

TALK PART 1

I wonder if there are ever arguments in your house? What do you fight over..... maybe access to the TV, maybe who got the biggest slice of pudding, or maybe who's best at something. 'We all know that I'm the best at... whatever/everything.' (SLIDE)

Let's find out who's competitive here... (SLIDE) (ASK)

Levels of competition: who gets competitive over food? Board games? Challenges? Sport?

Remember arguing about this at work – 'sport's just about enjoying yourself, enjoying fitness and taking part'. Colleague said: 'I enjoy winning.'

People are fascinated with comparing themselves and others, about who's the best – so we end up with debates about the greatest Englishman ever, or the greatest footballer, or the greatest author, or composer, or painter. The Times newspaper even runs an annual Preacher of the Year competition (funnily enough, I've never been shortlisted).

Even on such a special day as this there is rivalry if you look at all the products in the shops, no. 1 mum, best mum merchandise (SLIDE): (no. 1 mum prop/best mum – well Alise clearly number 1 mum what positions are the rest of you?)

All this reflects an ancient attitude. Human beings have always been competitive, lots of us want to be the best. Partly because if we make

it to the top, we get the privileges. Like footballers with their flash cars, or directors with their big houses. Jesus' friends the disciples were just like the rest of us. Our bible story today tells us about 2 of them – James and John – or rather their mum, asking Jesus for a favour. 'Can my boys get the best seats in heaven?'

Well, they're obviously the best disciples, two of the original 4, in fact two of the inner circle of 3, and Peter doesn't count because he was brought by Andrew, so really my 2 boys deserve the best seats!

If you were Jesus, what would you do? How do you answer that?
Someone has to get the best seats....

As so often, Jesus turns it on its head. He says to J & J's mum: 'Listen, you're looking at this the wrong way round. There is such a thing as greatness, but it's not what you think it is. If you want to be great, you need to be great at serving others' – or as he says (**SLIDE**): READ v27-8

All of us are loved equally by God – so when you think about it, there is no greatest really. But if you want to be great at something, to be remembered for something, here it is – if Jesus came to serve, then his friends need to do the same too.

So for all you competitive people out there, here's something to be competitive about: who's the best servant?

TALK PART 2

Let's look a bit more at this theme of being a servant.

SLIDE – What think of when hear word 'servant'? (ASK)

Who used to watch this? – **SLIDE** (DOWNTON) Full of servants, some of them nice, and some of them like this... **SLIDE** (MR BARROW) – a servant who serves himself.

Role of parent (esp mothers) involves a lot of service. We give up a lot to serve our children – food, shelter, social life. Put our kids first. Real service. Think of one way your mum served you (NEIGHBOUR – **SLIDE**).

Same idea in church – serve one another. Easy to say, but often like Mr Barrow – **SLIDE** – serving ourselves, our needs, our interests. Problem with words we use – what do we call this? 'Service' but actually it's wrong idea. Here to worship God, to encourage each other, to be strengthened in faith, to pray. Only a few of us are serving in sense that bible means it – yet we call this service. Why lots of churches call this a 'meeting' instead, so we don't get wrong idea.

But back to original theme – how do we avoid just looking after ourselves and our interests?

Well, it's about who we follow. In the book of Philippians, St Paul says that our attitude should be the same as that of Jesus, who took the nature of a servant. And that's what Jesus says here too: copy my example. 'I served, so you should too. Look at how I live, what I taught and follow me.'

So we need to spend time with Jesus learning what he did, how he served, and be inspired by his example.

Still hard – think of some areas where it's hard (**SLIDE**) in church:

NEIGHBOUR – FEEDBACK

What about family – where is it hard there? NEIGHBOUR - FEEDBACK

Need God's help – Jesus comes to help us by His Spirit.

Also need to remember that it's worth it. A community where people serve each other is a wonderful place to be. STORY OF LONG SPOONS – **SLIDES**.

So let's ask for God's help – PRAY: READ v1-2 first.