

LOVE'S CALL TO SERVE

Mark 10:35-45

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WATCH/LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/loves-call-to-serve/>

P.J. O'Rourke has written, "Everybody wants to save the Earth but nobody wants to help Mom with the dishes." It's true, isn't it? We've been centering all our sermons and worship themes for 2018 on love, but when love shows up in work clothes, it's called service. We want to serve, but to limit it, to receive credit and thanks for it and to complain about it.

Our text offers an amazing insight into human nature. Have you ever had a child say, "I want you to say yes to whatever I ask"? That's the conversation Jesus has with James and John in vv. 35-40. They asked him if they could be in the privileged seats of his new kingdom. Jesus warns the disciples, "It's not mine to give and you really don't want to go there." Ironically, several years later, James did follow Jesus. He was martyred by King Herod (Acts 12:1-2). Gulp. Be very careful what you ask for.

It's interesting that Jesus uses baptism imagery. We are baptizing today. Baptism signifies being flooded (we use the phrase "in over our heads"). It means we're not in control. We don't get to control outcomes of relationships, conversations, situations. And baptism is the induction into a new lifestyle, with new values, a new way to see reality. So it is significant that Jesus reminds them—we're not trying to copy Rome (v. 42). We are counter-cultural. And the irony is that they were mimicking the very people they despised (the Roman Empire). Jesus says in v. 43 that whoever would be great (megas in Greek, as in mega awesome) must be servant (our word deacon...it was a character trait and way of life before it was a church office; some are called to the office; everyone is called to a diakonos way of life!). We must be slave to all.

Do you see what Jesus driving at? The greater our authority, the greater the temptation to take ourselves too seriously and fill up with pride. Only Christ can break us out of our circle of pride. The only solution is to constantly bathe our lives in the reality that we belong to Jesus and are mere servants.

The context of this gospel text shows Jesus has been telling them about the deadly cost of following him (vv. 32-34). And yet they ask for honors. Do you think that, like the original disciples, you and I sometimes miss the point of following Jesus? Historians tell us some of the early Christians sold themselves into slavery in order to give the money to the poor and hungry. Shane Claiborne writes about the time he visited Mother Teresa and noticed that her feet were mal-formed. Someone explained that when they received a new shipment of used shoes, she always took the worst ones, with the least support. And over the decades, her feet became misshapen [The Irresistible Revolution, p. 158].

I repeat the question. Do we ever miss the point of following Jesus? It's because of love that we serve. Love calls us. Christ's love for us (v. 45). Typical of Jesus, he doesn't zap the thick-headed

disciples with an electric cattle prod. Instead, he patiently teaches them. I like this word by Lamar Williamson, Jr.: “Their relationship to him [Jesus] is imperfect but unbroken” [Interpretation—A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching—Mark, pp. 193-194]. Isn’t that your relationship with Jesus also? Your servanthood? Mine?

A while back, my mother-in-law’s property was struck by one of those sudden, brutal north Missouri tornadoes. It tore through a machine shed full of farm vehicles and packed to the gills with tools, lumber and more. The roof and three sides of the shed were carried across the highway into a pasture. As we worked over the Fourth of July holiday, dodging mud puddles, heaving lumber, dumping out rain-soaked paint cans, neighbors would drop by. Some would just stand and watch us. Others would roll up their sleeves and help. I developed this internal question in my mind. “Are you here to watch or are you here to work?”

Are we hearing the gospel this morning? Really hearing? The call of Christ is not a call to stand around and watch others do the work. FBC family, our mission is huge. Countless thousands without Christ, human suffering everywhere. Believers need discipling. Families need mentoring and care. Are you here to watch or are you here to work? Love calls us to serve.