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# Jesus as the Man for Others

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**Abstract:** In this article, the Bishop (Emeritus) of Poona, traces Jesus as the man for others. Jesus exhorts us: “Whatever you do to the least of my brethren you do unto me “ (Mt 25:40). Here my love for Jesus should be the measure of my love for others. Thus Jesus demands what seems impossible. “Love one another as I have loved you “ (Jn 13:34). The yardstick now is the love Jesus has for us. Our love is too small in order for us to love as Jesus loved us. Jesus does not ask the impossible from us. We can fulfil this commandment only to the extent that we open ourselves to the love Jesus is waiting to pour into our hearts. Christianity means befriending the other, just as Jesus was a man for others.

**Keywords:** Other, Jesus, Christianity, Love, Unknown.

Jesus is called “A Man for Others”. It is evident from his life. He is the Son of the Father and truly became man for the salvation of humankind. He loved, lived and he died for others. Before his death he gave us the commandment of love. The Bible gives us the commandment of love in three stages: love of self, love of others and love of God.

## 1. Love for the Other and Befriending the Other

So the Bible says clearly: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Lev 19:18, Mt 19:19). The golden rule is, “Do to others as you would have them do to you (Lk 6:31). The love you have for yourself should be the criterion of the love you expect from others. As a man for others, Jesus raised the bar higher. “Whatever you do to the least of my brethren you do

unto me” (Mt 25:40). Here my love for Jesus should be the measure of my love for others. Finally Jesus demanded what seems impossible. “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34). The yardstick now is the love Jesus has for us. Our love is too small in order for us to love as Jesus loved us. Jesus does not ask the impossible from us. We can fulfil this commandment only to the extent that we open ourselves to the love Jesus is waiting to pour into our hearts. Thus Jesus is a man for others and Christianity means befriending the other.

An illustration may help here. Dr. E. Stanley Jones, an American missionary in India, who knew Mahatma Gandhi well once asked him, “How can we make Christianity naturalized in India, not a foreign thing, identified with a foreign government and a foreign people, but a part of the natural life in India and contributing its power to India’s uplift?” Gandhiji’s response showed he was way ahead of his times. “First, I would suggest that all Christians, missionaries begin to live more like Jesus Christ. Second, practise it without adulterating it or toning it down. Third, emphasize love and make it your working force, for love is central in Christianity. Fourth, study the non-Christian religions more sympathetically to find the good that is within them, in order to have a more sympathetic approach to people.” Thus Gandhi expected from Christians nothing but love of the other and befriending the other.

## **2. Dialoguing with Others**

Befriending the other is based on Jesus’ command to love. The opposite of love is not hate, but selfishness. Love is outward oriented. “What can I do for you? How can I make you happy? How can I serve you?” The opposite is selfishness. “What can you do for me? How can you make me happy? How can you serve me?” Jesus thought not of himself but only of others. It is salutary for those exercising authority to examine themselves whether they are befriending the other

or being selfish. “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many “ (Mk 10:45).

Such a befriending implies reaching out and encountering the others. Jesus also commissioned his disciples to go out and make disciples of all nations.(Mt.28:19). “The Church was sent by Christ to reveal and communicate the love of God to all peoples and nations” (Vat II, ad gentes,10). It is not the Church as a whole but every disciple who has the duty to evangelize, to bring the Good News of The Father’s love and forgiveness, and our redemption through Jesus, to others. It is a great joy to have Jesus but a still greater joy to give Jesus to others. The typical illustration is Mother Mary, who did not keep Jesus to herself but gave him to the whole world.

Such spreading of the Gospel to others presupposes genuine dialogue. The Good News has to be spread by good methods and not by arrogance, force or denigrating other religions . In his very first encyclical Bl Pope Paul VI spoke on how the Church must carry out its mission in the contemporary world and spoke of dialogue. (*Ecclesiam Suam*, 65). Dialogue does not mean one-way traffic, the donor model. “I have something you don’t have. Listen to me”. But it means being open to what the other has to say and being ready to be enriched by the other. “By dialogue we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God” (St. John Paul II in Chennai, 5th February 1986). For true dialogue, love of the other, including befriending the other, is indispensable.

From all this we may hold that to be a true disciple of Jesus and to carry on his mission every individual in the Church must imitate him and live for others. This calls for an openness to the unknown.

### **3. Openness to the Unknown**

Unfortunately today, instead of imitating Jesus, we tend to seek comfort and security. Security for the most people lies in the maintenance mode. The unknown can cause apprehension but can also be a challenge. The unknown is present all through the Bible. Abraham, Joseph and Moses are typical cases. Abraham dared to go to the unknown land and believed in the unknown promise of God. Joseph believed in God, even when he was sold and imprisoned. Mose could only gaze at the promised land, which remained elusive to him. Further, Mary's question to the angel and conversion of Paul are illustrations of such openness to the unknown.

Further, we may say that for the religious believers, faith is the solution to the unknown. It is a leap in the dark. We may not know the future, but we know who holds the future. God is with us and he is in full control of our lives. Precisely therein lies our openness to the unknown and to the other. In the same way Jesus as the man for others was open to the unknown.

Thus the challenge before us is to be men for others, following Jesus, even in the unknown contexts and cultures. There we need to encounter others warmly, dialogue with them genuinely and discern together properly.

### **4. Conclusion**

Jesus was truly a man for others. He challenges us his followers to encounter others and befriend them. This may call for prophetic commitment that may cost us very much.

Thus when we, following Jesus, become men and women for others, we need to be courageous enough to proclaim the message of life and to be ready to suffer, if needed!