

Serving Like Christ

Mark 10:43b-45

Discipleship Sermon Series

8-11-24

Good morning, Colonial! It's so good to be with you today. My name is Mark Potter, and I currently serve as the campus pastor at our Overland Park Campus, but I'm a Colonial lifer. I grew up here, and I've been on staff at Colonial in some capacity for 20 years now – God is good!

If you're new to our church, we are so excited you're here! And I want to let you know that we've taken a brief 4-week pause from the book of Jonah to share about something incredibly important. In fact, it's at the very core of the Christian faith. Specifically, we've been talking about our path, or journey, of discipleship to Jesus.

Speaking of the path, or journey, of discipleship, this past Wednesday I returned home from the men's mountain hike. How many of you have ever hiked a mountain? Anyone ever summited a 14er?

On our mountain hike, there were 19 of us altogether ranging in age from 16 to 71. Some were incredibly experienced – one of the guys who came has successfully completed all 58 Colorado 14ers -- and some were moderately experienced, and then there were some first timers. That would be me! Well, I am proud to share with you that despite some incredibly rugged terrain and a thunder/hail storm, every single one of us were able to summit the 14,000 foot mountain and make it back down safely – praise the Lord! (show group photo on summit of Red Cloud). More on that later.

I want to suggest to you that mountain hiking is a great metaphor for discipleship because a disciple is a follower who is on a journey, or mission, with a goal of ascending, or growing, or learning from the master in hopes of one day becoming adept enough at it to teach others.

The definition of a disciple is a follower, or a student, or an apprentice. But it's not a student merely in the classroom sense. Like a mountain hike, discipleship is hands-on experiential training with the goal of getting the group from here to there. It's about following closely behind the leader along a path while learning to overcome the obstacles and weather through the elements together. The journey is extremely rewarding and fulfilling, but it comes at a great cost.

Two weeks ago, Pastor Jeff discussed the call to follow Jesus, and then last week he talked about how we can grow in our faith by abiding in Christ – that is, by being rooted in the Word, prayerful, and available to teach others about Jesus when the opportunity presents itself.

Today, I'm going to hit on another essential aspect of discipleship: serving. Now I know what you may be thinking: not another sermon about serving! The last thing I want is to

be guilt-tripped into doing more things. After all, I'm already extremely busy. And exhausted!

Listen, I get it. My wife and I run at about 90 miles/hour. We have four boys in three different schools, and they are all active little guys. She and I both work, and I coach three of my kids' sports teams. Between school activities, church activities, sports practices, family stuff, friend stuff, neighbor stuff, vacations, doctor's visits, etc. – there is a LOT going on in the Potter household. We don't have margin for adding new things. Can anyone relate?

But the thing is, serving like Christ isn't about adding more things to your plate. It's actually the opposite. Serving is not a checklist of things to do. Instead, it is allowing God to use your gifts, talents, abilities, and passions for His kingdom purposes to His glory in the places you live, learn, work, and worship.

I'm going to say that again. Serving is not adding things to your plate. Serving is letting God use your gifts, talents, abilities, and passions for His kingdom purposes in the places you live, learn, work, and worship.

Serving should not be motivated by a guilty conscience, although if you're not currently serving, the Holy Spirit may very well be convicting you of that. Generally speaking, we shouldn't be motivated by guilt; we should be motivated by gratitude to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant.

With this in mind, please stand if you are able as we read Jesus' words together from Mark's gospel, Mark 10:43b-45.

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Thank you, please be seated. Will you pray with me. (Pause to pray).

My sermon today falls under three subheadings:

- I. The Greatness of Serving
- II. The Gift of Serving
- III. The Gladness of Serving

Let's begin with

- I. The Greatness of Serving

The context of Mark 10:43-45 is that two of Jesus disciples, James and John, approached Jesus and told him that they wanted to be on his right and his left in glory. And Jesus basically rebuked them by telling them that they have no idea what they are asking, because they have no idea of the gravity of the events that are about to unfold or the cost it will take to get there. For Jesus will soon have to suffer and die, and even

then, it's not His decision to grant who is on His right and left, for those places are reserved for those whom the Father has prepared.

When the other disciples caught wind of James and John's request to sit next to him in glory, they became indignant with James and John. Not because of the question itself, but because they didn't think to ask it first. And so, Jesus gathered the twelve disciples and told them about the countercultural nature of kingdom greatness. Specifically, they were not to abuse or flaunt their potential power and influence to advance their own socio-political agendas or to attempt to upgrade their seat at God's table. Instead, they were to simply serve.

In other words, the Bible teaches that greatness is not defined by one's position or status. It's not defined by one's bank account, or number of Olympic medals won, or how many degrees, or how many Youtube hits. Instead, true greatness is defined by our sacrificial love for one another, and by humbly helping a neighbor in need.

Jesus says if you want to be truly great, truly serve. For the greatest among you is the one who serves.

In the Greek, the word for serve is *diakoneo*.
διακονέω = to serve, to minister.

Diakoneo is where the word "deacon" is derived from. Deacons are one of the elected positions in our church, as well as hundreds of thousands of other Christian churches throughout the centuries. Our Colonial deacons are truly incredible people because they show up every week and quietly serve in their ministry role without ever seeking the spotlight.

You know, it can be easy to serve for the wrong reasons. So, we must ask ourselves, what's my motivation for serving? Perhaps you, like the disciples, desire to feel rewarded. That's human nature. It's ok, even appropriate, to feel good about yourself after you serve. But there is a difference between self-righteous serving and the self-denying, sacrificial serving that Jesus promotes.

What's the difference? Glad you asked.

- Self-righteous serving is accomplished through the power of human effort, while self-denial serving is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Self-righteous serving is drawn to crowds, while self-denial serving is drawn to secrecy.
- Self-righteous serving expects immediate rewards and human praise, while self-denial serving is content with future rewards and a divine nod of approval.
- Self-righteous serving picks and chooses when and who to serve, while self-denial serving occurs freely and indiscriminately.
- Self-righteous serving is motivated by human moods and emotions, while self-denial serving serves simply because there is a need.

- Self-righteous serving fractures community, while self-denial serving builds community.

Jesus was the epitome of a self-denying servant. He served freely and sacrificially. He ministered to all types of people wherever there was a need - the hungry, the poor, the sick, the tax collectors, the widows, the religious leaders, the peasants, men, women, children. He served them all by healing them, teaching them, encouraging them, praying for them, washing their feet, and ultimately by dying on the cross for our sins. None of it for His own glory, but to the glory of the Father.

And since Jesus is our teacher/master, and we are His followers/apprentices/"little Christs," then we, too, ought to serve others as we follow in His footsteps. That, my friends, is the path to true greatness. The path of Christian discipleship is marked by serving like Christ.

Toward the beginning I said that serving is letting God use your gifts, talents, abilities, and passions for His kingdom purposes in the places you live, learn, work, and worship. Allow me to elaborate of the gifts portion. This brings me to my second subheading:

II. The Gift of Serving

Serving, or the gift of helps, is one of the two dozen or so spiritual gifts that can be found in Scripture. (show spiritual gifts image).

As a spiritual gift, serving is the capacity to selflessly help others and meet practical needs within the church, often behind the scenes. The truth is, not everyone has been blessed with the spiritual gift of service, but don't use that as a copout because every Christian has spiritual gifts of some kind that God can use to build up His Church and advance His kingdom.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 says this:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

If you are a follower of Christ but have no idea what your spiritual gifts are, you can take an online assessment to get an idea. If you'd like, you can go to giftstest.com to take an easy spiritual gifts assessment that will e-mail you your top five gifts. Or, you can just ask your closest friends and family members and they'll likely be able to help you identify what a few of your gifts might be.

But regardless what your spiritual gifts are, the important thing is that you are actively using them to serve God and bless others. The Bible tells us that each of us has a unique role to play, and we're all part of the same team called the Church that is journeying together toward a common goal.

I don't know if you've been watching the Olympics, but I'm bordering on becoming an Olympaholic. Confession is good for the soul.

Well, a little over a week ago, I was watching the men's gymnastics team event, and I learned that there was a young man on USA's team named Stephen Nedoroscik. Say that five times fast! The country fell in love with Stephen because he did not look the part. He described himself as a nerdy engineer, and apparently he can solve a Rubik's Cube in under 10 seconds. It would probably take me about 10 years, but I digress.

But the thing was, Stephen didn't compete in any of the events until the team's very last rotation on its very last event of the competition. You see, there was one particular event that he excelled at. He was a specialist at the pommel horse. He was literally added to the team solely because he scores so big on this one apparatus.

During the competition, the camera would show him cheering for his teammates, passing out water, and encouraging them between rotations. And then, after several hours of waiting, it was his turn. The camera cut to him calmly breathing and meditating with his eyes closed.

Mind you that in order for team USA to win a medal, they needed Stephen to do his job and nail the routine. This was his do or die moment – no pressure! Slowly, he stood up, took off his jacket, removed his glasses, stepped up to the pommel horse, and began his routine. Stephen knew that he was made for this moment. He had been training for this moment for his entire life.

Spoiler alert – Stephen killed it and secured the Olympic bronze medal for his team, their first team medal in 16 years (Show Stephen's individual pic, followed by team flag pic). Can you see the joy on Stephen's face and on the faces of his teammates? Stephen knew his purpose and he delivered an incredible performance, helping his team achieve great success. As a result, he must have felt an incredible amount of fulfillment.

Why do I share this story with you? I share it with you because each of us have a role to play in the greater Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit bestows on us various gifts, talents, and abilities -- not to go it alone or for our own selfish gains -- but to serve the greater team and help the team accomplish its mission. But the thing is, we don't do it to win a gold medal; we do it for a far greater purpose that will lead to a far greater joy – winning people to a saving faith in Christ!

Speaking of joy, this brings me to my third and final subheading:

III. The Gladness of Serving

Serving in your giftedness is not a drag. It's life-giving and fun! There are several places in Scripture that speak about the of gladness of serving. For example, Psalm 100:2 says:

Serve the Lord with gladness. -Psalm 100:2a

In another Old Testament passage, during Samuel's farewell address to Israel, Samuel was pleading with God's people to obey God's commands and serve Him alone, saying: "Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you" -1 Sam 12:24

The truth is, when we forget the great things that God has done for us, we are slow to serve. But when we remember what God has done for us, we are quick to serve, and we serve with gladness.

What has God done for you? This is your testimony.

- Do you recall what it was like to be separated from God?
- Do you recall being overcome by guilt and stuck in your sin?
- Do you recall feeling exhausted by continually trying to live up to the expectations of others?
- Do you recall feeling lonely, anxious, and depressed due to the heaviness of life's unrelenting struggles?
- Do you recall feeling afraid of what might happen to you – or your loved one – when you die?
- Do you recall feeling empty inside after you did something that you hoped would make you feel fulfilled?

Part of discipleship is remembering all the great things that God has done for us, and then sharing it with others. It's remembering who we were – individually and collectively – and how far we have come... not because of anything that we have done, but because of what Christ has done for us.

This is what motivates us to serve! Let us never forget that Christ came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for you and me. As a result, our service is not done out of obligation, but with a spirit of gladness.

Earlier I mentioned that I just got back from a mountain hike with 18 other guys this past Wednesday. Going in, I thought, "This is no big deal. I'm young and physically fit. How hard could it be?" I quickly learned that hiking a 14er is no joke. You might think it's an individual thing until you show up with the wrong gear. It doesn't take long to realize that hiking is actually a team sport.

James 2:15-16 says, "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

Let me tell you, on Monday I was the poorly clothed brother that James was referring to. I was the new guy who was inadequately dressed on the mountain.

The day before we did the real hike, we did a shorter acclimation hike. And everyone was pulling all these items out of their bag that I never thought to bring. When people were spraying themselves with bug spray, I thought, "Huh, maybe I should put on some bug spray." So, one of the guys gave me a can.

Others were pulling out their shock-absorbent trekking poles. I thought, "Huh, I wonder if those help." Turns out, one of the guys had an extra pole to loan me.

After we got back from the acclimation hike, our leader mentioned that for the real hike we'd have to get to the base of the mountain before sunrise, so we'd all need to bring our head lamps. I thought, "Headlamps? Didn't think of that." So, one of our leaders sacrificed his headlamp and gave me his to wear.

After several hours of hiking, we all made it to the summit, and we started to see some clouds off in the distance. About halfway down the mountain, those clouds that were way over there were suddenly right on top of us. Within about 10 minutes, it went from being sunny and 60 to cold and wet. Then came the thunder and lightning, followed by the hail. Soon, we couldn't see the trail because it had been flooded with water and ice. (show picture of the trail). Thankfully, we all made it down to the bottom in one piece.

After I got down to the base, I was soaking wet and shivering, so I pulled out my spare jacket and spare socks out of my backpack, but sure enough, they were too damp to wear. So, one of the guys took out his dry jacket from his dry backpack and gave it to me.

I now have a long list of items to pack the next time I go.... assuming there'll be a next time.

The point of the story is that discipleship is like that. Discipleship involves a community of faith banding together and serving one another for the common good. It involves sharing one's resources, gifts, talents, and abilities with others to help accomplish God's mission.

As you may know, we have many, many opportunities for you to serve both inside and outside of Colonial. There is no better time to get plugged in than right now, heading into the fall. We have Find Your Niche happening each Sunday in August at our South KC campus, and on Sunday, August 25th at our Overland Park campus. We hope you'll join us!

You may not realize that for a sermon to be delivered on a Sunday, it takes more than the preacher. The preacher has a vital role, but it's so much more than that. Dozens of people are praying and dozens more are serving behind the scenes, from our sermon research team to slide creation to in-house technical production to online communications and video editing to manuscript uploading. We have volunteers that help in all of these capacities. If done well, the gospel is advanced and there is only one person who receives glory -- Jesus Christ!

Every Sunday, we also have greeters, ushers, parking lot/security teams, welcome desk attendants, coffee helpers, children's workers, nursery helpers, youth leaders, worship team members, prayer leaders, Sunday school teachers, communion servers, and a variety of other roles. Not to mention everything that happens outside of Sunday mornings through God's garden, Abounding love, the food pantry, Harvester's, our Foster Adopt ministry, our school partnerships, and our 15-20 citywide ministry partners.

The bottom line is that there is certainly no shortage of opportunities to serve. So, what are you waiting for? If you don't know where to start, you can reach out to one of our Connections Directors at either campus. They'll be hanging out over by the welcome desk after service and their emails are on the screen (cleary@colonialkc.org – Overland Park campus; tsmith@colonialkc.org – South KC campus)

In summary, serving like Christ is not a drag. It's fun! And more importantly, it's significant and fulfilling because when we serve, we serve within the Body of Christ to advance His mission in the world. We don't serve to become the greatest; we serve because we are disciples of Jesus and we're grateful for His great sacrifice. We don't serve to earn a gift; serving is the gift. Therefore, our serving is done with hearts of gladness.

Lately, I've been reading *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and in closing I want to read one of his quotes to you because it powerfully summarizes the reason we serve as disciples of Jesus. Here's what he says:

"To serve our brother, to please him, to allow him his due and to let him live, is the way of self-denial, the way of the cross. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. That is the love of the Crucified." -Dietrich Bonhoeffer, [The Cost of Discipleship](#)

Let's pray.