


Jesus' Teaching on Servant-Leadership (Matthew 20:25-28): A Model for Christian Youth Participation in Politics

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Abstract

Youths have been underrepresented and excluded from active and visible participation in Nigerian politics as a result of the exclusion frameworks of the large population by the more elderly members of the political class. This intentional exclusion by the aged members of the Nigerian political class has been situated in and leverages on the supposed immaturity and incapacities of majority of the Nigerian youth. Some scholars have explored youth political participation in Nigeria from legal, sociological, democratic, and contextual perspectives, but without relating it to Jesus' teaching on the servant-leadership model. Therefore, this study carries out a socio-rhetorical analysis of Matthew 20:25-28 to explicate a servant-leadership model to political participation. The exhumed servant-leadership model of the Matthean account is appropriated in the context of advocating for Christian youths' political participation in Nigerian politics. Data collected from the Bible and bibliographic sources were exegetically and descriptively analysed respectively. Evidentially, Jesus' teaching on servant-leadership in Matthew 20:25-28 emphasises service and not lording, teamwork and collaboration in leadership and serves as a veritable resource model for political participation in Nigeria. Consequently, the elderly political class in Nigeria should imbibe an inclusive framework that allows the youth to participate and be represented in Nigerian politics.

Keywords: Politics, Youth, Matthew 20:25-28, servant-leadership model, political participation in Nigeria

Introduction

Youth's participation in Nigerian politics is a slogan rather than a reality (Vambe 2016:167). The Nigerian youths are underrepresented in politics, and the elderly continue to dominate; leveraging on the incapacities of Nigerian youths with a solid claim on their immaturity. Additionally, members of the older generation often remind the youth of cultural limitations, emphasizing the need to respect and honour the elderly in order to gain experience and shed the perceived unwholesome behaviours associated with youthfulness. Many youths, in the long run, usually succumb to the yearnings of the elderly, support their political ambitions and eventually sit back, watching the elderly thriving in politics (Ituma et al 2021:1). Paradoxically, Christians are sidelined on the one hand by the political permutations of the Nigerian political elites, and on the other hand by the political apathy within the Christian community, largely due to doctrinal and moral questions (Chioke 2023:50). Siwoku-Awi (2022:27) claims that Nigerian young Christians are vulnerable and marginalised to the extent that they seem not to see beyond the activities of the church instead of seeking to find solutions to Nigeria's underdevelopment, insecurity and economic downturn.

This study, therefore, examines the reasons for the exclusion of youths from Nigerian politics by conducting a socio-rhetorical analysis of Matthew 20:25-28 in relation to the concept of the servant-leadership model. Subsequently, it appropriates the outcomes of the analysis to Christian youths' participation in Nigerian politics.

There is no universal definition of the youth population. It varies from one organisation to the other, and one nation to the other. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization fixes the youthful age as ranging from 15 to 24 years and the United Nations Habitat (Youth Fund) fixes it between 15 to 32 years (Crews 2002:3), UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA puts it at 15-24 years (Engel 2019:6), while the Commonwealth fixes it between 15-29 years (Robinson, 2021:4). The African Youth Charter extends the age range to 15-35 years (Ubi 2007:3).

The Nigerian National Youth Policy of 2019 and the National Youth Service Corps set it at 18-19 years and graduates under the age of 30 years respectively (Arubayi 2016:97). Youths, for some people and organisations, are young people, aged 24-25 who represent an essential and dynamic part of the world's human resources and have the potential for creativity and dynamism (Crews 2002). They have strong stamina (Michael, Inyang & Ojeka 2016:3), energy, and the power to make things work (Obi 2006:8). This paper adopts the African Youth Charter's categorization which fixes the youthful age between 15-35 years. This will allow Christian youths of this age to be relevant in Africa and other parts of the world.

The study becomes imperative because it would reassure the Nigerian Christian youth to be bold enough to be actively engaged in politics, not as a means of amassing wealth but to apply Jesus' leadership model to the Nigerian situation. This would also enable Nigeria to be at par with nations of the world, whose leaders are energetic, have good stamina and are technologically current to keep abreast of the events around the world.

This study carries out a socio-rhetorical analysis of Matthew 20:25-28 to explicate a servant-leadership model to political participation. Consequently, the exhumed servant-leadership model of the Matthean account is appropriated in the context of advocating for Christian youths' political participation in Nigerian politics. Data collected from the Bible and bibliographic sources offline and online were exegetically and descriptively analysed, respectively.

Socio-historical Overview of Selected Political Leadership in Nigeria by Age (1950s-2023) and Contemporary Youth Political Participation

A survey of a few political leaders and their ages is imperative in this study to have an insight into the justification of the youths' political participation in Nigeria. Firstly, the fathers of nationalism, Obafemi Awolowo, Samuel Akintola, Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa, Okotie-Eboh and Anthony Enahoro were aged 37, 36, 36, 34, 27 and 27 respectively when they led the struggle for Nigeria's Independence after the death of Herbert Macaulay, only Nnamdi Azikiwe was 42 at the time (Etuk 2002:9; Olusanya 1980:550; Falola & Heaton 2008:15; Okafor 2023; Falola & Genova 2009:20).

Also, in 1966, the first military coup was led by Nzeogwu who was 29 years old and countered by M. Mohammed, T. Danjuma, I. Babangida, J. Garba, Sani Abacha and Yar'adua who were ages 28, 28, 25, 23, 23 and 23 respectively (Siollum 2012:3; Okafor 2023; Falola & Genova 2009:21). Yakubu Gowon, Odumegwu Ojukwu, Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari became heads of State at ages 32, 33, 29 and 24 respectively (Okafor 2023; Falola & Genova 2009:59). Likewise, Matthew Mbu, born in 1929 became Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Minister at age 23 and later held other ministerial positions such as the Minister of Labour in 1953, acting Minister of Transport in 1954, acting Minister of Commerce and Industry in 1954 and acting Minister of Works 1955 (Falola & Genova 2009:20) while Pat Utomi became a

Federal Adviser at age 27 (Icon 2023). By implication, it was not difficult for the young people to attain meaningful leadership positions and thrive within the society earlier in Nigeria's history.

The Nigerian youths have made several attempts at reclaiming leadership positions. Many calls by youth organisations such as the *Nigerian Youth Forum*, the *Nigerian Youth Collective Action*, and a few serving younger legislators in collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs) to allow youths to hold political leadership positions led to the amendment of sections 65, 106, 131, and 177 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. The youths also sponsored the passing of the "Not-Too-Young-To-Run" Amendment Bill to Law in 2017. The Bill, signed into law on 31 May 2018, allows Nigerians to run for the presidency, governorship, and for positions in the National Assembly from ages 30 and 25 (Krook & Nugent 2018:63).

President Muhammadu Buhari, at a meeting held in the UK on April 18, 2018, averred that the Nigerian youths are lazy. The statement did not go down well with the youths who felt such a statement was untrue and unrepresentative of their activities. Thus, they took to Twitter and other social media to express their displeasure at the statement (Ezeh & Mboso 2020:118), despite the explanation of the supporters of the president (Ogundipe 2018). This, among others, was a reason for the ENDSARS protest of 2020. The ENDSARS protest united the Nigerian youths, irrespective of ethnic and religious affiliation, and helped the youths to achieve one of the reasons for the protest, the disbandment and dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on October 11, 2020 (Inobembe & Santas 2022:103; Afolabi 2023:356; Nduka 2023:150). The protest negatively impacted all strata of the Nigerian economy (Ochi & Mark 2021:3; Akhimien 2022:4).

However, youths' agitations through the #ENDSARS protest were a setback when on October 20, 2020, some of the protesting youths were hit by bullets from the Nigerian force at Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos, Nigeria (So-oriari 2023:195). Youths could not continue! The protest seemingly did not achieve fully, one of its goals with the main goal being active inclusion and involvement of the youth in the political arena (Akanle & Uziewi 2023:215). Nevertheless, the protest was indicative of the leadership capabilities of the youth.

The Nigerian Youth Union (NYU) through its president in 2022 voiced, "...as minimum criteria, we expect and declare that the next President of Nigeria must be below 60 years of age and should be prepared to show his antecedents how far he has reflected or factored youths in his leadership vision and accomplishments" (Obasi 2022). In like manner, the Nigerian Youth Collective Action (NYCA) whose slogan is "Not-Too-Young-To-Run" calls on youth not to vote for any candidate above 55 years old. The NYCA Southwest coordinator avers,

This session recognises that Nigeria is a country with more than 70% of its population below the age of 50 years. And that youthfulness fuels a huge energy capable of delivering sustainable prosperity to over

200 million Nigerians if well-harnessed and rightly targeted.’ (Ogunrinde 2022:1).

The agitations yielded nothing! The situation persists as the youngest presidential candidate in the 2023 general election was 39 years old, above the UNESCO and Nigerian prescribed 24 and 29 ages of youth respectively. The elderly still dominate the political arena of Nigerian politics.

Factors Affecting Christian Youth Participation in Politics

There is no doubt that some factors pose threat to Christian youth political participation in Nigeria. The first, cultural factor, is demonstrated in two major ways- the norms within various Nigerian cultures and cultural diversities of the Nigerian society. The Nigerian society, like most African societies, is gendered. This accounts for why the men are the social superiors while women are supposed to be subordinates (Odalonu 2019:541). Hence, a woman within the youthful age would find it difficult to come out confidently to contest with her male counterparts on the same political terrain. Also, the norm in many Nigerian cultures is that the younger generation allows the elderly to have their way in almost all things. This cuts across almost all Nigerian cultures. Concerning cultural diversities, what Adelakun, et al (2023:59) describes as ‘cultural superiority’, ethnic rivalry cannot be overruled as a hindrance to youth participation in politics. Nwabueze (2014:13) asserts that ethnic factors have impacted negatively, the distribution of economic resources and devolution of power. Each ethnic group fights for what would benefit their group. This also affects Christian youths.

Secondly, there is the problem of population explosion. Nigeria’s population in 2006, which was the last census was 140,431,790 which by 2022 had increased to 216,746,934, making Nigeria the most populous country in Africa which boasts of the world’s most youthful population (Sasu:2023). Population growth is advantageous in the availability of human capital. Still, the Nigerian socio-economic situation is a deterrent to Christian youth political participation in Nigeria, due to unemployment and underemployment (Adewuyi 2023:5). The Nigerian youths have undergone all levels of political youth theories. The theories range from ‘youth bulge’ (the marginalised, deprived youth), ‘youth in crisis’ (slim socioeconomic and political opportunities), ‘lumpen youth culture’ (antisocial and anti-establishment orientation) and ‘doom theory’ which underestimates the worth of youths, Christian youths inclusive, in participating and contributing their quotas productively in the political space (Osumah 2016:4).

Money politics and vote buying characterize the Nigerian political arena. This features greatly among major political parties, giving the highest bidder the chance to win. Unfortunately, many Nigerian youths are not gainfully employed. The Nigerian youths are energetic and highly intelligent but they do not have enough money to qualify them to become ‘adult youths’ (Obi 2006) in Nigerian Politics. The case of many Christian youths, like their counterparts in Nigeria, suffering prolonged unemployment status cannot be

overlooked. Adetayo (2016) notes that within 36 hours, on June 14, 2016, 403,528 Nigerian youths applied for 500,000 employment opportunities called for by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Same was the case for the Nigerian Navy Recruitment exercise of April 9, 2016, where 300,000 Nigerian youths applied for 3,000 naval jobs (Omonobi 2016). 53.4% of young people in the labour force are unemployed. The Nigerian youths are poor, and unemployment, illiteracy, inequality and poverty are factors aiding criminality among the Nigerian youths (Michael, Inyang & Ojeka 2016:3). The issue of the NYSC discharge certificate is also integral here. Without the NYSC certificates, no matter the level of the youths’ skills and knowledge, they are limited in the level they can get to in the political arena (Adebite 2020:15). Yet, those who have completed the scheme and received the certificates aver, ‘We are going to join millions of unemployed graduates’ (Balogun 2018:18).

In Nigeria, Godfatherism allows the godsons to govern at the expense of the larger society, pleasing their godfathers not minding capacity building and economic empowerment; this is a bane to youth participation in politics (Omidiwura 2012:205). This cannot be called youth participation, because participatory politics is, ‘...interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern. Importantly, these acts are not guided by deference to elites or formal institutions’ (Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh and Rogowski n.d.: vi). Adeniji and Odeyemi note that, ‘young people consider themselves co-habitants in the Nigerian political system and not participants’ (2023:108)

Another factor that should not be overlooked as a hindrance to youth involvement in Nigerian politics is religious tension and sentiments. Some scholars assume three hermeneutical difficulties are discovered here; First, the call for a separation between the State and the Kingdom of God as exemplified in John 18:36, Mark 12:17 and Matthew 6:19f, the pacificism and non-violence stance of Jesus Christ, and the socio-political context of Jesus Christ would not allow Christians any say in the political situations of his time (van den Toren 2007:67). The doctrine of some denominations would not allow them participation in the process of art of governance. These include the Christadelphians whose doctrine denounce political participation (Quili 2005:1). Some Christian youths indeed want to partake in political activities, but they fear what fellow church members would say (Adeoye & Dauda 2023:23).

Lastly, the nature and unwholesome behaviour of youths allow the elderly to disregard Christian youth participation in politics. Youths are easily predisposed to social vices either because of relative deprivation, social disorganisation or because of the causative-preventive Model of Youth Violence (Abdullahi, Seedat-khan & Abdulrahman 2016:46). Some youths are prone to criminality due to such factors as managing boredom, making wrong decisions, imperfect political systems, and the perception that they can make things happen (France, Bottrell & Armstrong 2012:5). Hence, some,

including Christian youths who have been put in positions of authority have disappointed the elderly.

Despite the challenges facing Christian youths' participation in politics, there are favourable arguments for their involvement in politics. The youths under normal circumstances and situations are strong physically, active mentally and have strong technological capabilities. Youths are involved in formal and informal exercises. This improves their sleep, and eventually, mental health and quality (Liu & Liu 2023:1316; Burton, Elsenmann, Cowburn, Lloyd and Till 2022:5). This, however, is lacking in the adults.

Along the axis of globalisation, Nigerian youths can be compared with their counterparts in other nations of the world. Emmanuel Macron became the President of France at the age of 39; Barack Obama became the President of the United States at the age of 47, Rishi Sunak became British Prime minister at the age of 42; Sanna Marin became the youngest-ever prime minister of Finland at 34; Dritan Abazović, Montenegro's prime minister, is 37 years old; Gabriel Boric, 36, is Chile's current president; Nayib Bukele, now 41, became the president of El Salvador at 38; Georgia's prime minister, Irakli Garibashvili, is 40 years old; and Mohammed bin Salman, 37, is the crown prince and prime minister of Saudi Arabia. Warren exclaims,

...it becomes incumbent on society to ensure that we elevate the political journeys of all young people—not just those who look like us, have access to copious amounts of money, or agree with us. We have a particular need to elevate the voices of those young people who have been most systematically targeted and marginalized in our society for decades upon decades: young people of colour who come from lower-income backgrounds (2019:217).

More so, there are biblical examples of young men and women who rose to administer justice for the entire Israel race. Moses was just 15 years old when he saw the need to leave King Pharaoh's palace to identify with the Israelites. David rose to defend his people, the Israelites when he was about the period of his youth. Jonathan, Saul's son, and David's friend was also a warrior.

Socio-rhetorical Analysis of Matthew 20:25-28

The Text

²⁵ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς εἶπεν. οἶδατε ὅτι οἱ ἄρχοντες τῶν ἐθνῶν κατακυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι κατεξουσιάζουσιν αὐτῶν. ²⁶οὐχ οὕτως ἔσται ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ὅς ἐάν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν μέγας γενέσθαι ἔσται ὑμῶν διακονός. ²⁷καὶ ὅς ἐάν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι πρῶτος ἔσται ὑμῶν δουλός. ²⁸ὥσπερ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἤλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντι πολλῶν

²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you;

but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; ²⁸ even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (RSV Version).

Context of Matthew 20:25-28

The dialogue in verses 20-24 arose because of Jesus' discussion with his disciples in Matthew 19:28. Jesus had told his disciples how he would sit in the throne of his glory, and how the disciples shall sit upon the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This, probably made the mother of James and John go to Jesus, making her request, thereby incurring the anger of the remaining disciples (Matthew 20: 20-24).

The Israelites were under the Roman authorities who believed so much in hierarchy, positional authority, ambition and status. They were seriously yearning for freedom to self-governance in Judea (Wilson 1982:94). The gap between the slave and the master was very wide under Roman rule. Wilson (1982:95) holds that James and John's mother probably was influenced by the Roman authority's Power and hierarchy or by the Levitical hierarchical structure in the temple. Besides, she might envisage a royal rule which would be inaugurated by Jesus in Jerusalem. Hence there is a need to be proactive so that other disciples would be reporting to the two disciples and not to Jesus directly (Garlington 2010:313). Wilson (1982:96) opines that in Matthew 20: 25-28, Jesus aimed at the reformist and Utopian responses to leadership. The leader should understand that the leaders of the world are prone to do evil, but his disciples as leaders should be different, whatever the situation. More so, Jesus' disciples should inaugurate a new social system that would overturn the present evil one.

Matthew 20:25-28 in Biblical Literature

The narrative in Matthew 20:25- 28 can also be seen in Mark 10:41-45 and Luke 22: 25-27. In Matthew 20:20-24, the mother of James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who are also disciples of Jesus came and worshipped Jesus, desiring that her two sons be granted the opportunity to sit at the right and left hands of Jesus. The mother came after Jesus had predicted his death (Matthew 20:17-19). It should be noted that in Markan's account (Mark 10:35) the Sons of Zebedee presented their request before Jesus and not their mother, as contained in Matthean and Lukan compositions. Explaining the contrasts, Bailey (1980:134) opines that the Jewish tradition gives aged Jewish women some respect to the extent they could get away with some things their male counterparts would not get away with. The Canaanite woman also pleaded for the healing of her daughter (Matthew 15:6). Dixon (1988:179) and Keener (1999:600) assert that women enjoy some levels of preferential treatment in the broader Graeco-Roman culture because, despite the official laws, some women pleaded their cases before the magistrates. France (2007:667) notes that James and John's mother must have been a regular follower of Jesus who also formed part of the 'large crowd' of Matthew 20:29. Yet, the issue of the Synoptic problem should

not be unnoticed. If the priority of Mark is upheld, then, Matthew probably altered the narratives in Mark to protect the disciples (Hill 1972:287), or to protect Peter's position earlier discussed in Matthew 16:18 (Green 1975:29). However, it may be noted that Matthew is giving a historical detail based on John and James' aggressive nature in Mark 9:38 and Luke 9:54 (Carson 1984:431). Furthermore, the seating arrangement is an etiquette in Talmudic tradition whereby the most prominent person sits in the middle, the most esteemed or proficient person sits in his right hand, while the less esteemed and proficient sits by the left (Basser & Cohen 2015:522)

However, the verbs οἶδα (perfect active indicative 2nd person plural) and δύναιμι (present middle indicative 2nd person plural) indicate that Jesus' response was not directed to the mother alone, it was directed to the two sons also. Jesus' question to them was to help them see literally or figuratively, the implication of what they were requesting from him. '...drink of the cup...' is a metaphor for suffering (Kapolyo 2006:2537). Likewise, to be baptised in something is a metaphor for being immersed or overwhelmed in something. Jesus was reminding James and John of the great suffering attached to his rulership or exultation. James and John answered, 'We are able', δυνώμεθα (present middle indicative 1st person plural of δύναιμι). The sons of Zebedee affirmed that they were capable. Nevertheless, in all three accounts, Jesus brought all the twelve disciples together. He gave them the same answer and explanation (Matthew 20:25-28; cf. Mark 10:41-45 and Luke 22: 25-27). They need to become better leaders who would allow others to fulfil their vision (Adehenu 2013:70). Nsiah (2015:94) opines that the mother was in great expectancy of the promise, hence the urgency to ask for space for her two children. Nevertheless, Jesus discouraged lobbying to get to positions of authority (Nsiah 2015:95)

Socio-rhetorical Analysis of Matthew 20:25-28

Socio-rhetorical analysis looks at the historical context of a passage in relation to social behaviour as shaped by societal conditions, structure and processes (Nyiauwung 2010:137). Diachronically, the exegete looks at the text in relation to first-century Palestine and synchronically examines the culture, economic, political and social contexts (Nyiauwung 2010:137). The result is now compared with the social situation in the twenty-first-century African context.

In verse 25 b., οἰδατε οτι οι αρχοντες των εθνων κατακυριευουσιν αυτων (you know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them), Jesus reminded the disciples about what greatness is among the gentiles. The leader is the ruler, the authority; he is like a dictator. He works at his own pace to ensure social order and development, even if it will affect others negatively (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich & Danker 1979). Foerster (1964:488) thinks that κατακυριεω has the concept of compulsion, subjugation and which could lead to oppression. μεγας of the μεγαλοι would mean 'a person of importance'. The leaders, just like in many African cultures, need to be served. The followers bestow upon them the 'honour' they deserve to a fault, that when they err at times,

the followers overlook their mistakes, just because they are leaders.

Verse 26 a, ουχ ουτως εσται εν υμιν (not but so it shall be among you), has a considerable degree of doubt by the majority of the minuscules and some uncials manuscripts. εσται would translate to be '...you are not like this....'

Verses 26b - 28 explain the Servant -leadership model of Jesus. Verse 26b (αλλ ος εαν θελη εν υμιν μεγας γενεσθαι, but whosoever will among you, great be) and c (εσται υμων διακονος, be let him be your minister) brings out the Servant Leadership model of Jesus. In the Kingdom, greatness is by service. The 'great ones' (μεγαλο) among the Christians do not 'lord it over' (κατακυριεουσιν) one another. The LXX use the word καταξουσιαζουσιν, which could mean 'play the tyrant' (Robertson n.d:121). In other words, they do not use their rulership to oppress.

v.27b, εσται υμων δουλος (let him be your servant), the word for 'bond-servant' simply means a slave. Jesus did not use the word υπηρετης which would translate as server, footman or servitor. v. 28a. ωσπερ ο νιος τοθ ανθρωπου ουκ ηλθεν διακονησαι (even as the son of man not came to be ministered unto), v. 28b. αλλα διακονησαι και δουναι την ψυχην αυτου λθτρον αντι πολλων (but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many) διακονος (servant) and δουλος (slave) implies that to serve or be a messenger, the leader must forget about power and authority. To be πρωτος (first), a leader must be δουλος (servant).

Servant-Leadership Model of Matthew 20:25-28 in Relation to Christian Youths' Political Participation in Nigerian Politics.

In the contemporary Nigerian context, the servant-leadership model is yet to be achieved. A good way of measuring this is by looking at the characteristics of the Servant-leader vis-a-vis- its features as demonstrated by Nigerian leaders, using the Craun and Henson (2022:5) model. The five characteristics of the Servant leadership model Jesus used in Matthew 20:25-28 (Craun and Henson 2022) are organisational order of change, everyone matters, implementation without compromise, new identity and values and speaking more about the New than the old. Jesus began by connecting with his disciples. He never summoned them to teach what servant leadership is. Rather, he listened to them to attain a transition to servant-leadership. The majority of Nigerian leaders are not like this. Paradoxically, many religious leaders are following the path of political leaders. Church members serve them, rather than God.

Secondly, in the servant-leadership model of Jesus, everyone matters. Jesus never looked down on the low within the first century Palestine. He interacted with sinners, the outcasts, and the women. This explains why, amongst other reasons, John and James' mother was able to approach Jesus with her request. Does everyone matter in Nigerian politics? Any respect for freedom of speech? Why the ban on Twitter? Why the killing of youths at the Lekki toll gate on October 20, 2020? Again, leaders in Nigeria are lacking in this area. The

majority of Nigerian leaders are characterised by 'it is my turn syndrome' (Ikegbu 2013:103).

Furthermore, Nigerian society is saturated with compromise in implementation. The slang is 'man-know-man'. The 'man-know-man' syndrome cuts across all aspects of the Nigerian society. Hence the competent are compromised for the affluents within the society. The same sets of people, and 'their families' want to be in leadership positions always. Otherwise, they have to be godfathers and godsons. Jesus bothered less about whoever the mother of his two disciples was. He was not ready to compromise to the detriment of others.

In addition, servant leadership encourages new identities and values. This is lacking in Nigerian politics and leadership. Leadership cannot be done in the usual way of lording it over the followers. Leaders must serve their followers. The situation in Nigeria is that people can easily predict the attitude of leaders towards issues which is most times on the negative side.

Lastly, the leaders in Nigeria are not open to change. Many CONFABS have been called for restructuring (Onyishi, Obiorah & Oji 2021:142; Obani 2019:59). None seem to have been implemented. There have been several calls for the cutting down of the legislature salaries and allowances to be in tandem with the Nigerian economic situation, and to identify with the masses (Kolawole 2022:57; Nyewusira & Nweke 2017:200). None of the presidents in the last 16 years has listened to this. Lamido Sanusi, the former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria did a critical analysis and urged a cutting down of legislature salaries and allowances. No one listened to him (Chiluwa 2021:11). Sidi, Lawal & Ahmed (2019:35) claim that a leader who would bring change must be accountable, neutral in ethnic and religious issues, respect the rule of law, provide inclusive governance and ensure equal, efficient distribution of resources. Most Nigerian leaders lack this (Olannye-Onkonofua 2021:201). Leadership in Nigerian politics involves overpowering and being a tyrant to the governed. It concerns self-interest, self-protection and dominance (Sewapo and Ajibade 2021:5).

However, biblical leadership is antithetical to the idea of leadership in the world. Biblical leadership involves service to the ruled (O'Harae 2003:2). The concept of Servant-leadership was first used by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) in 1970. According to Greenleaf, the leader is first a servant. The servant-first is the second extreme of the leader-first (Greenleaf 1977). Greenleaf felt that when the leader focuses on others, the followers' hope is rekindled and this brings hope to the leader also (Kumar 2018:45; Charles 2015:50). The core characteristics of the servant-leader are humility and the growth and development of others (Wilson 2016:10; Craun & Henson 2022:5). It encourages teamwork and collaboration (Buck 2019:312) as well as a culture of confidence and commitment in the organisation (Edmondson 2018:26). The leader must serve even in suffering (Malbon 2006:273). There may be no systematic or formulaic principles for leadership, but the Christian looks into the characters of leaders in the

bible concerning their strengths and weaknesses and reflects on whether they are in line with the total redemptive history and whether Jesus' view of leadership is antithetical of the world's view of leadership as exemplified in John 13:1-16. This understanding is further developed in Acts 20:17-38; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Thess 2:1-14; and Heb 13:7, 17. The thrust of the servant leadership model is services to others (Wilkes 1998:10). A Christian leader must first be humble, through service to be glorified. Servant leadership includes role modelling, sacrificing for others, meeting the needs and developing others, recognising and rewarding others, involving others in decision-making, and treating others with respect (Koshal 2005:14). It focuses on other people's well-being.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made consequent upon the socio-rhetorical analysis of Matthew 20:25-28 and in relation to Christian youths' participation in Nigerian politics:

1. There is a need for intercultural and interethnic communication among Nigerian youths. This is because presently, many Nigerian Christian youths are not united. This would guard against cultural bias which is a bane to Nigerian youth agitation for robust representation in the Nigerian political system. It would also make the Nigerian youth understand that no ethnic group is more important than the other, no one is subhuman. They would be able to speak with one voice.
2. Christian youths should intently disregard the concept of godfatherism because the one who 'pays the piper would always dictate the tune'. An exhibition of the servant-leadership model remains unrealizable when someone, 'a godfather' is controlling the one in political position.
3. There is a need for a mental reorientation of the Christian youth. The popular notion amongst Nigerian youths that politics is an avenue to amass wealth traceable to what they see in the lives of most of the corrupt politicians who continue to live fat on the nation's wealth must be addressed. The Nigerian Christian youth need be taught, trained and educated that political positions are for service, and not to become 'bosses' or corrupt.
4. The Nigerian youth should be transparent and accountable in their dealings. This will encourage the elderly to commit greater things like governance into their hands.
5. Christian youths in Nigeria, need to put denominationalism aside if they would be in positions of leadership, and enshrine Jesus' servant-leadership model. Experience has shown that every denomination wants a representation of their members in power. Yet, the positions of leadership are very limited. Without, denominationalism, Nigerian Christian youths would be a strong force rather than a group divided by doctrines and affinities.

Conclusion

The present Nigerian political scene is dominated by the elderly. The Christian youths, like other youths are marginalised in the political leadership of the country. This is due to cultural factors, population explosion, youth unemployment, money politics, godfatherism, denominationalism, religious tensions and unwholesome behaviours of some Nigerian youths. However, while encouraging Christian youth participation in politics, it must be to serve while leading; the essence of socio-rhetorical analysis of Matthew 20: 25-28.

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