

THE SERMON

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday, January 18, 2026

Our New UMC Vision:
Serve Joyfully

Psalm 100:1; Nehemiah 8:10;
John 13:14–15; 1 Peter 4:10

Beloved Church, the second part of our new vision of the United Methodist Church says, “***Serve Joyfully***” and explains that with the heart of Christ, we journey alongside the most vulnerable among us, offering care and compassion with joy.

So, ***what does this second part of the vision mean for us, United Methodists? – Serve joyfully?*** Let me share a story that speaks to the heart of what we are called to do as followers of Jesus Christ.

During different seasons of the year, some Methodist churches in Chile run a program called “*A Week for Christ*.” Where congregations gather, and volunteers serve a specific community through construction, gardening, and other forms of service.

One of those times, a group of volunteers in a small town decided to spend their Saturday repairing homes for elderly residents. One woman, in her late seventies, had lived alone for years in a house that was falling apart. The volunteers painted her walls, fixed her porch, and cleaned her yard. When they finished, she stood on her porch with tears streaming down her face and said, *"I never thought anyone would care enough to do this for me. You didn't just fix my house—you gave me joy."*

What struck me most about that story wasn't just the transformation of her home, but the transformation of the volunteers. They came tired, some reluctant, but they left with radiant smiles. They discovered that serving wasn't a burden—it was a gift. Their joy didn't come from what they received, but from what they gave.

And yet, let's be honest: serving isn't always easy. Sometimes it feels inconvenient, exhausting, or unnoticed. Sometimes we serve out of obligation rather than delight. But Scripture calls us to something more profound: to serve joyfully, as a mark of true discipleship.

My friends, this morning we continue our series ***"Love Boldly. Serve Joyfully. Lead Courageously."*** Based on our new United Methodist vision. Last Sunday, we

reflected on the first part of this vision, "Love Boldly." Today, the invitation is to turn to joyful service.

Psalm 100:1 declares, "***Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!***" Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us, "***The joy of the Lord is your strength.***"

Jesus Himself, in John 13:14–15, after washing His disciples' feet, said, "***Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.***" And 1 Peter 4:10 exhorts us, "***Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.***"

These passages together paint a picture for us that **service is not a routine, but joy. It is not a chore, but a privilege.** It is not about recognition, but about reflecting Christ.

So, with that clear idea, that joy reflects Christ in our lives and in the lives of others. Let me offer five ways we can make this second part of the vision – ***Serve Joyfully*** - effective in our lives and in the lives of others.

The first way is that ***joyful service flows from God's grace.***

One of the first things we need to consider when discussing joyful service is that it begins with gratitude. Psalm 100 calls us to joyful worship because we belong to God when we recognize His grace, and our hearts overflow. Yes! Our hearts can overflow in joy when we serve God and others. That is why we say that *“joyful service is not forced”*; it is the natural response of a heart touched by God’s mercy and love.

At the same time, Nehemiah reminds us that joy is our strength. Without joy, service becomes weary. With joy, service becomes life-giving.

So, perhaps you need to ask yourselves: ***Do you serve out of guilt, or out of grace? Do you see service as a duty or as a delight?***

I met someone who had led many mission trips around the world, and she always saw opportunities to bring love and joy to others, regardless of the circumstances in the places she visited. What about you?

The second way is to take **Christ as our example of joyful service.**

In John 13, Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. This was the work of a servant, yet He did it with love. If you notice, He didn’t complain, He didn’t delegate, He didn’t avoid. He embraced the role of servant joyfully. And at the

end, Jesus says to us: ***"I have set you an example."*** Serving joyfully means following His footsteps.

So, let me ask you: ***Whose "feet" are you unwilling to wash?*** Who in your life do you avoid serving because it feels beneath you, inconvenient, or uncomfortable?

A third way is that **serving joyfully means serving the vulnerable.**

My friends, joyful service is not selective. It doesn't only serve those who can repay us. It seeks out the vulnerable, the overlooked, the marginalized.

Jesus spent His ministry with the poor, the sick, and the outcast. He showed us that joyful service journeys alongside those who need care most. Even 1 Peter 4:10 reminds us that our gifts are entrusted to us for others—not for ourselves.

So, ***what would it look like for you to serve someone who cannot give back?*** Perhaps mentoring a child, visiting the lonely, feeding the hungry, or advocating for the voiceless.

The fourth way that I would like to challenge you to consider is that **joyful service requires open hearts.**

Why? Because joyful service is not about efficiency alone, it's about compassion. We can serve with our hands but not with our hearts. True service requires

both. Remember that when we open our hearts, we discover delight in the very act of giving.

So, let me ask you, ***are you willing to slow down enough to serve with presence, not just productivity?***

To listen, not just to act? Think about that. We are so accustomed to seeing productivity in what we do that we forget that sometimes listening and maintaining a silent presence are also important.

The final way I challenge you to serve joyfully is that ***joyful service strengthens the Church.***

When believers serve joyfully, the church becomes a community of grace. Because joyful service is contagious, and it inspires others to join in. A church that serves joyfully becomes a beacon of hope to the world. I have seen that over and over since I have been your pastor, when you do the “easter eggs” or the “Christmas eggs” all serving together for one cause, and not just that, serving with joy.

So, imagine if every member of this congregation committed to one act of joyful service each week. What impact would that have on our church and in our community?

When I have been leading or just as a volunteer on a mission trip, we usually share some

practical applications that can help us navigate our mission field. They are simple but profound truths of what we need to do and not do when we are in a place to serve. So, let me offer you some practical applications that can help you in the second part of the vision: serving joyfully.

Serve with gladness, not grumbling. Ask God to transform your attitude before you serve. Pray: *"Lord, let me serve with joy today."* And this is not just for mission trips overseas, it is for our mission here, in our own church and community.

Serve where it costs you something. Joyful service is not always convenient. It may require time, energy, or resources. So, challenge yourself to serve in ways that stretch you.

Serve in hidden places. Not all service needs to be public. Some of the most joyful acts happen in secret. Remember Jesus' words, *"But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* (Matthew 6:3-4) - Wash dishes, visit the sick, write notes of encouragement, without seeking recognition.

Serve with others. My friends, joy multiplies when we serve together. Invite your family, friends, or small group to join you.

And finally, **serve with compassion.** Don't just do tasks, see people. Look into their eyes, hear their stories, share their burdens. Be present with a compassionate heart.

Beloved, serving joyfully is not optional; it is the mark of discipleship. It is how we reflect Christ to the world. It is how we embody the grace we have received.

When we serve joyfully, we discover the strength we didn't know we had. We find delight in places we didn't expect. We see Christ in the faces of those we serve.

So let us not serve reluctantly, but gladly. Not out of obligation, but out of love. Not for recognition, but for the glory of God. Let us pray.

Gracious God, thank You for Your Son, who taught us joyful service. Forgive us when we hold back our gifts. Fill us with gladness and compassion, that we may serve others with love. Strengthen us with Your joy so our service brings hope and honors Your name. Help us follow Christ's humble example, and may our church shine as a community of joyful servants, reflecting Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.