

SERMON

WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR?

Preaching text: Mark 10:35-45

Sometimes we call this time together a “service.” We really shouldn’t. That implies as worship leaders we are here dispensing something to you as consumers. This is not a “service,” this is worship. We are here to worship God, not ourselves. Too many people in churches today are more interested in being served rather than serving. When that happens it’s very sad.

Service is what our Bible reading is all about. There is an old saying that goes, “Life is not so much one thing after another ... as it is the same old thing over and over and over again!”

That is really true of our Bible reading. The old controversy about who was the greatest began to rage again. Over the past couple of months in worship you have heard from the Book of Mark how Jesus has been trying to prepare his disciples for what lies ahead.

In chapter 8 we read of the 1st time Jesus took the disciples aside and told them that they would be going to Jerusalem where he would be arrested, beaten, tried, condemned, and put to death. Immediately after sharing this with the disciples, Peter says to Jesus, “No way! I won’t let them do anything like that to you Lord!”

And then we heard in chapter 9 of the second time Jesus told the disciples of the suffering and death that was in store. That time Jesus asked the disciples what they talked about after he shared that news with them ... and they were embarrassed ... because they had talked about which one of THEM was the greatest.

And now, in chapter 10 ... for the 3rd time Jesus tells them that he is going to die. This time James and John respond by asking Jesus a favor. “Teacher,” they say, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

“What do you want?” asks Jesus.

“Grant us to sit ... one at your right ... and one at your left ... when you come into your glory.” It’s like I said: life is not so much one thing after another ... as it is the same old thing over and over and over again.

And what is repeated over and over and over again is the disciples putting their own agendas first. In our gospel Jesus asks, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And that is a great question for us today. What are we here for? What do you want? Do you want to sit and be entertained? Or do you want to be energized to serve?

I ran across a fascinating bit of trivia. The Christian Century did a feature story on “The Ten Greatest Preachers.” Later that feature was followed by another on “The Ten Greatest Churches.” And it was immediately apparent that none of the 10 greatest preachers was associated with any of the 10 greatest churches. Not one! What do you make of that? Maybe those with the 10 greatest preachers felt called to sit and be entertained ... and those in the 10 greatest churches were energized to serve!

We at Good Shepherd have been blessed so much! Blessed in so many ways ... we have life ... we have health ... we have strength ... but we have come here to be energized to serve.

We are called to serve as a church ... and we are called to serve as individuals. How we “do the serving” is the challenge. Are you willing to serve ... to sacrifice ... for others?

It might mean this: Do you have a friend with cancer? That friend is in pain, is alone, and needs you. That friend is aware that many are avoiding him or her because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. But your friend needs you.

Do you know someone who has lost their significant other over the past year through death or divorce? Pick up the phone and invite them over. Or if you have a couple of tickets to something, don’t invite a couple. Waste a ticket. Invite that friend.

See the waitress ... or the clerk ... the ones waiting on you. Smile. Be friendly. Offer an encouraging word. Their jobs will be less of a grind and more of a serving the public.

Not very spectacular ... any of that. Certainly not the stuff of Mother Teresa, but God hasn't placed us in Calcutta. He placed us where we are ... and we can be servants wherever we are ... and we can make a difference!

AMEN.