

## God's Stewards: Served and Serving

People w/a Purpose #2 – 02/07/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 13:3-5, 12-17 Pastor Keith Besel

v.15 [Jesus says,] **“For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”**

### **Introduction**

- ⊗ This morning, as we continue into the second week of our *People With A Purpose* journey; as we are forced to have our entire congregation worship this week online because of Covid concerns, we see that there is a bit of a connection between those two issues and our theme for the day.
  - ➔ As stewards of the gifts and resources and opportunities that God has given us, Jesus leads us today to consider the issue of Christian service. And yes, it matters that I said Christian service and not just service in general.
  - ➔ Why? Because, as we see in our Gospel Reading today, it was Christ who first came to serve us with His unsurpassed love and care. And it is Christ who then called all of His believers to follow His example by serving those around us in this world with His sacrificial love and care as well.
- ⊗ Yes, Jesus is the one that taught us to put the needs of others before ourselves when He went to the cross in great suffering; to give up His life so that you and I can now have life eternal.
  - ➔ That's the main reason why we cancelled our in-person worship services today – because of our love and concern for you; to remove any chance that any of you might somehow become infected with Covid in a similar way that I inadvertently came in contact last week with someone else who had it.
  - ➔ What we're talking about is the Gospel motivating and impacting what we do. Not because we are “forced” or “mandated” or because we believe that something is our “right”. That's not why Jesus came to serve us with salvation, and it is not why we serve others as His stewards. He served us in love so that you and I are able now to serve others in His love as well.

### **I. Christ – the perfect, humble suffering servant**

- ⊗ In Scripture we are taught that Christ's love is the hallmark of our Christian life. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because He first loved us”.
  - ➔ Now, our world thinks of love primarily as an emotion or a strong feeling. But this is one area where God's ways do not fit with the ways of this world.
  - ➔ Scripture teaches us that with God, love is not an emotion or feeling, but rather, it is an action done to benefit another. We learn this truth through passages like John 3:16 that says, “God so loved the world, that He gave ...” and 1 John 4:9-10, “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”. And one more, 1 John 3:16, “By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us”. You see, we know of God's love by His actions of giving, sending and laying down His life for us!
- ⊗ Additionally, the apostle Paul spends the entire 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians unfolding the nature and character of love as it is expressed in acts of care for another person.

- This love – Christ’s love – is expressed in His actions as a humble servant; as the perfect servant. Jesus’ whole life was a life of service. Even His death was done in service. That’s why He was born. Yes, He healed countless sick, drove out demons from people, raised the dead, preached repentance and salvation, but above it all He willingly suffered and died on a cross.
- ✘ He is the Second Person of the Holy Triune God. He did not need to be coerced, bribed, or prodded into setting aside His place in heaven; His power and all His rights and privileges as God to become the Suffering Servant. No, He did it all willingly. He became a man so that He could suffer humiliation, torture, and death – not for Himself – but for you and me; to pay the price required by our sins and that of the entire, undeserving world.
  - I know this may shock some people, but God doesn’t need us. He didn’t need to create us. He didn’t need to save us. He already has it all. He is perfect. But still, in love He chose to bless us with His life, His love, and His service. He created, loves and serves us so that we can benefit from who He is and all He has to give to us.
- ✘ It blows the mind to think that God created us first to serve us in His love! Then, as a result of His service and love to us, we now have the added joy of serving Him and others in return; in acts of love as well.
  - That’s the encouragement we heard from St. Paul in our Epistle Reading this morning: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:5–8).

## **II. In faith we serve in love and humility**

- ✘ This is where we receive not only the call to serve, but where we are given the ability to serve others with an attitude of humility and thanksgiving and love. Yes, loving service is a clear mark of the Christian life of stewardship.
  - And because we receive this attitude and power from Christ, then we also express our love for Christ and then for others in acts of service solely to benefit another.
- ✘ This is what it means to be one of God’s stewards. Jesus makes it clear in several places that you and I, as His disciples are to strive to have, and live each day, with a servant heart.
  - In Matthew 20:26-28, after John’s mother asked Jesus if her sons could sit at His right and left hand in His kingdom, Jesus said, “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”.
  - It was then later that same night that Jesus put that teaching into action as we heard in our Gospel Reading; washing His disciples’ feet in love and setting the example that, even the Son of God is not above serving others in humility and love.
- ✘ Yes, friends, the Christian life; our life as God’s stewards, is not something we do because we must, or because by doing so we gain points or favor with God, but rather it’s the character of God that He Himself brings to life in us. It is our privilege; our honor to be servants; to serve others in love.

- ✘ It pretty much has to be addressed any time that we talk about Christian stewardship; how a sure sign of our sinful nature is whenever we are tempted to believe that all we have is for us; for our use first, last and every day in between.
  - ➔ That though is spiritual blindness and death. It's when we see the world as nothing more than a big department store made for our own pleasure; where all of our gifts of time, talents, and treasure are viewed as tools to get us everything that we want.
  - ➔ What a contrast that attitude is to what we hear from St. Paul when he reminded the pastors in Ephesus of what He learned from Jesus, that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
- ✘ Look, for the most part, if God (or Jesus) does something one way, you can pretty much expect that the world operates in opposition to that.
  - ➔ And friends, we must simply come to accept and embrace that truth. The ways of our fallen world are not God's ways. For example, how often do we set goals (like career goals) with serving God or others as the primary purpose? Too often they're typically done with an attitude of "What's in it for me?"
  - ➔ Even as Christians we run up against the fact every day that our old flesh; our human nature is primarily self-centered; looking at the world around us and trying to figure out how we can best manipulate it to our personal benefit.
  - ➔ The best interests and needs of others – well, that is further on down the line of our instinctive priorities.
- ✘ Yet Jesus' command is not confusing, is it? After the first priority of loving the Lord your God, you are to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mat. 22:39).
  - ➔ But again, you don't serve your neighbor in love in an effort to gain brownie points with God. His love for us has already come to us first! And you can't be in any higher or more beloved position before God than you are right now because of Jesus.
  - ➔ You have been set free from the law by Jesus so that now loving and serving others is what you actually want to be about; it's just who you are now that you've received Christ's ultimate love and saving power in Baptism.
- ✘ And with that gift of faith, God has bestowed upon you a variety of resources, intelligence, and abilities; He has blessed you with an abundance of ways to put all that He's given you to work; serving Him in serving others; in serving the church; in serving the world in every part of life.

### III. Using the Lord's blessings in service

- ✘ Yes, that last phrase is one of the most often, and most difficult aspects of Christian stewardship to grasp and accept. Paul says in Colossians 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ".
  - ➔ "Whatever you do...", Paul says. That means no activity; no area of life is excluded from your service to your Lord. 1 Peter 4:10-11 explains it: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

✘ Jesus not only set the example in today's Gospel reading when He washed His disciples' feet, He taught us in Matthew 25:31-41 that serving others is important all the way up until the Last Day of His return. He said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me'. Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me'".

➔ You see, loving our Lord is acted out in serving those around us in His love; caring for their needs, their health, their safety, their general well-being above and before our own comfort and desires.

✘ You have opportunities right here in Christ's church to serve, whether it be in an official position or on a board, or plugging into an effort such as our Board of Human Care is kicking off today where they are looking for donations to help those in need in our community through the Ft. Lupton Food and Clothing Bank.

➔ Once you engage in love and interest with those who live around you, or those you work with or go to school with, then their needs will inevitably become known. Then in appreciation for Christ's loving service, you can joyfully serve those needs moving forward.

## Conclusion

✘ God loves you. That will never change! Now as His *People With A Purpose* you and I have the joy of passing His love on to others each day in humble service to them.

➔ You've been served, and you continue to be served each day by Jesus. What a blessing now to serve our neighbor in response; in Jesus' name. Amen.