9-2-2018 – Message – Sacrificial Service

Mark 10: 43 – 45

My messages over the last few months have been about God's gifts of Love, Grace, and Faith.

All of these gifts transform our lives and when used in sacrificial service for God's mission, will influence others for Christ.

How many of you think of yourself as a leader?

Now think about the person who made the most significant impact on your life, someone who had a major role in who you are today.

How many of you identified someone from your working years, a supervisor or manager?

How many of you thought of mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, teacher or friend?

We all fall into one or more of these areas of relationship and have had influence over the thinking and behavior of others.

Perhaps that's because **everyone** is a leader in some part of their life, the only way to avoid a leadership role is to isolate yourself from the world.

Today's Scripture follows another discussion the disciples had about who is the greatest among them and who should sit at the right and left hand of Christ Jesus on the throne of His Kingdom.

This encounter is recorded in both Matthew and Mark. James and John were seeking more than just to sit next to Jesus at dinner.

They wanted the seats of honor, power and privilege, to be the most important people in Jesus' Kingdom.

The other ten disciples were indignant, annoyed and angered, by the request for special treatment and expressed their thoughts and feelings.

In Mark 10: 42 Jesus responds to the disciple's discussion, *So Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them".*

**1. Leadership in the World**

Jesus is speaking to His disciples, the twelve, the men He chose as followers, disciples, to be leaders in His Church. He describes the worldly leadership which is contrary to His teachings of love, grace, and mercy toward others.

Worldly leadership values personal advancement, individual accomplishment above the needs of the people under the leader's control.

Have you ever experienced leaders that act as if the people under their influence and authority are there only to benefit the leader?

**A. The Way of the World**

This seems to not only be the style of leadership but in other relationships in Jesus time that sadly continues today.

The disciples, the Jewish people had suffered greatly under the dictatorship rule of conquering nations.

Because of this experience James, John and all the disciples had a skewed understanding of what Jesus was telling them about leadership in His Kingdom.

They were still picturing Jesus entering Jerusalem as the conquering hero, removing by force the current rulers, and assuming the throne of Israel.

That day Jesus heard James and John squabbling over who should have seats of honor, power, and privilege at His right and left hand.

Their desire for position and status showed they didn’t understand the nature of Jesus yet, in respect to leadership and power.

**B. Misuse of Power and Authority**

The disciples all seemed to be influenced by the worldly self-serving ambitions of the culture and society in which they lived.

Worldly rulers, the pharaohs, the Caesars, the Herods, and Pilate all used their authority and power to abuse the people under their authority.

Even the Spiritual leaders, the Pharisees considered themselves as greater than everyone else. As in the parable recorded in Luke 18: 9 – 14 *9 Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: 10 “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people— cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! 12 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’ 13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ 14 I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

**C. People Had No Value**

Individuals were treated as possessions to be used like any other tool in their tool box and discarded when they were no longer able to do the job.

People had no value except for what they could do for their master and further his greatness in the world.

Jesus is bringing to light the way of the world, so the disciples will better understand the need for change in their thinking about what it means to be a leader in His Kingdom.

In Luke 22: 25 – 27 Jesus shares, *25 Jesus told them, “In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called ‘friends of the people.’* (Does this sound familiar in today's world?)

*26 But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant.*

*27 Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.*

Jesus continues to teach the disciples about what leadership looks like in His Kingdom. Mark 10: 43 – 44 *43* ***But among you it will be different.*** *Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else.*

**2. Leadership in Jesus' Kingdom**

Jesus is using a different standard of greatness, God's standard built on humility and sacrificial service.

Peter instructs church leaders, elders in 1 Peter 5: 2 - 3 *2 Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly— not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. 3 Don’t lord it over the people assigned to your care but lead them by your own good example.*

**A. Changed Thinking**

In verses 43 – 44 Jesus was using the same method of teaching He used in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and Luke 12.

He would say you have heard this, using examples of current ideas, laws, and attitudes and then state but I tell you this, to illuminate God's truth which was different from the social and cultural norms of their day.

Today, businesses, organizations, institutions and in some cases, even churches, measure greatness by personal achievement.

In Colossians 3: 14 – 15 Paul emphasizes unity and harmony as we achieve God's Mission together.

*14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect unity/harmony.*

*15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.*

In Christ’s Kingdom greatness is humble, self-giving, and sacrificial service in Jesus' name.

Instead of seeking to have your needs met, look for ways to serve and meet the needs of others free from the need for recognition.

As Paul writes in Philippians 2: 3 – 5,

*3 Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*

**B. Servant Leadership**

In reality, we are all leaders to some extent. The question is who is your leadership role model? Christ Jesus of course, because it tells us in

Titus 2: *14 He gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.*

The Greek word for servant is *diakonos,* from which the term deacon is derived. Secularly used to describe someone who does menial tasks, but Jesus chose the word to describe His committed follower's selfless humble life of service.

In the book *Lead Like Jesus* is this statement "For followers of Jesus, servant leadership is not an option; servant leadership is a mandate. Our servant leadership is to be a living statement of who we are in Jesus, an identity evident in how we treat one another and how we demonstrate the love of Jesus to the whole world."

Just as Jesus said in John 13: 34 – 35 *So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”*

**C. Slave to All**

The position of slave is even lower and more demeaning in the social strata than servant. The Greek word used in this passage for slave is *doulos*, meaning bond-servant, someone without any rights.

At the beginning of his letters Paul introduces himself as a slave or bond-servant of Christ Jesus.

In Romans 14: 8 Paul writes *8 If we live, it’s to honor the Lord. And if we die, it’s to honor the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

As slaves bought with a price, followers of Christ Jesus are compelled to humble, selfless, sacrificial service.

**3. Our Model for Sacrificial Service**

Jesus continues in Mark 10: 45 *45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*

**A. Son of Man**

The incarnate Jesus is the greatest model of sacrificial service of all time.

The opposite of what the world values, someone who comes from nothing in the world and by worldly standards achieves greatness.

Jesus came from greatness and humbled Himself to sacrificially serve us sinners and become the model for how we ought to serve God and others to the Glory of God.

As Paul wrote in Philippians 2: 6 – 8 *6 Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, 8 He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.*

**B. To Serve**

One of the best teaching moments in Scripture is Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. He is very specific about why He did it and instructs them and us to go and do the same.

When we reach out with words and actions of love and care in the name of Jesus we are figuratively washing each other's feet.

John 13: 3 – 5 & 12 - 15 *3 Jesus knew that the Father had given Him authority over everything and that He had come from God and would return to God. 4 So He got up from the table, took off His robe, wrapped a towel around His waist, 5 and poured water into a basin. Then He began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel He had around Him.*

*12 After washing their feet, He put on His robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? 13 You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. 14 And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. 15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.*

Service to others takes many forms and when it becomes the driving force in our lives it is a beautiful expression of serving in the name of Christ Jesus.

**C. Sacrificial Service**

Some of you have had experiences of putting your life on the line in service to others, in the military, law enforcement, firefighters, etc.

There are those who serve in everyday actions without acknowledgement of any kind.

I may have already told you about a special Christian friend of mine who at the age of 95 underwent a cardiac procedure and was no longer allowed to drive.

She was a diligent visitor in the church, but since she could no longer drive to visit she asked the pastor to give her a list of people who missed church and she would call them, all of them.

She would inquire after their wellbeing, give them encouraging words, and pray with them. She was my example of sacrificial service. She is with the Lord now, but her life of service lives on in all of us who knew her.

I know people in this church family who go above and beyond in serving others. They sacrifice time, resources, and talents to make sure others are served in many ways.

More than this they do everything to bring honor and glory to Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord.

Paul wrote in Colossians 3: 17 *And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

My Prayer is that you will rededicate your life to sacrificial service to the Lord Jesus, His Church, and all His children.

I would like to conclude today with these words from the song Only Jesus:

Make it count, leave a mark, build a name for yourself  
Dream your dreams, chase your heart, above all else  
Make a name the world remembers  
But all an empty world can sell is empty dreams  
I got lost in the light, but it was up to me  
To make a name the world remembers  
But Jesus is the only name to remember

All the kingdoms built, all the trophies won  
Will crumble into dust when it's said and done  
Cause all that really matters  
Did I live the truth to the ones I love?  
Was my life the proof that there is only One  
Whose name will last forever?

I don't want to leave a legacy  
I don't care if they remember me  
Only Jesus  
I've only got one life to live  
I'll let every second point to Him  
Only Jesus