

October 21, 2018

Servanthood – Serving All

Prayer

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Sermon

So many times, when we have stories about the disciples and their interactions with Jesus, we see that the true humanity of the people, the men, that Jesus chose to be witnesses to his earthly ministry. Probably never more so than this interaction between James and John and Jesus. The two brothers, the sons of Zebedee come to Jesus and they use the trick that kids often do. I want you to do for me whatever I ask of you. In other words, commit to doing what I want you to do before you know what it is. If you've ever had children, they're great at trying to do that. Do this for me. Do me this favor. Well...let me know what it is first and then I'll commit to yes or no. And Jesus says well what is it that you want me to do for you.

And they laid it out for him, we want to come into your kingdom. To sit on your right hand and on your left. We want the seats of honor. We think and suddenly, they did think that they did that by following Jesus to this point, earned that right. And they wanted to get their stake on that claim before any of the other disciples thought of it and went to Jesus and asked. And Jesus responds as Jesus often does with do you understand what this really means kind of statement or question. Are you able to drink the cup that I'm going to drink? Or be baptized with the baptism with which I must be baptized?

Now James and John, they're confident. We are able. We're going to stick by you, we're going to do whatever it takes to be by your side. We're sold on this idea of the kingdom of God and with you as a leader. We want to be there in the seats of honor because we're going to be with you through it all. And Jesus response again with well okay then. You will drink the cup that I'm about to drink. They had absolutely no idea exactly what that meant. And we can be baptized with the baptism with which you are going to be baptized.

Now cup you might remember, is symbolic of the cup that Jesus says, "Let this cup pass without me." When he's in the garden of Gethsemane on the night that he is about to be arrested, questioned, beaten, and taken to the cross. That's the cup that he's referencing here. I don't think James and John understood what it was to drink of that cup. Because it was a cup of obedience. It was a cup of giving oneself over for the good of all. The baptism that he speaks about is that death. Passing through this life. Redeeming death so that it was no longer an end but coming into an eternal life.

It's the baptism that all who believe will pass through. It is not one that many of us look forward to. He's trying to tell his disciples at least James and John at that point. That the road that they have chosen to travel is not an easy one. That it has to do with suffering. That it has to do with pain. That it has to do with servanthood. That the kingdom that they are looking forward to, they will be a part of. But not without going through all the temptations and strife of this world. Just as Jesus is going through all that humanity goes through in the living of life. For to redeem all of life, the son of God had to experience all of life and death.

Now as you might imagine, the other disciples when they got wind of what was going on weren't very pleased. It wasn't because they

thought that James and John were that out of the line. It was because they didn't think about it first. They thought they all deserved to be in those places of honor because they were all going through the same thing that Jesus was going through. And that all the disciples were going through. Sometimes they would be lauded for their great faith. Sometimes they would be accused of breaking the law. And not being worthy of even being a good Jew, let alone to be part of the kingdom of God that Jesus seems to be touting. So, it wasn't out of a righteousness that they're angry. They just wanted the same thing.

And this becomes a teaching moment for Jesus. He said you must really understand what I'm about here. This is not a kingdom that's going to be taken by force. This is not a kingdom that's going to be one without sacrifice. Don't you understand that I came not to be served but to serve. If you really want to be a part of this kingdom you must understand that the greatness of this kingdom is not about having power and authority that you can laud over other people. It's about being there for everyone else.

It's about the son of God being there to take the place of pain and justice on the cross for everyone else. And you as witnesses, your job is to serve everyone. Each other first and foremost. To be willing to lay down your life for your brothers here. To be willing to lay down your life to drink of this cup. To be baptized with this baptism so that all can see and understand that the kingdom of God that's being spoken about has a payment and it is your servanthood. It's about going out. It's about seeing the needs. It's about sharing with one another from the abundance that you've been given. It's about being there and sharing and telling and living out the life of a servant in the world.

Now when I was reading that and if you follow the diocese on Facebook or if you get the emails from the diocese, hopefully you've seen the

video that the bishop has done. Ten days after Michael. He's talking about servanthood. He's talking about what we are about as Christians. I commend his video. It's very short but look at it.

But we are during a time of being a servant is truly needed. And held up as something that's good. I've seen the people here at St. Jude's and I've seen people across the diocese. I've seen people across the country respond as servants to the need that is so apparent. Whenever a devastating hurricane or natural disaster or flooding takes place, it puts people in a completely different mindset and living condition. Where before there was a strata of well-off and not so well-off. Where there was the rich, the middle class, the lower class. Everybody right now in these affected areas are in the same situation.

People who are used to having the air conditioner turned down. The lights coming on. Having everything that they need as far as ice and food. And to be able to choose whatever they want to eat or wherever they want to eat, all that's been taken away from them. It's something new for them. The same could be said about the mostly middle-class folks who have found out what it is to live without electricity and drinking water suddenly. Where now they must rely on word of mouth to be find out where the ice is. To find out where the water is. To find out where they can get a meal that's not warmed up on their grills.

Now the poor folks they've been living with this for some time, but they're still hurt by it. They've still had lost housing. They've still have lost the little bit that they had. Everybody's kind of in the same boat. And it gives two things. One, it gives them the opportunity to be served. Not because they have prestige. And not because they are so poor that they can't help but need service. This is a time when they're all in the same boat and they need the very essentials of life. And they're learning what it is to receive that and to receive that gratefully.

For those who are in the areas around who have not been affected, it is a time to really know and understand service in a new way. What it is to recognize the abundance and blessing that we have been given. And to have a heart to share, to offer to others out of the abundance that we have. And to recognize what it is to have that abundance. So many times, we think we have just what we need. But what we need is a relative term we find out. What some people are used to in having at their beck and call is quite a luxury for many other people.

And I've seen members of this congregation, a group that by this point has already left to go up to Marianna to help clear away debris and trees and help to make sure that there are safe conditions for the people that live in Marianna who have trees down around their homes or in their homes. They are serving in a very real way. Other people are serving as they can by giving donations. The number of things that have been taken up to the folks in Marianna but throughout the affected area is amazing. And I dare say that nobody who has given these things or offered their service feel like they have been diminished. It is a time to really recognize what it is to be servants. And to give of oneself and know that I've not been diminished by this. I don't have less because of this. I have been filled in a different way. And blessed in a different way.

And again, a couple of things about that. One, it shouldn't take the disaster to help us to know and understand and feel that. And the second thing is once the disaster, once that area has recovered. There are still needs around us every day. That's why every Sunday people bring food so that it could be taken to Sharing and Caring. So that people who simply can't make enough, earn enough to feed themselves adequately throughout the week can get food to help supplement that so that they can have enough. Not extravagance but enough to assist. Enough to live. Enough to go another day. Enough to work another day.

Therefore, we have the program of Supper on Saturday and that so many members here volunteer their time to go and serve these people. Who are looking forward to that hot meal. That one full meal where they know that on Saturday, every Saturday they are going to receive enough to feed themselves and feed their family. Not that it's a great extravagance but it is a necessity that is being supplied because of a service of the folks at Crosspoint. Because of the service of people like St. Jude's folks and other churches that help support that ministry. This is a time for us to acknowledge and remember and know that there is need around us every day.

And that as members, as citizens of God's kingdom, we are called to recognize that to have eyes open to it. To be willing to give to those who worry about not having enough. But to be assured that God has provided so much that we can help others with time, with food, with gifts. So that they can have enough to go another day. Jesus tried very hard to see that being citizens of God's kingdom is about servanthood and about serving all people. Not trying to evaluate whether they are worthy of our help but in acknowledging the need to be moved by the spirit of God to offer what we can.

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