

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

In today's Gospel reading we find that Jesus is still leading the way and the destination is still Jerusalem.

This is the third time that Jesus has told the disciples that He would die and be raised again.

1. The first time Peter had responded by arguing with Jesus.(Mark 8:32)
2. The second time all the disciples decided to argue among themselves over who was the greatest.(Mark 9:30-34)
3. This time it appears that James and John wanted to settle the issue of greatness amongst the disciples once and for all by a direct appeal to Jesus.

I suppose they were just clarifying the seating arrangements in heaven.

Regardless James and John had aroused the anger of the other disciples. Perhaps they were annoyed because they had not thought to ask first or maybe it was righteous indignation on behalf of God.

Whatever the cause the result was disunity to the group and once again, as he had done in Capernaum (Mark 9:33-37), Jesus tried to teach them what it means to be an "important person" in the kingdom of God.

Jesus tells us quite clearly while in the in kingdom of man greatness is measured by the number of people and objects you can control; greatness in the kingdom of God is measured by the number of people you can help.

Today we find ourselves in week four of a five week series covering the five life purposes from Rick Warrens book "The Purpose Driven Life". St Peters has adopted these purposes as its primary strategy for Christian living.

So far we have looked at:

1. Worship – the love of God
2. Fellowship – being part of God's family
3. Discipleship – becoming like him

This week and next I will be leading you in an exploration of...the fourth and fifth purposes are all about serving.

1. Ministry is service to believers.
 - a. In particular what we do for our sisters and brothers here at St Peters.
2. Mission is service to unbelievers
 - a. Evangelism must be part of what Mission involves but they are not the same.

Participation point One!!! – Bible Excuses Quiz

Who has attempted the Quiz in the pew sheet?

I'll give you a minute to look them over and then I'll put the answers up on the screen.

- **See appendix A for Quiz and answers.**

You may have guessed that this is a list of some of the many excuses people in the bible gave to try and opt out of serving God.

In every case God enabled them to serve in spite of their perceived excuses.

In his letter to the Philippians Paul urges them (and dare I say us) to

“Get beyond ourselves and protecting our own interests, and secure your neighbours’ interests first. In other words, adopt the mind—set of Jesus, with His attitude in your hearts.”

As a result I have to ask myself this question:

“If I am principally concerned with my own needs’ is Christ really active in my life?”

This idea of service in ministry and mission is very important because our salvation and our acts of service are linked.

“So work with fear and trembling to discover what it really means to be saved.” Phil 2:12 “God is working in you to make you willing and able to obey him.” Phil 2:12-13 (CEV)

How easy or difficult is it for you to imagine the kind of church Paul describes in the letter to the Philippians?

- A community where every person considers the needs of others first and does nothing from selfishness;
- a group that pulls together rather than pulls apart,
- a body that knows its purpose and lets nothing interfere with it.

Isn't that the kind of extended spiritual family we all want to belong to?

Even outsiders would line up to become part of a church like that where they.

- feel the welcome,
- feel the encouraged, and
- know they are truly loved.

Paul gives us a glimpse of one of the ways God will bring this about in the passage we read from 1 Corinthians 12 – on Spiritual Gifts:

There are different ways to serve the same Lord, and we can each do different things. Yet the same God works in all of us and helps us in everything we do. The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others. (1Cor 12:5-7)

While God has created, called and equipped us for service we must always remember that a servant is not a slave.

- **A slave** is a person who has no will of his own, but whose person and services are wholly under the control of another. A slave cannot stop being a slave.
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- .

There are significant elements of choice and free will, involved in being in the service of God. Rick Warren has noticed several characteristics of REAL servants:

1. Availability
 - a. What you spend your time on is a reflection of your priorities
 - b. If you fill your life with other things then you can't serve
2. Needs focussed
 - a. Phil 2:3-4 – "...consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves.
 - b. "We should help people whenever we can, especially if they are followers of the Lord." (Gal 6:10)
3. Do their best
 - a. Ecc 11:4 – "Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest."
 - b. The perfect conditions for serving are not part of God's plan for us.
4. Dedicated
 - a. The size, importance, permanent, or prestige of the task doesn't matter. The only real question is "does it need to be done?"
5. Faithful
 - a. Servants can be relied on they aren't looking for a better opportunity
 - b. Do you know that there are people here who have been faithful in a single area of service for decades...?

- c. I am not saying find something and never move from it. But if God tells you to serve in a particular way then be faithful to God and wait for Him to tell you to stop!

6. Unnoticed

- a. We notice when it is not done... like the clean clothes in the cupboard and food in the fridge.

7. Stewards

- a. Never owners
 - i. This is not our church
 - ii. This is not our body

8. Dependant

- a. Self-sufficiency will evict God from your life
- b. Our areas of weaknesses are God opportunities
- c. Servants are given what they need

Let's get away from the theory and into the practice.

Participation Point Two!!! - Ministry Skills

I am going to show you a list.

- How many things in this list can you identify with?
- Do any of them relate to you or your circumstances right now?

Each and every one is a Ministry Skills

- How is ??? a ministry skill?
 - Driving a car
 - Walking
 - Being Alone
 - Shopping
- How creative can you be?
 - What's missing?

Participation Point Three!!! - The Professional Church

I am going to put up another list.

- Is there anyone who is not now or at some time been covered by the professions in this list?

Each and every one is a Ministry Skills

- Where do we use ??? as a ministry skill?
 - Customer Service
 - Public Relations
 - Research
 - Law
 - Education and Training
- How creative can you be?

- What's missing?

I do not believe that Ministry (ie service to those who believe) is not an optional extra. Like Rick Warren I believe that:

1. Christians are created to serve God.
2. Christians are saved to serve God.
3. Christians are called to serve God.
4. Christians are commanded to serve God.

Let us conclude by praying together one of the Morning Collects from the daily office.

*Eternal God and Father, by whose power we are created
by whose love we are redeemed; guide and strengthen us
your Spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service,
live this day in love to one another and to you; through Jesus
Christ our Lord. Amen. `*

APPENDIX A – BIBLE EXCUSES QUIZ.

Which of these match up?

Old	1		Abraham	A
Country Boy	2		Jacob	B
Poor	3		Gideon	C
Insecure	4		Rahab	D
Younger Brother	5		Jeremiah	E
Depressed	6		Jonah	F
Reluctant	7		Naomi	G
Doctor	8		Ruth	H
Business woman	9		Peter	I
Fearful	10		Woman at the well	J
Widow	11		Zacchaeus	K
Impulsive	12		Timothy	L
Immoral	13		Moses	M
Immigrant	14		David	N
Divorced	15		Lydia	O
Twin	16		Thomas	P
Timid	17		Luke	Q
Short and unpopular	18		James	R

Answers

Old	1	A	Abraham
Country Boy	2	N	David
Poor	3	C	Gideon
Insecure	4	B	Jacob
Younger Brother	5	R	James
Depressed	6	E	Jeremiah
Reluctant	7	F	Jonah
Doctor	8	Q	Luke
Business woman	9	O	Lydia
Fearful	10	M	Moses
Widow	11	G	Naomi
Impulsive	12	I	Peter
Immoral	13	D	Rahab
Immigrant	14	H	Ruth
Divorced	15	J	Woman at the well
Twin	16	P	Thomas
Timid	17	L	Timothy
Short and unpopular	18	K	Zacchaeus

APPENDIX B - MINISTRY SKILLS LIST

Alone	Gardening	Shopping
Animal lover	Home Maintenance	Singing
Chop wood	Knitting	Single Parent
Cleaning	Listening	Talking
Computing	Mechanical repairs	Telephone Calls
Cooking	Musical	Too much money
Craft	Photography	Visiting
Drive a car	Playing Board Games	Walking
Eating	Reading	Writing letters
Electrician	Sewing	

APPENDIX C – THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH TODAY

If church was a business we would be hiring in the areas of:

Administration	Finance	Music
Building Maintenance	Government Relations	OH & S
Childcare	Grants Management	Project Management
Cleaning	Grounds Maintenance	Public Relations
Communications	Health Care	Real Estate
Computing	Human Resources	Research
Construction	Insurance	Security
Cooking	Interior Design	Strategic Planning
Customer Service	Landscaping	Transport
Design & Drafting	Law	Travel (domestic)
Education & Training	Mentor / Life Coach	Travel (overseas)