle: 'whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.' The Greek 'doulos' (servant/slave) is stronger than 'diakonos' (minister) in verse 26—indicating one who belongs entirely to another. The greatest kingdom leaders are the most self-effacing servants. This radically inverts worldly hierarchies. Reformed ecclesiology sees here the pattern for pastoral ministry—shepherds serve the flock, not the reverse. Authority in Christ's church comes through sacrifice, not assertion.

Historical Context

Slavery was ubiquitous in the first-century Roman world. Using 'doulos' shockingly equated leadership with the lowest social status. Jesus deliberately chose offensive imagery to emphasize complete reversal of worldly values. His own example (verse 28) modeled this servant-slave leadership. Early church leadership reflected this ethos, though later corrupted by worldly hierarchies.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does 'slave leadership' look like in contemporary church ministry?
2. How can you cultivate servant attitudes while holding leadership positions?
3. What ambitions for recognition need crucifixion?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὃς	ἐὰν	θέλῃ	ἐν	ὑμῖν	εἶναι	πρῶτος	ἔστω
And	G3739	whosoever	will	among	you	be	chief	let him be
G2532		G1437	G2309	G1722	G5213	G1511	G4413	G2077
ὑμῶν	δοῦλος·							
your	servant							
G5216	G1401							

Additional Cross-References

Luke 22:26 (Parallel theme): 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.

Matthew 18:4 (Parallel theme): Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

2 Corinthians 4:5 (Parallel theme): For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.