

Servants

Mark 1:29-31

February 8, 2009

*You call us into your church,
to accept the cost and joy of discipleship.
to be your servants in the service of others ...*

You call us into your church, to accept the cost and joy of discipleship. and to be your servants in the service of others ...

We need to turn the pulpit around because today, you need to preach to me!
You need to preach to me, because you know far more about service to others than I do.

Twice a month, you take your car and deliver hot meals to folks in their homes. You've done it, every month, for twelve years!

You are an active member of your service club: Rotary or Kiwanis or Sertoma. You help out with the fundraisers and educate yourself about community issues and needs and you do your best to motivate others to respond, compassionately and generously, to those needs.

You volunteer with Red Cross . You collect Christmas cards to be mailed to soldiers. You teach CPR classes. You donate blood.

You volunteer in the local schools. You meet once a week with your mentee, investing that precious hour in the future of this one young person.

You work with college students, members of a fraternity, trying to help them see past the ends of their noses, trying to teach them skills in management and planning.

You help out with Junior Achievement.

You serve on the boards of community organizations: cultural organizations and service organizations: Grin & Grow, the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony, the Citizens' Review Board, Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging, Cedar Valley's Promise.

You serve on a board or a committee of this church! And you come to the meetings, because you take your commitment seriously! You faithfully give your time to strengthen the church and its mission.

You teach Sunday School. You taught Sunday School in that same corner classroom for fourteen years! You assisted with the youth groups for twenty-five years!

You serve funeral luncheons. You serve as an usher. You serve as a deacon, a job title that means servant!

You make financial donations, using your money to the service of others. You give to this church. You give to cultural institutions. You give to humanitarian organizations. You give to advocacy groups, groups seeking to ensure that justice is served, not just for some, but for all.

You give, not just your money, but yourself. You don't just express concern about the plight of children in Nicaragua or send money to organizations trying to address their needs. You go yourself and get others to go with you! You deliver the shoeboxes and the layette bags and the bicycles and the sewing machines.

You go to Haiti, as part of a medical mission team. You go to Papua New Guinea, taking the good news of the gospel to people who have never heard it before. You spend a lifetime in Alaska, offering its people the gift of your love and your faith, sharing with them the stories of Jesus.

You travel to New Orleans to rebuild homes destroyed by a hurricane or to Parkersburg to help clean up after a tornado. You travel to Pennsylvania or Michigan or Maine or West Virginia to offer yourself in service to others.

You can't do everything, but you will do something! You will do something to serve your neighbors ... and some of you manage to do a lot of somethings!

This is what you do, as God's servants, in the service of others. Do I call you heroes? No, I do not. I call you saints! I call you saints, holy ones, men and women dedicated to the service of God through service to humanity. I call you saints, women and men, called by God into the church.

You call us into your church ... to be your servants in the service of others.

You see, the saints are not just people like Francis of Assisi or Theresa of Calcutta or Jean Paul of Poland or Tutu of South Africa. You are the saints, all of you, all of you whom God has called into the church, any of you, any believer, anyone who hears God's call and decides to join yourself to others who have chosen too to follow Jesus.

You are saints, not heroes. Not heroes because you are only doing what you have been called to do. Once you are called into God's church, being a servant, serving others, is business as usual! It's nothing extraordinary, nothing for which to be especially commended. It just comes with the territory!

Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever, and as soon as Jesus arrived, he was told about her. He went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them.

The fever left her and she began to wait on them! This is what she does! This is who she is! Serving others is what she is called to do. She doesn't say: "Wow! I've been healed! Let me celebrate! Let me savor this moment! This day will be for me a special holiday! This day will be for me a holy day!"

No. Quietly, without any fuss or fanfare, she goes back to doing what she would do any day, waiting on the guests who have come into her home. The fever left her ... and she began to wait on them.

This is, I think, the form genuine service most often takes -- quiet, invisible, simply part of a daily routine.

You stop by her apartment, your confidant and mentor, almost now a surrogate mother to you, bringing her what she needs, taking her to doctors' appointments, just checking in, filling some of the lonely hours of her day with conversation and friendship.

You visit her, everyday, your wife of sixty years, even now when she can give little back to you, even now when you aren't even sure she knows you have been there.

You make it a point, you go out of your way, to make sure he feels welcomed, to make sure he feels wanted, to make sure he feels appreciated.

You make the phone call, you write the thank you note, you send the birthday card that will surely bring a smile and let someone know they are remembered and loved.

You do the dishes ...

You do the dishes at church! When the tables are cleared, you are the first to the sink, running the water and pouring the soap and soaking the silverware. You stay to wipe the tables and sweep the floor, not because it's your job, not because you've been asked to do it, but because ... just because.

When there is a call for volunteers -- to paint a room, to build a ramp, to get a cabin ready for the summer youth camping season, or to move an elderly couple into a different senior-living apartment -- you are there.

You don't have to be on center stage. You don't have to get the credit. You willingly give up your place in the limelight to let someone else shine.

You understand the future of the church, and certainly the future of humanity, does not depend on you ... and yet you act as if it did!

You pray. You pray, not just for yourself and your own needs, not just for the members of your family and their needs, not even just for the members of your church family and their needs. You pray, daily, for any and all who need your prayers, any and all of whom you have knowledge, asking God to bring healing, comfort, wisdom, strength, courage, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace.

This is what you do, as God's servants, in the service of others. This is what we are called into God's church to do. So, let's do it!

Now I am preaching to you, aren't I?