



May 20, 2012
Pastor Mark Toone
Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church

Re-Member: Why Serve? Mark 10:45 and various

In two weeks, on June 3—one service at 10:00—we will be received into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Many of you are excited about this transition. Others of you may not care so much about denominations or might even have some lingering questions about this change. But wherever you are on the denominational issue, I hope that all of us would be in agreement on this: Chapel Hill is our home. You aren't members of a presbytery; Jeremy and I are. You are members of a local church body... this one. And this season of Re-Membering is a wonderful opportunity to reaffirm and recommit ourselves to what it means to be a part of our church family here at Chapel Hill.

We have one core requirement for membership: a commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior. But we also have expectations of our members... four of them. Do you remember what they are? **LifeGroups**: that every member would be part of an accountability group. **Sundays**: When you are in town, you are in church.

And today, **Service**: every member of Chapel Hill is expected to serve Christ somewhere. It doesn't have to be in the church. But we expect every member of this congregation to be serving Christ somewhere—teaching Sunday School, serving in a soup kitchen, being a deacon, working in the prison, leading a Boy Scout troop, repairing a widow's home, working in a street ministry, going on a mission trip (our men are in Mexico right now), volunteering in Young Life—there are thousands of ways to serve Christ in this community. And we expect every Chapel Hill member to find one.

I'd like you to do something for me; think about the **last** time you performed an act of service for the sake of Jesus. Be honest. I'm not talking about something you were already doing anyway... for yourself or for your family. I'm asking, "When was the last time you went out of your way, inconvenienced yourself, intruded upon your lifestyle to do something for someone else **specifically** for the sake of Christ? Last week? Last month? Last year? Ever?"

If not—if you are either too busy or too disinterested to offer yourself in service—I daresay that you have a huge hole in your spiritual life. Something is missing. Christians should serve. Somewhere. Service is like a Christian EKG; it is a sign of life.

But why... why is service so vital? I'm going to pause here and let you think about that for a moment. Why is service a hallmark of Christian faith? What reason would you give? I want to give you three reasons why I think service is essential for followers of Jesus and why it's an expectation for membership in this church.

1. Because Jesus was a Servant. There were many things revolutionary about Jesus' ministry. There are few things more revolutionary than this: that the God who deserved all praise, honor and glory—the holy and awesome God before whom we are not worthy to stand—that God cast everything aside and, in His grace, became our servant. Amazing!

This wonder is most clearly stated in Philippians 2:5: "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 (held onto) but emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant!..." The eternal Son of God relinquished his grip on heaven... entered time and space, took on human form and became a servant. It's remarkable enough that God would become a human and dwell among us... would voluntarily enter the prison of human flesh. But more remarkable still is what that God/Man became. He could have come as a conquering king. He could have come as a highest of high priests. He could have come as someone rich, powerful, famous and honored. By rights, He should have come as one or all of these things, but He did not. God came to earth as a servant. Don't you find that astounding?

Of course, that's the Apostle Paul's description of Jesus. What was Jesus' opinion of himself? What did Jesus have to say about his role on earth? Turn to Mark 10:42:

Jesus called [his disciples] together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Do you realize what a counter-cultural command this was? "The leaders of this world hold and wield power by force," Jesus says. "But you will wield power by service. You will lead and influence, not because you control people, but because you serve them." And take note of that last line: "For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve..." You get his point, right? "If I, God in the flesh, do not insist on being served—although it is my right—what do you suppose I expect of those who call themselves my disciples? You are servants of a servant!"

Or how about the Last Supper... do you remember what Jesus did as an illustration of how His disciples should treat each other? He washed their manure-covered

feet! The scummiest job always reserved for the lowest household slave on the totem pole, but it wasn't too lowly for servant Jesus.

Now, when we find ourselves staring with wonder at the Lord of the Universe as He kneels before us, washing off our filth, what are the implications for us who call Jesus "Lord?" Jesus taught, "A student is not above his teacher; nor a servant above his master..." (Mt 10:24) If that is true—and we find our Master on His knees before us—where do we belong? On our faces before Him in humble service... and not just before Him, but before those around us. Remember what else Jesus said? "If you do it for the least of these (in other words, if you perform acts of kindness and service for the lowliest of our society), you have done it for me!"

Why is service a Christian essential? Because Jesus, the one we call Lord... the one we promise to obey and follow—Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father, the Creator of all things, the Redeemer of all things, God in the flesh—Jesus Christ became a servant. How can we do less? There are things you will never know about Jesus unless you serve. Are you a Christ-follower? Want to live more like Jesus lived? Want to love more like Jesus loved? Then serve as Jesus served.

2. Because it makes Dad look good. When we serve it reflects well upon our Father in Heaven. Jesus said that we should let our light shine before men so "that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Mt. 5:16.) In his first letter Peter says, "If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 4:11)

Our culture is not very kind to God. Our media does not have a lot of good things to say about our Heavenly Father. But when we serve, we honor God; when our words of witness fall on deaf or hostile ears, our silent acts of service soften hard hearts.

3. Because it shapes us, and it shapes our children. The other day I saw something surprising. I saw a man washing dishes in our church. What surprised me is that I know this man to be the president of a large company. But there he was, washing dishes after a church gathering, and his 11-year-old son was with him. Later, I asked him about it. He said, "All my life I spend in the spotlight in front of people. I want to do something for the Lord that is anonymous, and I want my son to see me doing that."

That blessed me. And of course, he is right, isn't he? By the world's standards, it seems stupid for a high-priced executive to be washing dishes. Is that really the best use of his time, experience, influence? He could pay for someone to wash those dishes and be doing other, more "strategic" work. But this man knows that he is the servant of a Lord who washed manure off of people's feet. It is not beneath him to wash chili sauce off people's dishes. In fact, he thinks it is good for

his soul to wash dishes and for his son to see him wash dishes and to join him in that chore.

Would it be good for your soul to wash dishes, too? When you read the various service opportunities available in every bulletin, every week, do you ever consider that it might be you that God is calling to do this? Or is it always someone else's problem? And when you read it, do you find yourself thinking—privately, of course... you wouldn't admit such things out loud—"That work is beneath me. Someone else can do that. I am more suited to something important... something more significant." Really?

And what about your kids and your grandkids? We have never lived in a more indulgent age when it comes to our children. We will do anything, spend anything, go anywhere, exhaust and inconvenience and impoverish ourselves endlessly for what we consider to be the welfare of our children. Academically, we will put them in the best schools, pay for extra classes, provide them with tutors and delay our own retirement to send them to the best college. Athletically, we will drive them thousands of miles in a year to belong to the best teams. Musically, we will haul them to lessons and endure countless recitals. We will do any and everything to offer our children a leg up in life.

But may I ask this: what are you doing to teach your children to serve? Are they watching you wash dishes? Are they watching you volunteer in youth group or at their school or in the community? Are their dads in Mexico right now, building houses for the poor? Did their parents just return from our village in Guatemala? Have you done anything in a systematic way to train your children that the world does not, in fact, revolve around them? That they, in fact, have a responsibility to take their incredible opportunities and privilege and use them to serve others? Your kids will never really learn about Jesus or the lost world that is precious to him until you teach them to set aside their own needs for the sake of others. Are you doing that?

One of the legacies of Shari Monson's ministry here will be the hundreds of people who, because of her leadership, served the mission of Christ for the first time both here and around the world. It is clear that she and Craig, one of the most amazing servants I know, passed their hearts for service on to their children. Madeline was one of few students who became involved with the United Way Varsity Letter in Community Service which honors high school students who serve their community. Kids must serve at least 175 hours to receive this distinction. Many do way more. Madeline did; service is her passion. And she invited others to join her. My daughter Rachel was one of them. The first year of the program, there was one table of students from Gig Harbor High. Several years later there are many tables full of kids who have caught the service bug.

Her brother Jackson did. My son Cooper did. And our youth ministry fans those flames of service with Mission trips to Yakama and to Mexico. There is a reason

that these trips—where kids work and sweat and sacrifice—are among the most memorable and meaningful experiences in their lives. Because when we teach our children to serve—when we teach them that true fulfillment is found, not in satisfying all of my wants and desires but in caring for the needs of others—we create a generation that swims against the tide of self-indulgence. And we create a generation that emulates and loves Jesus, the servant par excellence.

So, those are three good reasons to serve: because Jesus did and calls us to, because it honors God, and because it transforms us and our children. Notice, I have not mentioned “because your church needs you,” which may seem odd because your church certainly cannot accomplish its mission unless its members serve. We always need help: 100 dozen cupcakes, teachers and servants for Day Camp, any number of opportunities which you can find on the web. Today! It would be great if we didn’t feel like we had to twist arms to get people to volunteer; if we developed a culture where everyone shows up on Sunday ready to engage in some part of ministry, large or small. So, yes, we need servants to fulfill our mission.

But our expectation is that every member will serve somewhere... in the church or out of it. In a religious cause or a secular cause that honors Christ. That they will walk out of here every Sunday asking the question, “Where would Christ have me serve him this week?” This is not about filling slots to get jobs done. This is about filling the souls of Christians who, if they don’t learn the joy and purpose that comes from serving others for the sake of Jesus, will live ultimately empty and unfulfilling lives.

If you cannot remember the last time you served someone for the sake of Christ, what does that say about you? ...that you are too busy, too important, too self-centered? Too... what? When you have breathed your last breath, and open your eyes and find yourself standing before Jesus, there are seven words you are going to want to hear from his lips: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” If you want to really live... serve.

Sermon Questions

- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don’t teach! Listen and reflect on God’s word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.
- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.
- **DIG DEEPER**

1. Can you name one core requirement and four expectations of membership at Chapel Hill? Which one arises out of the I Peter text?
2. Peter speaks of several qualities that make for healthy service. How many can you identify? Which of these is hardest for you?
3. How or where are you serving for the sake of Christ? If you are, share your witness about that experience. If you are not, share why not.