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LEADERSHIP THAT SERVES: INSIGHTS FROM JOHN 11:1-27

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When you think of leadership, where does the idea of servanthood fall within your frame of reference? Within contemporary culture, the leaders that are often celebrated are not typically celebrated for being servants. However, as one considers the character of Jesus and his contribution as a leader, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate the ideas of servant and leadership. In this article, an inner textual analysis from the socio-rhetorical criticism tradition is applied to the pericope of John 11:1-27, with the aim of drawing insight from the model of servant leadership as demonstrated by Jesus Christ. This research highlighted how servant leadership, as a contemporary theory, has rightfully started to take off with more and more research being done to support and speak to the positive benefits of a leadership style that serves. However, this author also found that it is imperative that contemporary servant leaders look beyond contemporary theory, as they endeavor to lead followers in their respective marketplaces. Only in employing a style of leadership that serves, which is grounded first in love, can leaders truly realize the greater organizational results they desire.

I. INTRODUCTION

When you think of leadership, where does the idea of servanthood fall within your frame of reference? Within contemporary culture, the leaders that are often celebrated are not typically celebrated for being servants. Figures like Steve Jobs, Carli Fiorina, President Obama, and Bill Gates are not necessarily known for how they have served others. On the contrary, they are applauded for being visionaries, pioneers, change-makers, or authority figures. Northouse spoke to this cultural disconnect when he noted “Servant leadership is a paradox – an approach to leadership that runs counter to common sense.”¹ He continued on to add that when compared to the every day images of who leaders are and what a leader looks like, the idea of a servant does not seemingly coincide.² However, as one considers the character of Jesus and his

¹ Northouse, Peter G. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. Vol. 6. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2013, 219.

² Ibid.

contribution as a leader, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate the ideas of servant and leadership. As Engstrom noted, Jesus' kind of service set an example – making it clear that true leadership has its foundation in love, which then presents itself through service.³ Ayers highlighted this apparent disconnect when he noted that much of the research on leadership has failed to embrace theology in the leadership context.⁴ He supported this adding that “theological considerations of leadership are not penetrating the literature of leadership, nor keeping pace in terms of advancement.”⁵ In offering a possible solution to the perceived problem, Ayers suggested that Christian leaders must develop a theology of leadership through which they seek to explain God, while wrestling with the person of the leader and leader-follower dynamics.⁶ Huizing (2011) supported this when he highlighted the fact that most often, the focus of leadership theory centers on the question “what do we do to attain certain outcomes?”; while a theology of leadership challenges leaders to wrestle with a whole new question “why do we do what we do to conform to Jesus?”⁷ In so doing, leaders ultimately come face-to-face with Jesus, the servant leader, as they turn to the pages of Scripture for insight. For the sake of this article, this author intended to apply an inner textural analysis from the socio-rhetorical criticism tradition to the pericope of John 11:1-27, with the aim of drawing insight from the model of servant leadership as demonstrated by Jesus Christ. The research into this subject is fairly extensive, yet the question of how the Bible supports and critiques contemporary servant leadership theory still remains.

II. INNER TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF JOHN 11:1-27

In his seminal work that has served as a guide to socio-rhetorical criticism for so many scholars, Robbins noted that its purpose is to challenge interpreters “to explore a text in a systematic, broad manner that leads to a rich environment of interpretation and dialogue.”⁸ He explained that socio-rhetorical criticism serves as a hermeneutical tradition that helps readers to uncover the values, convictions, and beliefs that are imbedded within the text, and that emanate from the world within which the original audience lived.⁹ Poon noted that socio-rhetorical criticism is a multi-dimensional approach to analyzing the text that allows readers to draw out interpretation through the multiple layers or textures of a text.¹⁰ As readers embark on a interpretive journey through textures of Scriptures, it is absolutely critical that they carefully cross the bridge between the world of the original author and audience as they seek to apply the

³ Engstrom, Ted W. *The Making of a Christian Leader: How to Develop Management and Human Relations Skills*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976, 37.

⁴ Ayers, Michael. "Toward a Theology of Leadership." *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* I, no. 1 (2006): 3.

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷ Huizing, Russell L. "Bringing Christ to the Table of Leadership: Moving Towards a Theology of Leadership." *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* V, no. 2 (2011): 60.

⁸ Robbins, Vernon K. *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996, 132.

⁹ Ibid., 132.

¹⁰ Poon, Randy. "John 21: A Johannine Model of Leadership." *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* (Regent University) I, no. 1 (2006)

principles derived from within to contemporary contexts. To fail to do so, readers run the risk of abusing the Scriptures – misinterpreting, mishandling, misunderstanding, and misapplying them in ways that potentially have serious consequences. Brauch cautioned that these consequences are often manifested in two ways: (1) the undermining and blunting of the veracity of the Gospel that impairs the effectiveness of the Christian witness; and (2) the contribution to the abuse and brokenness of this world as seen in violence, bitterness between people groups, bigotry, prejudice, judgmentalism, and the exclusion of others.¹¹ Robbins work then helped readers to avoid this by dealing with both the sociological realities within a text – i.e. historical, theological, ideological and intertextual factors, while also acknowledging the intrinsic nature of a biblical text that Tuppurainen labeled “purpose-driven rhetorical communication.”¹² To do this, Robbins (1996) offered five specific textures – inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.

Specific to inner textural analysis, Robbins explained that the goal of this texture is to help readers gain “an intimate knowledge of words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes in the text, which are the context for meanings and meaning-effects that an interpreter analyses with the other readings of the text.”¹³ The inner textural pieces ultimately help readers to discern the relevance and import within each of the textual pieces as they attempt to draw out meaning that can be applied to a contemporary context. Robbins also stated that this form of textual analysis leads the interpreter to identify and explore six kinds of inner texture in a text: (1) repetitive texture and pattern – the patterns of repetition that reside in the occurrence of words and phrases on multiple occasions throughout a unit, and that help to provide readers with initial glimpses into the overall rhetorical movements in the text; (2) progressive texture and pattern – the patterns of repetition that reside in sequences or progressions of words and phrases throughout a unit, and that serve as stepping stones that open up doors to other phenomena within the text; (3) narrational texture and pattern – the patterns of repetition that reside in the voices throughout a unit, and that help readers to have a closer look at the units or scenes within a text; (4) opening-middle-closing texture and pattern – the patterns of repetition that reside in the beginning, body and conclusion of a text, and that help readers uncover the structure that frames a text; (5) argumentative texture and pattern – the patterns of repetition that reside in the assertions and support as presented through various forms of rhetoric (i.e. logical progression, epideictic rhetoric, and judicial rhetoric) throughout a unit, and that help readers uncover the reasons for events to happen as they do; and (6) sensory-aesthetic texture – the patterns of repetition that reside in the range of senses that a unit evokes or embodies, and that help readers to see particular tones or colors to the other aspects of inner texture.¹⁴

¹¹ Brauch, Manfred T. *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009, 252.

¹² Tuppurainen, Riku P. "The Contribution of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism to Spirit-Sensitive Hermeneutics: A Contextual Example - Luke 11:13." *Journal of Biblical & Pneumatological Research IV* (2012): 39-40.

¹³ Robbins, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8-31.

Narratological Units

In commencing this socio-rhetorical interpretation of John 11:1-27, it appears that there are two two narratological units within the text, each beginning with a narrative account. The first unit begins with the voice of the narrator in v. 1 setting the scene for Jesus' discovery of Lazarus' illness and death, and ends with the voice of Jesus' disciple Thomas (attributed speech) in v. 16 urging the disciples to forsake their refuge "across the Jordan" (John 10:40, English Standard Version) and to head back to Judea where the Jews had just attempted to stone Jesus for blasphemy (John 10:33). In the second unit, the voice of the narrator again opens the unit in v. 17 by setting the scene for Jesus' arrival in Bethany, and ends in the voice of Martha (attributed speech) in v. 27 as she declares her belief that Jesus is "the Christ, the son of God, who is coming into the world." The two textual units within the pericope of John 11:1-27 are verses 1-16 and 17-27.

Repetitive-Progressive Texture and Pattern in John 11:1-27

The first element of conducting an inner textual analysis begins with analyzing the repetitive-progressive texture and pattern of the text. With regard to the pericope of John 11:1-27, this section will focus on identifying the patterns that emerge through the repetition and progression of key words and topics.

Repetitive texture and pattern in John 11:1-27. In analyzing the repetitive texture and pattern, the following is a list of the main characters in the text: Jesus, Lazarus, Mary and Martha, the disciples, and (too a lesser extent) the Jews. Here also is a list of the important questions, statements, themes or commands that are repeated throughout the pericope: "He will rise again/I am the resurrection," "fallen asleep/taken rest/death/life," "Let us go/also go", "walks in the day/walks in the night, he will not/will stumble."

Progressive texture and pattern in John 11:1-27. Progressive textures emerge in a variety of ways through the text. These include progressive usage of the names of Jesus, progressive patterns of characters (mainly Lazarus, Mary & Martha, disciples, and Jews), and progressive patterns of phrases.

In the text, Jesus is referred to twenty-five times, while his name is used ten times. Each time it is used, it is used in the narrator's voice by the text's author. Jesus is then referred to four times as "Lord," once by the narrator, once by the disciples, once by the sisters together, and once by Martha alone. Jesus is also referred to twice as "Son of God", once by himself and once by Martha. Similarly, Jesus is referred to as "Christ" once by Mary." Finally, Jesus is referred to as "Rabbi" once by his disciples. It is worth noting that throughout the book of John, the disciples often refer to Jesus as either 'Rabbi', which can be translated as 'Teacher' or 'Master', or 'Lord', which can also be translated as 'Sir'.¹⁵ These frequent reference to Jesus reflects the central role that he plays in this pericope. Other central characters Mary, Martha, Lazarus (more so in the first unit), and the disciples (only in the first unit).

¹⁵ Poon, 53.

Mary and Martha are two other key figures in the pericope, both appearing five and nine times throughout the text respectively. Though they often appear together throughout the text, Martha plays much more of a central role as she directly engages with Jesus in the second unit while her sister Mary stayed home to be comforted by the Jews. In fact, Mary's voice does not even appear in this pericope as she is merely referenced by the narrator throughout the pericope. Mary only appears in the second unit two times, one of which notes that she remained in the house while Martha went to meet Jesus upon hearing that he is coming. However, we do know that Jesus cared deeply for both of these women as the text makes clear (v. 5). In fact, this deep love for them can be seen in the progressive texture of Jesus' conversation with Martha in v. 23-25. What begins as a simple statement made by Jesus, "Your brother will rise again" (v. 23), progresses to Martha's assumption that Lazarus will rise again "on the last day" (v. 24). Finally, because he wanted to make sure that Martha was clear on what he was telling her, and possibly because he wanted to comfort her, Jesus' initial statement fully unfolds to reveal that he is "the resurrection and the life" (v. 25). It is worth noting here that this belief that "the dead would be raised bodily at the end"¹⁶ was pretty prevalent throughout Palestinian Judaism in that period. In fact, the Pharisees believed and taught that anyone who denied this doctrine (namely the Sadducees) would be damned for their doubt.¹⁷

Compared to his sisters, Lazarus plays a central role in the pericope as the plot seemingly hinges upon his fate. Lazarus is referred to thirteen times throughout the text (more so in the first unit). Though he doesn't have a voice in the text, the narrator references him as the sole reason for Jesus' return to Judea after a hasty exit. Keener suggested that this narrative, and Lazarus' role by extension, is even more important than many might consider given that it represents Jesus' final miracle other than his own resurrection.¹⁸ He pointed out that the first sign that Jesus produces in the Gospel of John occurred at a wedding (John 2:1-12, ESV), and this, his climactic sign, happened at a funeral – "the most joyful and most sorrowful occasions"¹⁹ in Jewish tradition.

In the first unit, the disciples are referred to eight times, six times as a group in the narrator's voice, one time in conversation as Jesus teaches them the significance of the moment, and once in a specific reference to Thomas that served as their final appearance in the text. There appears to be a progression here in the narrator referencing the disciples generally throughout the first unit, building up to the specific reference that closes out their role in the pericope. Throughout the first unit, their role mainly serves the purpose of allowing Jesus to build the anticipation and set the stage for the coming miracle. In fact, it is in his final conversation with them in the pericope that he states plainly that "Lazarus has died" (v. 14) and that they must go to him so that he can "awaken him" (v. 11). This is the climactic point of Jesus teaching them. As is the case throughout the Synoptic and John's Gospel, Jesus attempts to leverage the opportunity as a teaching moment for the disciples. Similar to other learning

¹⁶ Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. 2nd Edition, 281-282

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 281.

opportunities that they had encountered with Jesus, the disciples (as seen through Thomas' reaction) seemingly misunderstand the moment, assuming that Jesus is merely meaning to say that this circumstance is worth the risk of returning to the place where the Jews had just attempted to stone them in John 10 (ESV). To his credit, Thomas (often portrayed as the great doubter) encourages the disciples to forsake their security and safety away from the Jews to follow Jesus into assumed danger, though it is not clear that he or the disciples understand the significance of Jesus needing to die.²⁰

Finally, the Jews are referred to once in the first unit and once in the second. There appears to be a progression here concerning their role in the story. In the first unit, the Jews are referred to in the negative as the disciples express concern that Jesus wants to cross back over the Jordan to go to Bethany where he has been informed "he whom you love is ill" (v. 3). Upon hearing Jesus' command "Let us go to Judea again" the disciples instantly question whether this is a good idea, reminding Jesus of what they had just barely escaped. Interestingly, it is in this conversation that the Disciples refer to Jesus as "Rabbi" for the last time in John's Gospel. Mounce suggested that this narrative signified a defining point in the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, with their connection moving far beyond that of student-teacher, to Jesus becoming their Master and Lord.²¹ Fast forward to the second unit and the author's second reference to the Jews. Only this time, the Jews have come to comfort Mary and Martha in the death of their brother Lazarus. As was Jewish custom, not only did the family gather, but professional mourners also came to help the family grieve the loss of their loved one, journeying through the prescribed rituals which lasted for at least seven days time.²²

Opening-Middle-Closing Texture in John 11:1-27

Turning now to the opening-middle-closing texture, as mentioned previously, there appear to be two main narratological units within John 11:1-27: an opening unit found in John 11:1-16, and a closing unit found in John 11:17-27. In looking at the nature of the opening unit to its closure, one can see a few different progressions. In looking at the opening section of the first unit, one finds Jesus and the disciples across the Jordan in Galilee, just receiving word that Lazarus is ill. As readers move through the unit, they come to the closing where finally, two days after receiving notice of Lazarus sickness, Jesus and the disciples are preparing to leave. It is worth noting here that Jesus was only notified in the opening that Lazarus was sick. Yet, in this closing section, the narrative has progressed so that readers find a prophetic Jesus demonstrating knowledge of events that he could have only acquired supernaturally.²³ Furthermore, as the second unit opens, readers find Jesus just arriving in Bethany and being confronted by Martha. This sets the stage for Jesus moving Martha from a simple

²⁰ Mounce, Robert H. *John*. Vol. X, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revised Edition Luke - Acts*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, 357-662. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007, 515.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 514.

²² *Ibid.*, 516.

²³ *Ibid.*, 514.

faith in his abilities (v. 21-22), to a final understanding and declaration of his sovereignty as “the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 27).

As readers move through the text, one notes that though each of the units can be broken out into opening, middle, and closing sections, each of these subsections can also be dissected into beginning, middle, and end sections. In the first such subsection, the narrative progresses from Jesus being alerted to Lazarus’ sickness, to his declaration that “this illness does not lead to death” (v. 4a). It is worth noting here that Jesus demonstrates a sense of urgency upon hearing that someone he cares about is deathly ill. Yet, he offers a caveat to his declaration that Lazarus will not die – “It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (v. 4b). This then sets the stage for what is to come, foreshadowing in a way the supernatural occurrence that will soon happen.

The subsection that follows begins with a brief narrative account that explains who Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are to Jesus relationally (v. 5), thus linking Jesus’ willingness to risk returning to the place where he and the disciples were nearly stoned to death. It concludes with Jesus attempting to quell the disciples’ fears through teaching them as he has so many other times throughout the Scriptures (v. 9-10).

The next subsection picks up the narrative with Jesus seeking to clarify why they must return to Judea despite the risk that the disciples have noted (v. 11). As readers progress through this section, they find Jesus driving the disciples toward clarity as they seemingly miss the purpose and significance of the matter at hand. Interestingly, the author singles out Jesus’ disciple Thomas here as the voice that is representative of the disciples’ response to Jesus’ teaching. This is the same Thomas who would later come to doubt Jesus’ resurrection.

Moving into the second unit, this opens with the subsection that outlines Jesus’ arrival to Bethany. In the subsection the author makes sure to note that Jesus has arrived on the fourth day since Lazarus was buried. According to Mounce, Jewish rabbinic belief held that for the first three days after a person’s death, the soul would hover above the body as it desired to reenter.²⁴ However, on the fourth day, when the body began to change and decompose due to the warm climate, the soul would finally depart.²⁵ This is relevant as this subsection moves from Jesus’ arrival to Martha’s departure from the traditional funeral rituals and services. One might infer that despite traditional custom, Martha understood that nothing was final unto Jesus said so.

In the second to last subsection, the narrative picks up with the dialogue between Martha and Jesus wherein she confesses her belief that nothing is beyond Jesus’ abilities as God listens to him (v. 21-22). The section then progresses to show that though she believed in Jesus, her faith still did not yet comprehend exactly who he was and what he was capable of.

Finally, in the last subsection, Jesus reveals to Martha that he is in fact the “resurrection and the life” (v. 25) to which Martha comes into a full understanding. Her response then correctly identifies Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world” (v. 27).

²⁴ Ibid., 516.

²⁵ Ibid., 516.

Narrational Texture and Pattern in John 11:1-27

In turning to the narrational texture and pattern of the text, this author will examine the “scenes,” the active “voices,” the sequence of the narrative, and the plot apparent in the pericope.

In John 11:1-27, there appear to be two major scenes as documented through the two narratological units. Each of the scenes begins with a narrative actor setting the stage for what is about to play out through the remainder of the scene. The first scene (John 11:1-16) takes place “across the Jordan” in what many presume to be Perea.²⁶ It opens with Jesus receiving word that Lazarus is ill. Keener noted that a request for one to visit and pray when someone was ill was simply customary at that time.²⁷ As a healer, it would have been even that much more expected that he would have been asked to come quickly to the aid of his loved ones.²⁸ Though this news seems dire, Jesus seemingly feels no urgency to leave immediately, choosing instead to remain for two days and then use this situation as a teaching opportunity to begin to lay the groundwork and prepare the disciples for his death that is to come. The second scene (John 11:17-27) begins with Jesus arrival to Bethany, the town where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus live. Jesus arrives on what the text describes as the fourth day of traditional Jewish funeral rights, which typically last seven days. The scene depicts Jesus meeting with Martha and working to comfort and enlighten her as to who he is and what this all means.

In the pericope, there also appear to be four distinct voices: the narrator, Jesus, the disciples, and Martha. Scene one begins with the narrator’s voice setting the stage for Jesus final miracle. The narrator’s voice weaves in and out of the scene as Jesus is alerted to the illness, and then begins to dialogue with the disciples. The voices seem to flow together as things progress, connecting Lazarus’ illness, to the risk of heading back to Judea, to the disciples finally conceding that they will follow Jesus even to death if so required. Jesus voice is the most prominent as he is the central character in this scene. Scene two reveals the replacement of the disciples voice with that of Martha’s, though presumably from the first scene, the disciples must not be far off. Though the narrator opens the scene, setting the timing of Jesus arrival, the voices quickly move the focus from Lazarus death to the revelation of Jesus as Christ, the Son of God.

With regards to the plot of the pericope, it seems to focus on Jesus revelation as Lord, the Christ, the Son of God, who has come to offer life to all. While the disciples seem to miss the significance of Christ’s message in scene one, Martha seemingly gets it as she proclaims her belief in Jesus as “Christ, the Son of God” (v. 27). Beavis noted that “Martha’s confession of ‘the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world’ (v. 27), has rightly been interpreted as the Johannine equivalent of Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi” (Matt. 16:13-20).²⁹ This is representative of a complete and full understanding of the person and nature of Christ, similar to that which Peter exhibited upon being asked point blank, “But who do you say that I am?” (v. 15-16). It is

²⁶ Keener, 281.

²⁷ Ibid., 282.

²⁸ Ibid., 282.

²⁹ Beavis, Mary Ann. “Reconsidering Mary of Bethany.” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* LXXIV, no. 2 (April 2012): 284.

Christ's hope throughout the entire pericope that his conversations would lead others into a more complete understanding of his significance as the messianic figure that the Jewish community was waiting for. In doing so, he sought to correct confusion – i.e. stating plainly the events that were transpiring (Jn. 11:14), and drive the disciples in scene one, and Martha in scene two, toward the culminating idea that Martha finally grasps in the closing of scene two. Poon notes that one of John's main points throughout his Gospel, is the idea of that despite reader's shortcomings or misgivings, through Jesus, redemption and restoration has been made available to all.

Argumentative Texture and Pattern in John 11:1-27

The succeeding step in inner texture analysis is to review the argumentative texture that appears in the pericope. This is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Argumentative Texture and Pattern in John 11:1-27

Text Reference	Argumentative Texture and Pattern	Character
v. 3	Exclamation	Sisters
v. 4	Statement	Jesus
v. 7	Command	Jesus
v. 8	Question	Disciples
v. 9	Re-direct of original question	Jesus
v. 10	Answer	Jesus
v. 11	Statement	Jesus
v. 12	Rhetorical Statement/Question	Disciples
v. 14	Prophetic Utterance	Jesus
v. 16	Exclamation	Disciples
v. 21	Exclamation	Martha
v. 23	Statement	Jesus
v. 24	Exclamation	Martha
v. 25	Re-direct of original statement	Jesus
v. 26	Question	Jesus
v. 27	Answer	Martha

In the pericope there are three distinct conversations that take place. The first is short and it seemingly takes place between Jesus and those whom the sisters had sent to him in the first scene. The next one happens between Jesus and the disciples, still in the first scene. The third and final brings together Jesus and Martha as it transpires in the second unit. Similar to John's focus in the Gospel on Jesus as teacher and agent of transformation,³⁰ the rhetorical progression in this pericope seems to be qualitative in nature. Robbins noted that these sorts of rhetorical progressions tend to produce illogical outcomes or responses within the narrative that a reader might have no reason

³⁰ Poon, 59.

to expect.³¹ In the first sequence, we find the sisters imploring Jesus to come as their brother is sick. Given that the text states that this family is one that he “loved” (v. 5), logically, one might expect for Jesus to pick up and go in light of the presumed urgency. On the contrary, Jesus responds to their exclamation in a somewhat dismissive manner, tempering the urgency that the sisters obviously felt.

The next rhetorical progression takes place between the disciples. Upon hearing Jesus command, the disciples question whether Jesus’ has considered the risk in returning to Judea. Logically, Jesus turns this moment into a learning opportunity as he attempts to point the disciples again toward the significance of that which is to come. However, illogically, the disciples misunderstand what Jesus is attempting to communicate, leading to Jesus having to state his intentions plainly, and their assumption that they are going to Judea to die with him.

The third and final rhetorical progression takes place between Jesus and Martha upon his arrival to Bethany in scene two. This rhetorical progression does seem more logical in nature. Martha approaches Jesus and makes a declaration of faith, to which Jesus affirms that which is to come. However, Martha does not understand fully that Jesus does not intend for Lazarus to wait until “the last day” (v. 24) to rise from the dead, thus prompting Jesus to continue his explain. Logically, upon further prodding, Martha fully comprehends that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 27) and able to raise Lazarus from the dead there and then.

Sensory-Aesthetic Texture and Pattern in John 11:1-27

In turning to the final aspect of inner texture analysis, this author will have a look at the sensory-aesthetic texture and patterns that reside in the text. In the two scenes, the author uses emotive-infused thought and self-expressive speech to paint vivid pictures for readers as they engage with the text.

In the first scene, the author paints two specific pictures. First, the author paints a picture of two sisters, who are in dire need of Jesus to come and save their brother. In referring to the ointment that Mary used to anoint and wipe Jesus feet, there is this presence of familiar smells that allude to an intimate familiarity between Jesus, the sisters, and Lazarus. The author then uses words like “love” to invoke feelings of longing as he describes the sisters hope and request for Jesus to come to them. Second, as Jesus engages with his disciples, the author uses language and imagery to convey the disciples confusion and fear of returning to Judea after barely escaping with their lives. Jesus also refers to light and darkness, two aesthetics that are often used in the Scriptures to connote righteousness and evil. He does so in attempting to communicate that his time with them had not yet expired, meaning that night had not yet come.

Finally, in the second scene, again the author uses emotive language to paint the picture of an intimate friend who, upon hearing that Jesus has finally come, urgently rushes to him despite the traditional requirements and rituals that undoubtedly were taking place. Throughout their conversation, there is this lovingness that Jesus seems to convey that comforts, assures, and ultimately affirms the faith that Martha has

³¹ Robbins, 23.

communicated to Jesus. Though the outset of this text seems dark and cold with the sisters beseeching Jesus to come, there is this sense by v. 27 that the light has come, and that hope remains.

III. LEADERSHIP THAT SERVES

In summarizing the different layers of inner texture as uncovered in the this pericope, a number of points stand out. Despite the fear of the disciples and the despair of the sisters, Jesus never takes his focus off serving and meeting the needs of his followers. Even in waiting two days to travel to Bethany after hearing of Lazarus' illness, Jesus notes that it is for a purpose that ultimately will benefit them all – “so that you may believe” (v. 15). Furthermore, as discussed throughout the text, Jesus is ever conscious and concerned with ensuring that his followers come into full comprehension. So much so that he does not give up until each of them gets it, or at least somewhat in the disciples case.

Stemming from these points, what can Christian leaders draw from Christ's example of leadership that serves? How are Christian leaders called to apply Jesus' model to contemporary leadership theory? How does this pericope critique the contemporary theory of servant leadership? This section will attempt to offer up some answers that this author has found through his research.

Servant Leadership

In discussing servant leadership, Northouse notes that at its best, servant leadership can lead to greater community and societal change.³² This is achieved through the leaders desire to serve and put the needs and concerns of followers ahead of their own.³³ If done correctly, Rezaei et al. argue that servant leaders will realize greater follower trust, increased organizational trust, and improved organizational communication. Sendjaya & Sorros also offered that Jesus not only taught servant leadership, but that he applied it in very concrete ways.³⁴ They continued on to add that “Jesus reportedly knew that he had ‘all things under his power’ (John 13:3). The unusual twist of Jesus' leadership through the feet washing example has redefined the meaning and function of leadership power from 'power over' to 'power to', that is power as an enabling factor to choose to serve others.”³⁵

In an attempt to clarify servant leadership for readers, Northouse identified ten characteristics that uniquely identify servant leaders: (1) listening – understanding and validating the viewpoint of followers; (2) empathy – identifying with what followers are feeling; (3) healing – caring about the well-being of followers; (4) awareness – being aware of leaders impact on followers; (5) persuasion – using clear communication to

³² Northouse, 233.

³³ Rezaei, Morad, Sajjad Salehi, Masomeh Shafiei, and Somaye Sabet. "Servant Leadership and Organizational Trust: The Mediating Effect of the Leader Trust and Organizational Communication." *Emerging Markets Journal* II, no. 1 (2012): 71.

³⁴ Sendjaya, Sen, and James C. Sarros. "Servant Leadership: Its Origin, Development, and Application in Organizations." *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* IX, no. 2 (2002): 59.

³⁵ Ibid., 59.

convince followers to change; (6) conceptualization – a leader's ability to be a visionary and set clear goals and objectives; (7) foresight – ability to envision and predict the future for followers; (8) stewardship – taking ownership of leader's responsibility while effectively managing the people and organization they have been entrusted with; (9) commitment to the growth of people – commitment to seeing and helping followers reach their full potential; and (10) building community – helping followers envision and feel a part of something greater than themselves.³⁶

Jesus, the Servant Leader

In bringing Northouse's servant leader characteristics into dialogue with the person of Christ as uncovered through an inner texture analysis of John 11:1-27, this author would offer that Jesus clearly demonstrates each of the ten characteristics as proposed by Northouse.

In both the first and second units, readers find Jesus listening to both the sisters and the disciples as he works to understand their needs. In v. 13-14 we see a prime example of Jesus having listened to the disciples and ultimately discerning that they did not fully understand what he was attempting to communicate to them. As such, he opted to further engage them, stating plainly what he wanted them to understand (v. 14-15).

Throughout the pericope, Jesus exhibits empathy as he clearly identifies with the concerns of both the disciples and the sisters. Though this pericope stops short of the famous "Jesus wept" (v. 35) that serves as a prime example of Jesus empathy, he nonetheless exhibits in this pericope as he drives home that he understands Martha's pain by way of refusing to let her continue to grieve and think that Lazarus will remain in the grave.

Continuing, Jesus concerns himself with healing in this pericope as he demonstrates his unwillingness to leave his followers in a state of confusion. In caring for their well-being, Jesus continues to press in, hoping that through ongoing engagement, his followers will soon come into a fuller understanding of him as "the Christ, the Son of God" (v. 27).

Jesus also demonstrates awareness in responding to the disciples' fears (v. 8). Rather than simply brushing their concerns "under the rug," Jesus attempts to console them with the knowledge that his time to die has not yet come (v. 9-10). This is meant to assure them that their worries of returning to Judea after the almost stoning are misplaced. He also demonstrates his awareness of his impact on them in not leaving them with riddles, but in driving back to clarity as he states plainly his intended goals.

Jesus is clearly persuasive in both units of the pericope. This can be seen in the disciples' progression from fear and apprehension of returning to Judea (v. 8), to their willingness to die with Christ if that be required of them (v. 16). This is also seen in Martha's progression from believing that anything is possible with Christ, to acknowledging him as "the Christ, Son of Man" (v. 27).

³⁶ Northouse, 221-223.

Throughout Scripture, Jesus is ever the conceptualist as his focus stays trained on God's purpose for him on earth. In this pericope specifically, Jesus demonstrates this vision as he continually attempts to point the disciples back to the larger picture – that though he must die, the time is not now. He also demonstrates this in the second unit through his conversation with Martha as he drives her to see the bigger picture – “I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 26)

Jesus demonstrates foresight most clearly in the pericope through his prophetic utterance in v. 14. Though Jesus is informed earlier in the text that Lazarus is ill, at no point is it indicated that the messengers return to update him of Lazarus health status. As such, that Jesus knew that Lazarus had died could be considered foresight of knowledge that was yet unavailable to him.

Jesus exhibits stewardship as he continually takes ownership and responsibility for those that have entrusted their faith in and to him. In the pericope, again, this is demonstrated in his refusal to let any ounce of confusion remain in both the disciples and Martha. As he employs multiple tactics to clear away confusion, he accepts full responsibility for each of them.

Not only in this pericope, but throughout the Scriptures, Jesus remains committed to the growth of people. Whether this be in the form of teaching as in this pericope, or eventually dying on the cross, Jesus commitment to seeing individuals experience both redemption and restoration is core to his heart for this world.

Finally, Jesus demonstrates his desire to build and grow community most clearly in the second unit as he points Martha towards to the realization that he is “the Christ, the Son of God” (v. 27). In doing so, he also offers that “whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (v. 25-26). In these two Scriptures, Jesus clearly communicates that not only is about saving Martha and her brother, but ultimately, he is concerned with seeing and offering everyone an opportunity to be saved. This then links Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and the disciples to a larger community of saved and redeemed souls that believe and place their faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Critiquing Contemporary Theory

Though the Scriptures have much to offer in support of servant leadership, they also offer a critique of this contemporary leadership theory. For example, though Sendjaya & Sorros noted that contemporary servant leaders are motivated to serve and serve first, this author would push back in light of Jesus example in the pericope of John 11:1-27. Though Jesus heart was surely set on serving, his motivation to serve stemmed from his desire to love and see other's experience the love of the Father. As Engstrom noted, the type of leadership that Jesus exhibits in the New Testament, is a form of leadership that is grounded first in love that then is exhibited through service. Service that is for the sake of service can still be self-serving. In order for servant leadership to truly resemble the Christ in John 11:1-27, it must seek to love and care for followers first, ahead of its desire to serve. In doing so, leaders will be able to better discern, meet, and serve the needs of their followers.

Furthermore, though Northouse asserted that “servant leaders are ethical and lead in ways that serve the greater good of the organization, community, and society-at-

large,”³⁷ the question remains as to what is a servant leaders source that determines what the greater good may be for the organization, community, and society-at-large. In all of his studies and research on the topic of servant leadership, no where did this author find research that deals with centering the contemporary servant leader on something beyond themselves or followers. This pericope offers a prime example of what it could be like to serve followers without a fuller understanding of what the greater good might look like. If Jesus had failed to consider the greater good, choosing instead to listen to the expressed fears and desires of his followers, he may not have made the trip back across the Jordan to Bethany. This would have then been a missed opportunity to not only bring his followers into greater understanding of the significance of his life and coming death, but also other onlookers (Jews) who undoubtedly witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave.

IV. CONCLUSION

Servant leadership as a contemporary theory has rightfully started to take off with more and more research being done to support and speak to the positive benefits of a leadership style that serves. Northouse, correctly noted that in order for servant leadership to be successful, it will take both leaders and followers opening themselves up to being receptive to contributing to each others growth. However, as this pericope uncovered, it is imperative that contemporary servant leaders look beyond contemporary theory as they endeavor to lead followers in their respective marketplaces. Only in employing a style of leadership that serves, which is grounded first in love, can leaders truly realize the greater organizational results they desire. In doing so, one might only hope - and even expect - that the God they serve, can and will do through them the “greater works than even he” (John 14:12) that Jesus spoke of.

About the Author

Arthur L. Satterwhite III is an emerging voice on millennials, diversity, and intergenerational leadership, who is passionate about serving and seeing communities flourish. Whether in workspaces or faith-spaces, it is his belief that our ability to overcome issues stemming from increasing diversity will determine whether we realize greater human and organizational flourishing in our life and work. He currently pursues this passion as a sought-after speaker, coach, and consultant serving mainly faith and not-for-profit organizations and audiences. Additionally, Satterwhite is pursuing his Doctor of Strategic Leadership at Regent University where his studies are focused on

³⁷ Northouse, 219

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