

18th Sunday after Pentecost 2009

Servants Proud to Serve

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, *"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."* 36 He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 *"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."*

Cross & Crown for the Servant of All Great servants of the Servant welcome all

Grace, mercy and peace to you from the God who created you and saved you, the great promise keeper, the Lord God Almighty.

Introduction: Ask a child what they want to be when they grow up, you will receive noble answers like a doctor, fireman, soldier, or even maybe a Christian teacher or pastor. As children grow older and wiser, they learn what those jobs include. Doctors serve sick people all day long, every day. Do you want to work with sick people, dying people everyday? Fireman serve people caught in very dangerous situations –A soldier serves a whole country, even forfeiting his own life for people he has never met. Even in the world, occupations that serve the needs of others before their own are recognized on a higher level of honor and respect. In our text for today, Jesus Christ teaches us, His disciples what it means to be great – Servants proud to serve: Cross and Crown for the Servant of All and great servants welcome all.

1) Servants proud to serve: Cross and Crown for the Servant of all

Several times we are told that Jesus snuck away from the crowds with His disciples. I'm positive it was partly to recharge their spiritual batteries. The drain on Jesus and His disciples from the need of the crowds to hear the truth of law and gospel that Jesus calls shepherd-less sheep, the attacks of the enemies of Christ—the Jewish leaders with their hypocritical religion, fake worship and the devil himself behind it all, who poked and prodded their selfish pride and arrogance to hate the Savior. But don't forget also the lack of faith and misunderstanding of "The Mission" by the disciples themselves. Jesus knew the importance of equipping the disciples with the necessary tools to follow Him and to carry on "the Mission" post-ascension. It takes time to learn and especially to put the learning to good use. Not even the Son of

God made instant great disciples; just add the bible to sinners and presto chango, Viola! Strong spiritual growth and understanding is not instant oatmeal, regardless of the quality of the teacher. Now, if even Jesu' disciples needed to set aside their mission work, in order to grow spiritually strong and gain understanding, how much more do we need to sit at Jesus feet and be shaped and molded in our thinking and decision making?

This training time was especially for reentering the focus on "The Mission". I racked my brain trying to understand why the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus a question about the Gospel. At first glance we might say well the last time someone questioned Jesus mission of allowing Him to be arrested, tried, whipped and tortured to death, Jesus nearly bit off Peter's head – "Get behind me Satan. You do not have in mind the things of God, but rather the things of men." But I think there is more to it than that. They are unwilling to even think about Jesus Christ going down like a common thief, tortured to death in open public shame. Maybe the disciples even thought to themselves that Jesus had an unhealthy morbid preoccupation with death. It's just not right to talk about and dwell on your own death all the time. The disciples are refusing to let "The Mission" take root in their minds. They are refusing to chew on and swallow "The Mission"!

What's the mission? It's the Good News? What's the good news? Well everyone knows the good news right? Sadly today people still like the disciples refuse to believe, think about and chew on the facts of God's mission to save us from our sins. The problem the world has is not refusal to share, or feed the hungry, or greenhouse gases, or lack of laws or displays of the 10 commandments. The problem the world has is it is born in sin, without righteousness and holiness. The Lord demands both holiness and righteousness for entrance into

paradise. No man, woman or child born from sinful parents can live a holy and righteous life. The penalty for sin then is death now and forever in hell. The Mission is the good news to solve that problem of sin. The Son of God was born into this world not from two sinful parents but conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was born with holiness and righteousness and without sin. Jesus Christ, the Son of God and true man lived perfectly all His life and then He exchanged that life of holiness and righteousness for the sinful lives of the entire world. By His death on the cross we see He was punished for sins, not His own but for our sins. And by His resurrection, God proved to the world that it was Mission Accomplished. Jesus Christ did not deserve to die for His own sins. God raised Him to life and gave Him the crown of eternal life He won by His perfect life of righteousness and holiness. Now to those who believe in Jesus Christ's Mission, The Mission Accomplished to save Sinners, have righteousness and holiness. Chew on that mission. Swallow that mission of Cross and Crown. Remember that mission accomplished for you and for your family and friends. Jesus Christ, the greatest servant of all gave Himself for your life. That is THE MISSION.

2) The greatest servant welcomes all

Because the disciples misunderstood and refused to chew on and swallow "The Mission", the good news, they weren't following Jesus. They weren't serving Jesus. They weren't great disciples, far from it; they were hindering "The Mission"! The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest among them. This shouldn't surprise us. This is just a short time after the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. There on that mountain Jesus was changed and He appeared in all His glory as the Son of God – face shining like the sun, His robes glowing neon white, whiter than all the bleach in the world could get them. But not every disciple received that special treatment, only a chosen three – Peter, James and John. You can understand then when they came down that mountain, Peter, James and John felt pretty good about their place in the pecking order of disciples. You can also imagine the argument that ensued with the rest of the disciples. They were confused on The Mission of the Suffering Servant so they are confused on what makes a great mission minded servant of Jesus.

Again we are told that the disciples are afraid to tell Jesus what they were arguing about. And again I racked my brain trying to understand where the

disciples were coming from. Didn't they know Jesus was the Son of God? Did they forget that he reads minds and always knows what is going to happen even before people decide on doing it? But if we look at it from the viewpoint of the disciples refusing to chew on and swallow Jesus cross and crown of death and resurrection, then we can understand that they, too, refused to follow in His footsteps to greatness. The disciples were thinking that greatness meant people waited on your every need. "The Mission" called for the greatest servant of all, the Son of God to wait on the greatest need of the whole world. The disciples didn't want to follow a suffering servant – they wanted to follow a conquering hero, powerful ruler, the master of the universe! How often don't we think like those disciples about greatness? Following Jesus Christ, the greatest suffering servant of the world, means that we too are great disciples when we wait on the needs of others, especially the greatest need of forgiveness, hearing the law and gospel, the Mission.

Jesus taught His disciples this lesson of greatness by cradling a young child in his arms. He placed the highest value on a child when He said ..."the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Jesus' mission was to serve the greatest need of the world of sinners – forgiveness. Jesus disciples will be and are great when they carry that same mission minded service to and for the world. A great disciple of Jesus is a great servant of all.

Jesus used the word welcome to picture the work of His servants. It's a word that has been delegated to a floor mat outside your door. Welcome! Welcome to Oakfield! The sign greeted my family and me. Welcome. Did you know that this welcoming is what the Jewish leaders hated about Jesus?

NIV Luke 15:2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man **welcomes** sinners and eats with them."

How do you treat a guest at your table or house? Do you give them the first helping of food? Don't you give them the best seat in the house for the game? Don't you break open that special bottle of wine? Or do you get out the cheap stuff? The leftovers? A guest is an honored name among us. Here at church, our guests deserve the best we have to offer – the best parking spot, the best food, the best message, the best songs or the best seat in the house (back row, I guess?) We are servants of the

Suffering Servant. We are proud to serve as He did for us and for the entire world. Have you heard of the married couple and toast? This couple had been married some 50 years. The husband entered into eternal rest as a believer. The children were all trying to comfort their mother. So they started with her and made meals for her. The oldest son made breakfast just like he saw his dad do for her so many times. 2 eggs over easy and 2 pieces of toast, both crusts. When the Mother sat down she asked, "Why do you keep making me crusts?" That's what dad always made for you, didn't he?" Yes, he did. But he did that because that's what he liked." They both paused for a second and remembered how much he loved her. Watch out for thinking what others can do for you. Instead watch out for the needs of others and work to discover what you can do for them, as Jesus Christ did for you.

NIV Hebrews 13:20 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.