

Sunday Sermon March 26, 2017

Sermon Text: Matthew 20:17-28

Sermon Theme: Selflessly Serving

1. Our Savior Serves us 2. We Serve Him by Serving Others

¹⁷ Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, ¹⁸ “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹ “What is it you want?” he asked.

She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.”

²² “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”

“We can,” they answered.

²³ Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

²⁴ When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

John had worked for the company for about 10 years. He had been successful and had climbed the ladder in the company until he was almost upper management. He had passed over several other job opportunities because he felt that this was the place for him. He felt that his current bosses appreciated the work he did, paid him fairly, and would continue to advance him in the company.

Then the company got sold. His bosses were no longer his bosses. Things began to change, but John continued to work hard and it seemed the new company notices and approves of his work as the old had done.

About 6 months after the company had been purchased, the news came that John’s company would be merged into their parent company. Shortly after they received this news, even more bad news came: many positions would need to be eliminated including several middle and lower management positions. The company said they would reinterview all the employees over the next few weeks. The employees would be notified when and where they were to meet.

John waited for the call. He saw his fellow managers go, but he was not called. He saw his staff file out over the next few weeks, still no call. After 3 weeks of this he began to get frustrated. With all the people who went before him, he didn’t feel appreciated anymore. There could be only one conclusion. The company didn’t need him or appreciate him and his work. They must have decided to fire him.

Finally, when it seemed like he might be the only employee left, he got the call. He walked into the room and began the interview by telling all the things he had done for the company and all the sacrifices he had made. He told them all the things that the company was doing wrong and how they should be doing things. He told them he should’ve been first to be called in and not the last. He told them that they should have been better to him because he had been faithful to the company.

The three men on the other side of the table sat quietly as John gave his laundry list of frustration. When he ran out of steam the man in the middle said, “Hello John, my name is Dave and I own this company. I want you to know that we made sure to keep the interviews for the best employees until the end because we wanted to make sure that the offers we would be giving were going to the right people. John, you were one of those people we were going to make an offer to. But, you brought up a lot of things a few minutes ago that I think we need to talk about before or if we make you that offer.”

Maybe you have a story like John’s where you have thought way too highly of yourself and your sinful pride has led us to say or do things that aren’t right. Sinful pride can and does cloud our judgment to the point that we make sinful decisions that only reflects a love of self and looks to our own needs rather than a love for

others and their needs. In our sermon text today, we see Jesus teaching us about loving others and Selfless Service. Jesus shows us how he has selflessly served us and how we can serve him by selflessly serving others.

Jesus time was drawing to a close. During his last few weeks on earth, Jesus made sure to teach the disciples not only what would happen to him in Jerusalem, but also why that would happen to him.

As they travel to Jerusalem, Jesus pulls his disciples aside, and tells them this journey, which should have been a celebration of Passover, would not end well. This trip would end in suffering and death. Yet, even though this trip would be filled with fear and violence it would still end in victory. **We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death¹⁹ and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”**

Some of us have walked to the cross with Jesus during many times over our lives. For others this might be something new this year. Yet, no matter how often we have celebrated Lent we should see Jesus’ great love summarized in these three sentences. In these three sentences, we don’t just hear Jesus talking about his suffering and death, he also shows he is willing to suffer agony and be subject to death, in order to save us.

Compare Jesus example of love and service with our own lack of love and service for others. Even in the little things we think more of ourselves than others. When our spouse asks us to help with a household chore, instead of putting their need in front of our own, we don’t get up right away to do it, we wait until it is convenient for us. When children are asked to do something for mom and dad, they quickly forget about it and don’t do it. On our list of things to do, what we want usually comes first, while what other people want and need gets pushed to the bottom.

Our sinful nature does not allow us to easily do things for others because we too busy thinking about what it will cost us. Whether it is time, effort, or money, there are many times when we think it is too much to serve others. Other times, we will just not lower ourselves to doing those things because we feel someone else should be doing them.

Not Jesus. Jesus served us. He could have said, “No. Not for these sinful ungrateful people. I would be willing to do this for some people, but not these people.” But he didn’t. Jesus knew the cost to serve us, but he walked directly to the cross anyway and into the suffering and death that he knew was there. He never once entertained the sinful thought that he should serve himself first and not us.

Right after Jesus gives this lesson of selfless love to his disciples, we see the opposite play out. We see how human pride and selfishness can show itself. The mother of James and John comes to Jesus with her sons and asks that her sons be placed at Jesus’ right and left hands. To be at the right and left hands of Jesus were places of special honor. Maybe she thought she was doing something practical because Jesus was talking about the end of his life. Maybe she thought it was natural because James and John were part of Jesus’ inner circle of three.

Jesus tries to show them that this is a sinful request. He asks if they are able to drink from the cup he is about to drink from. Jesus is asking if they are ready to suffer and die as he is about to do. Once again, they show their pride in saying they are ready.

When the other disciples heard about their request they were upset by it, but not for the right reasons. They are upset that John and James would think that they were better than anyone else. Imagine you are standing there, what do you think that argument sounded like? Do you think like it sounded like a group of men, reasonably talking things over, or a group of kids out at recess arguing about who is the best player? Probably, like the boys at recess.

Jesus could have walked into the group and said, “You are all foolish because I am the greatest. I am the Son of God.” But he doesn’t. He uses his own service to once again teach them how they should serve him by serving others. **Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

Why would the disciples be servants? Why would they allow themselves to be last? The story is told about a servant who was willing to do anything for his master. One day the master had another important man over and they were discussing their servants. The other man scoffed at the master when he said his servant

would do anything for him. The master called the servant in and asked him to go to the highest mountain and get him some water from the spring that was there.

Days later the servant returned. He had been through much, but in his canteen he had the water. The important man knew that this trip was amazingly difficult thing to do for such a small thing like water. He asked the servant, "Why did you do that for the master." The servant replied, "My master has done so much for me. He has given me so much. I love my master for all that he has done, I am willing to do what he asks."

Soon, Jesus would wash his disciples feet. Soon, he would give them the command to love one another. Soon, he would show them that loving others would include sacrifice. Soon, he would tell them love others as he had loved them and to put that love and service into action by going out to preach and to teach to all people.

Our master Jesus, has done so much for us, he has given us so much by his suffering and death. He does not ask us to do something as difficult as climb the highest mountain, he tells us to love and serve others.

How do we respond to our master Jesus' love? Do we continue to look out for number 1, do we say the job is too big, or it too much for us to do, do we continue to count the cost of service do we reply as a loving servant should:, "I love my master, Jesus, I am willing to do what he asks when he tells me to serve others in love."

The servant loved his master and was willing to serve him even if that service was hard. Service is not always easy, the disciples would drink from the cup of suffering during their ministries, yet they would continue to serve. Our own service to others may not always turn out the way that we intend it to, it might not always influence people to come to the foot of the cross and repent, we may even experience some hardships. However, in love to our Savior who has lovingly served us, we continue to serve him and others by reaching out with the message of Jesus, just as he tells us to.