

2022.02.13 - The Way Of Jesus – Service

Mark 10:32-45 - Josh Siders

So What? Serving is the path toward looking like Jesus.

Feel What? Invited

Now What? Follow the Way of Jesus by serving one another.

VISION CASTING

The purpose of Tallgrass at The Well is to create community together by inviting everyone into the Way of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Charles the Great, or Charlemagne as he was known, was Kings of the Franks in the eighth century, and then later the first Holy Roman Emperor as he united most of Europe under his power and extended protection for Christians throughout his empire. But his exploits were not without a dark side. As he battled the pagan Saxons for supremacy, he offered his conquered foes a choice: be baptized into the church and live, or refuse and die. This was a of perversion of Christianity as it wed military might and religion. Conversion through coercion let its mark all throughout Europe, and also popped up through the world as the military engine expanded.

Power and coercion are wielded regularly in our world. One of the sore spots is when we look at how business is regularly done. It's interesting to simply look at the corporations that made money during the pandemic. Many

of the billionaires we would be familiar with grew their bottom line while their wage workers struggled to make ends meet.

This can be a sore subject in America, and we tend to appeal to our value for the free market. "It's what the market wants," we say, as if that's the highest and most unquestionable entity we serve.

Now, none of us here are anywhere close to billionaire status, or running a corporation with hundred of employees, But, still, does Jesus have anything to say about power and how we interact with one another?

Mark strings together several of Jesus' teachings to illustrate God's view on power and the kingdom. Jesus begins with welcoming children to come around him about how we must become like children to enter into God's kingdom. Then, he speaks with the Rich Young Ruler who refused to part with his wealth to follow Jesus, who bemoans how difficult it is for those with riches to enter the kingdom.

Mark 10:32-34 (NIV): They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit

on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

Jesus predicts for the the third time his death, but he is also explaining how the kingdom itself works. And then, right on the heels of this, Mark tells us about Jesus being approached by James and John, the Sons of Thunder, and how they wanted a special place of prominence and authority when Jesus came into his full glory.

Mark 10:35-37 (NIV): Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

In the Gospel of Matthew, we see these two brothers sent their mother to ask Jesus to fulfill their request. They want this so badly, it seems they've badgered Jesus several times, and even sent their mom to put extra pressure on him to relent.

Transition: They are using the tools of the fallen order while Jesus is showing them the Way of the new creation.

SOLUTION

Mark 10:41-45 (NIV): When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to

become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

This is means to provoke in us the question, *Am I truly following in the Way of Jesus, or am I, like the disciples, being seduced by the powers of this world?* If the disciples can follow Jesus for over three years, hear his anointed teaching about the alternative of the kingdom, and still want to use authority and privilege for their own means, in what ways does the world still lay claim to my own heart?

Timothy Gombis, *Mark: The Story Of God Bible*

Commentary: “Earthly rule is characterized by status seeking and is often reinforced through image-maintenance, intimidation, deception, and violence. ...Worldly figures misuse and abuse their rule to exalt themselves and keep their people in subjection. While the disciples are craving the glory that comes with such positions, Jesus warns them they are not to behave this way. ...The mode of prominence and exaltation in the kingdom of God is radically different from the way of this world. Greatness for followers of Jesus is for those who become servants, for those who are slaves. A servant looks to the needs of others, and a slave gives up all rights and personal claims. The expressions about servants and slaves are set in synonymous parallelism and are meant to provoke the imagination about the sorts of attitudes toward others that characterize true greatness in the kingdom. ...Jesus will receive the kingdom and rule

over it. Yet, he leads the way to the kingdom through suffering and death. Therefore, this is the way that all must go who will participate in his coming reign. If the Lord of the realm is a servant of others, giving himself up for their life, then those who desire prominence must follow him in servanthood and slavery on behalf of others.”

My own failings as a husband, father, and pastor expose me here. The Spirit of God has challenged me time and again about how I get loud and talk over people--namely, my children and my wife. I like to argue things out, and have the last word. Bang my fists, or threaten to leave in the middle of an argument. I can withhold affection and hide behind my self-build walls. I squint my eyes and furrow my brows to try to look intimidating. These are all things that I have to be aware of, submit to Jesus and ask him to change me. And many times where I have had to repent and apologize.

The Way of Jesus that embraces weakness required settledness in our identity in God--that we are beloved and accepted just as we are. The world will use all of its weapons to accuse us that we're inadequate and we're foolish to not want to win every argument and have every last word. It will also take vulnerability as we walk this out in community. We want to be open with our doubts and insecurities and include people in the journey that we're on. And it will require boldness to speak truth to the powers that coerce people, take advantage of them, and use them for evil and fallen purposes.

Transition: This brings things to us, to how we resist coercion and embrace servanthood in our midst here in our church.

APPLICATION

Have you ever showed up somewhere new and you're enjoying observing people do the things they do, with no responsibility? It might be taking your kids to school and not worrying about doing anything with the PTA. Or, how about at your in-laws where everyone has their role, and they're just glad you showed up. Or, maybe it's at a church—maybe it's even this church—and you get to enjoy worship while you sit back and just enjoy what's going on.

And then someone comes along and ruins it. They just ruin the experience for you. They ruin it with three simple words: *Can you help?*

*And you're thinking, **Can I help? No way! Everything is fine without me. You guys got this. I would just screw it up. I wouldn't even know where to begin to help. I'm tired. It's not in my skill set.** That's what we think, right?*

But hear me out. Being asked to help is a normal step in being a part of something. Your job, your neighborhood, your family. We show we care by being present and by pitching in. **Story about showing up to Sarah's grandparents for Thanksgiving.**

I share this, not because we have empty slots on our ministry teams, although we do, but because I believe three things are true: Church leaders are to share the

work, serving is the path toward maturity, and everyone has something to offer. Why do I say this? Listen, I'm not going to tell you anything you don't already know, but I would like to start with Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV): So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- 1. The primary duty of church leaders is to empower people for ministry.**

Paul says that when Jesus ascended to heaven and poured out his Spirit, he released gifts into his Church. Leadership--here designated by five specific titles--have a unique purpose: To equip his people for works of service. And when that is done well, the body, an analogy for the church, is empowered and unified.

2. **Serving is a part of the maturation process.**

If you were to ask me to condense down into one answer what sets someone apart as spiritually mature, I would say someone who is committed to serving others. Not the number of Scripture verses they've memorized, not if they know Hebrew or Greek, not if they're able to draw crowds with their oration skills. If someone is serving others humbly, without fanfare and attention, there is a high correlation to the depth of spiritual formation in their life. Why is that?

Some of this can be attributed to embracing our role, as Jesus said, as servants. Wanting to serve is fine, though, until someone comes along and treats you as a servant. There is a range of issues that have to be dealt with internally when this happens, and this little-death of humiliation leads to spiritual fruit and maturity.

When we serve, we're also forced to serve people that we don't necessarily get along with. And it's in those times when God's Spirit comes along to challenge us to continue in our resentment, or open up to love.

3. **Everyone has something to offer.**

Scripture often uses the body as a metaphor for the local church where everyone plays a part in the overall health and function. No one can say they're not needed and no one can elevate their own importance over another. If

you're here, it's because God has a place and a role in mind for you.

And if you're not sure what it is, just start where you are with what you have. You don't need to wait for the perfect opportunity, when life is just calm enough; start where you are with what you have. When Moses argued with God that he didn't have what it took to be the instrument of Israel's deliverance, God said, "What's in your hand?" He said, "Moses, what is it that you already possess? What overlooked feature have I already given you that can be used?" Moses told him that all he had was his staff, and God used that to frustrate magicians and confound the pharaoh and lead Israel out of her captivity. What's in your hand that God is wanting to use?

Several years ago, I asked some people why they served. Here are their responses:

- **Joe:** "I serve for the simple reason I love Jesus and my church. I want to support my church the best I can and whether that be putting in flooring or cleaning or making coffee. They are all acts of kindness in which makes a friendly and warm place for people to have community and worship. It's not about 'Look at me and all the good things I'm doing. I'm sure to get into heaven now.' It's more about selfless acts to make a better place for people. I think it's part of being all in for Jesus and supporting the place you worship him. There are plenty of times where you don't want to get up early or stay late and

you have to take a step back and ask yourself is it about me or something much greater than me.”

- **Karis**: “We serve because we’re called to serve biblically, it gives us an opportunity to use the spiritual gifts we’ve been given and it brings us closer to the community in our church.”
- **Jon**: “Ditto what she said. It’s also my top love language so in general, it makes my heart smile. For me it goes back to being bought into something as well and honestly the old farmer work ethic. If there is work to be done you do it.”
- **Trey**: “Why do i serve? Because I love Jesus. Yeah it sounds like a cliché, but for me it's not. Serving is an outward expression of my obedience to my Lord, my King of kings my Savior. Anyone can read and memorize and repeat Scripture. But it takes both voice and action to show that you have surrendered to Christ. There was an incident where the disciples were debating over who was the greatest amongst them. Jesus told them to make themselves the least. ‘So you want to be first? No make yourself second.’ I serve because my Savior came into this world and he also served. He healed the sick. He cast out demons. He raised the dead. And he was a teacher. He served even though he didn't have to. He served because he loved us. I love Jesus with all my heart. And I want to represent him well in the eyes of the world. So I serve.”

What I hear in these statements is one thing: **Life is about what you give, not what you get.**

True fulfillment will never come through self-gratification. That will lead you to emptiness and self-destruction. And along the way, you will destroy other people.

- not through building a business that blows up
- not through having a certain amount of money in the bank
- not through taking certain trips
- or having certain mountain-top experiences
- or winning trophies, medals, or plaques
- or even seeing your children have all those things

We all want to get to the top. But Jesus said the way to the top in his kingdom is to become a faithful servant to the Father and a humble servant to one another.

This is the life-transforming truth that took a man like Paul, seething with contempt and threatening death to the young Jesus movement, and turned him into its messenger, encouraging others along the path of sacrifice.

Philippians 2:3-11 (NIV): Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus, because he has been given all authority and glory in all of existence, stoops low and takes the towel and removes the muck and filth of the world to reveal the true beauty of servanthood as the way to be great in the kingdom of God.

Transition: Now, when we talk about serving, there are a few concerns that surface that we must address.

OBJECTIONS

First, there is the issue of how tired we all are. There is a very real sense of anxiety and languish that is pervasive in our culture right now. The pandemic and other recent crises have stretched us thin, and the result is that we wonder if we really have any more to give to others, namely serving in church.

Second, we've seen and perhaps been a part of organizations and, unfortunately ministries and churches, that run volunteers ragged and then shame them for dropping out. There's a very real trauma that results from this kind of environment.

So, what's the answer here? In both cases, there is a need for rest--the true rest in Jesus and his people that brings restoration. We recognize there are seasons where we all need to step back and enter into rest.

What I would say, for those skeptical about serving, give yourself--and us as leaders--three months in a ministry. Dip your toe in and then see how it goes and see if God may have a restorative process in the posture of servanthood. Also, you're welcome to come to our volunteer celebration if you're ready and interested in joining a team. We want to celebrate even the open heart posture of stepping into serving.

Transition: And, speaking of leaders, I want to leave us with a thought from the book *The Servant*.

INSPIRATION

James C. Hunter, *The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership*: “The final test of leadership is: Do you leave things better than you found them? Will your employees get promoted, have a better career, even have a better life because they spent a few seasons with you? Have they learned and grown as a result of your influence? Will your children be ready when they leave your home? Will they be effective parents, neighbors, coaches, spouses, and teachers—have you done your job, Dad? How about you, Mom? Leadership is influence—the mark we leave on other people and the mark we leave on the organizations we involve ourselves with. We all leave

a mark. The real question is: Will people be glad you were there?”

Now, this question applies to us all, not just leaders. What if we were a church where people could look at their lives and know they were better off for being a part? What if we formed a church culture where we were more than willing to lean in and look for ways to serve each other? What if we lived in such a way that our open arms were felt by everyone who came through our foyer and who came through our living rooms?

Transition: Here are some ways we can take steps toward just that.

CONCLUSION

Next Step:

- Follow the Way of Jesus in the Practice of Service
 - Beginning: Every week, introduce yourself to someone you don't know
 - Baseline: Join a Ministry Team where you can serve at least twice a month
 - Stretch: Find a non-profit to offer monthly volunteer hours

Prayer