



# GROW. PRAY. STUDY.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church

**October 14, 2018 – *How Will You Measure Your Life? By Who and How You Serve***

**Scripture:** Mark 10:35-37, 41-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

**“The ultimate servant leader”**

**MONDAY 10.15.18 Matthew 12:14-23**

Jesus enemies were plotting to destroy him. Jesus just moved elsewhere, and continued to serve and heal. Matthew quoted Isaiah 42:1-4 to describe Jesus’ approach: “He won’t argue or shout, and nobody will hear his voice in the streets. He won’t break a bent stalk, and he won’t snuff out a smoldering wick, until he makes justice win.” We might think that’s no way to make justice win. But people respected Jesus, even asking if he might be “the Son of David,” a title for the Messiah.

- Just before today’s reading, Matthew showed the Pharisees criticizing Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, which they saw as work. How did Jesus’ way of dealing with his foes live out the attitude Isaiah said God’s servant would have? Have you ever seen a situation where it was more effective to withdraw or speak gently rather than trying to loudly prove a contentious point?
- Matthew probably wrote mainly to Hebrew Christians, but he quoted parts of Isaiah’s poem that said God wanted to save Gentiles as well as Jews. Even as Matthew wrote, early Christians were actively preaching to Gentiles. What are some ways you can live out Christ’s life, making “justice win” so that “Gentiles [whoever is their equivalent in your world] will put their hope in his name”?

**Prayer:** O Jesus, you walked this earth, not as an arrogant, demanding ruler, but as a gentle, healing servant. Guide me as I seek to live into your brand of greatness. Amen.

**“Jesus came to serve”**

**TUESDAY 10.16.18 Matthew 20:20-28**

James and John (and probably their mom, though Mark left her out in his version of the story in

Mark 10:35-45) thought they'd get their bid for power in before the other disciples. Jesus kept talking about his kingdom. Well, weren't "kingdoms" about seeking places of power? "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. In the Kingdom of Heaven, there is no status seeking. In my Kingdom, we serve.

- We have a good idea (as James and John did) what power, privilege and importance look like. Down deep, most of us wish for some of the perks that go with power. But Jesus' view was succinct and direct: "that's not the way it will be with you." Jesus said he didn't come to be served, but to serve, and even give his life. In what specific ways does living like Jesus change your approach to life?
- Jesus told James and John, "You WILL drink from my cup." James was the first apostle martyred (Acts 12:2). On the other hand, Christian tradition said John, serving and writing, lived for many years. In what ways did John, as well as James, "drink from Jesus' cup"? In what ways, if any, has your life so far called on you to do that?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I thank you that your love's transforming power can motivate me to live a servant life. Teach me how to treat others as you treat me. Amen.

### **In God's kingdom, greatness = service**

#### **WEDNESDAY 10.17.18 Matthew 23:5-12**

In Jesus' day (and still today), many leaders (even religious ones) sought exalted, lofty titles. Scholar William Barclay wrote, "The Pharisees liked to be addressed as Rabbi and to be treated with the greatest respect. They even claimed ... greater respect than that given to parents, for, they said, a man's parents give him ordinary, physical life, but a man's teacher gives him eternal life." By contrast, Jesus said his Kingdom was not about high-status titles, but about greatness in serving others.

- Scholar N. T. Wright noted that the Pharisees were not just religious, but also political and social leaders. He asked, "What are today's equivalents? Some might be the leaders, elected or unelected, in our wider societies, who ... rejoice in their 'celebrity' status, make grand pronouncements about public values while running lucrative but shady businesses on the side, use their position to gain influence for their families and friends, and allow their private interests secretly to determine the public policy of their country ... What matters is the huge and humbling principle of verses 11 and 12." How easy or hard do you find it to lay aside human ideas of greatness in favor of Jesus' definition of greatness as service?
- Does verse 9 mean it's wrong to send a Father's Day card, or otherwise honor your earthly father? No—Jesus often used a teaching style called "prophetic hyperbole," overstating to make a point. Here he probably referred to men who demanded the title of Elijah the great prophet (cf. 2 Kings 2:12) and other "fathers" of the faith. When have you noticed in yourself a wish to make yourself feel more important by demanding your "rights" of role, status or title?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, keep purifying my motivations as I serve. May my meaning and sense of worth come more from you each day—until my service is about you, not me. Amen.

**“I have given you an example”**

**THURSDAY 10.18.18 John 13:3-17**

Jesus didn't just talk about service; he movingly modeled it. On the night before he was crucified, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. It was shocking—washing guests' feet was usually the lowest ranking slaves' work. Then Jesus told the disciples they were right to call him “Teacher” or “Lord.” His lesson for them (and us) was that by acting as a servant, he did not abdicate leadership, but redefined our ideas of glory and power. His life was guided by God's standards, not earthly ones.

- John, a very precise writer, quoted Jesus saying, “I give up my life so that I can take it up again” (John 10:17). He used the same Greek words to describe Jesus “taking off” and “putting on” his robes before and after he washed the disciples' feet. In what ways was Jesus' action not just practical, but an acted-out parable of the way he would give himself for us on the cross? Have you ever had an experience in which acting humbly toward someone else felt almost like dying?
- John stressed that Jesus knew what Judas would do later, but still washed even Judas' feet. Can you imagine the yearning in Jesus' heart as he washed the betrayer's feet? “Washing feet” was a practical act in a dusty land where people wore sandals. What are some practical ways you can serve another person that will tangibly make their life better? Who is God leading you to bless with a concrete act of service?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, what an example of humility you gave us! Soften my proud heart. Make me willing to take up the towel as you did, to set my power aside for the good of others. Amen.

**“Serve each other through love”**

**FRIDAY 10.19.18 Galatians 5:13-16**

The Apostle Paul started new churches in Galatia (modern day Turkey), but they had fallen into disagreement and struggle. False teachers came to the churches and began convincing them they still had to follow certain rules and laws in order for God to accept them. Paul's letter resisted the false teachers. He urged his readers to claim their freedom in Christ, but to use that freedom to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

- In verse 13 Paul bluntly stated a truth that can be painful to admit. We all have selfish impulses, especially when given the ability to choose freely. He pointed his readers to the one who can give us the ability to live out the Golden Rule: the Holy Spirit. Paul said, “Be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires” (verse 16). In what areas of your life do you want to invite the Spirit to empower you to deny your selfish desires and love your neighbor as yourself more fully?

- Macmillandictionary.com defined “freedom” as “the right to do what you want, make your own decisions, and express your own opinions.” The apostle Paul, shaped by Jesus’ servant model of greatness, defined it differently. “God has called you to a free life,” he wrote. “But use your freedom to serve one another in love. That’s how freedom grows” (*The Message*). In what ways have you found it freeing to let the Spirit guide you into loving and serving others, rather than having to follow all your impulses?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you came to set me free. I like being free from other people’s demands, and from bad things. Help me also value the times when you set me free from my own self-centeredness. Amen.

**“You have done it for me”**

**SATURDAY 10.20.14 Matthew 25:31-46**

After talking about the Temple’s destruction and the end of the world (in sometimes puzzling terms), Jesus gave a word picture of the final judgment. His story about the judgment clearly conveyed his Kingdom’s priorities. Kingdom people, he said, care for the hungry and thirsty, the poorly-clothed and strangers, the prisoners and the sick—the people whom Jesus called “the least of these brothers and sisters of mine.”

- There’s a Christian song that begins, “I met Jesus today, and I really must tell you, he didn’t look at all like the pictures ... He was a hungry child, a sick friend of mine, a stranger who needed a coat.” In Jesus’ story, both those accepted and the ones who were turned away were surprised. They expected to meet Jesus in “religious” places, with choirs and lights, not in the streets among the needy and poor. But Jesus’ story said we should notice all people in need of help, and treat them as if it were Jesus himself in need. In what ways can you sense God reshaping your attitudes toward “the least of these” in your community and the wider world?

**Prayer:** King Jesus, show me the “least of these” in my wealthy neighbor who struggles emotionally or spiritually, my poor friend who suffers financially, my sick friend who needs your comfort while dying—and in myself, who needs more of you in my life. Amen.

**Family Activity:** As a family, choose something that you will all give up for a period of time (e.g. dessert, screen time, shopping, cell phones). Decide how long you will commit to living without this thing. Now choose to substitute something that is more oriented to help others for whatever you have given up. For example, if you give up screen time, practice hospitality by inviting friends over for a family game night. If you give up dessert, save the money you would have used and give it to an offering at church. Add more prayer time in place of shopping or visit neighbors instead of texting. How might these new practices influence your sense of serving others, not just yourself? Pray for God’s guidance and grace.

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