

How do you balance your responsibilities and needs against the demands and expectations of others? How do you prioritize your time, talent, and treasure? Is your tendency to care first for yourself or first for those around you?

Three times in the middle section of Mark, Jesus outlined the cost for him to be Messiah, saying he would suffer, die, be buried, and come back to life. And after every effort to make this clear his disciples responded with, "That's nice, but let's talk about ME." Peter rebuked Jesus. Others argued about who was the greatest. James and John quietly demanded front row seats. Think about how patient Jesus must have been!

Lest we become too critical, how often do we find that we are more preoccupied with "me" than in simply being a disciple and letting Jesus lead? How often are my feelings, needs, and control more important than someone next to me?

Jesus came to suffer and serve – in love. But his disciples selfishly were all mixed up! He announced that he would not be a king who sat on a throne demanding to be served, but willing to kneel and wash his disciples' feet. He was born to enter our place of death so he could turn such darkness into the beginning of new life! This was the "*cup he was to drink and the baptism which he would be immersed in ...*"

An American journalist went to China to visit a Catholic hospital. For more than an hour, he watched an old nun clean sores on the leg of a dying woman. He casually remarked, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars." She smiled and said, "Neither would I." She woman understood true greatness comes from true love.

At Baptism, each of us was touched with the sign of Christ's cross and called to share Christ's love in every touch we share. Jesus said to love is to serve. To serve is to surrender. In surrender you find the true honor of being a disciple. This is what life in the kingdom is all about.

I have been humbled over the years as I have watched adoptive parents continue to love children who gave them nothing but grief, when it would have been easy to say, "this isn't fair." and simply

walk away! I have watched husbands and wives spend hour after hour, week after week, year after year, caring for spouses with Alzheimer's or dementia. They get little sleep, develop their own health issues, and do nothing but serve the one they promised to love no matter what. I have watched so many of you give hour after hour in ministry and service to others, with no recognition, no reward, and no spotlight, for no other reason than a commitment to share the love of Jesus. That is point of today's Gospel.

Discipleship is about being servants rather than snobs, about sacrifice rather than ego. It is about being foot-washers rather than people who expect to be honored with praise and earthly fame. What good news this is for a lonely, selfish, hurting world!

What parent has not cleaned dirty diaper after dirty diaper or stayed up all night with a sick child? What reward is there in that, except the reward of loving someone special? We are called to share that love for the same reason with everyone we meet! It is not an easy task, but is there any other way to respond to the servant love of Jesus? We do so as thanksgiving for the unbelievable gifts and opportunities with which we have been entrusted. And we do so as we understand our role in modeling that love so that Christ, and not me is given glory.

A church in England that has sign over its only entry point saying, "the servants' entrance." There is no other way to get in. To enter for worship, one must accept the fact he or she is not a lord or lady but a servant! That was Jesus' message to his disciples. It was a lesson they eventually learned well.

Years ago, we visited my parents in a rented condo on the beach in Traverse City. Our kids were playing in the sand, and eight-year-old Katie saw a solitary duckling with a damaged eye and hurt leg that was being pecked at by sea gulls. She wanted to pick it up and put it in the bathtub in grandma's room, but I didn't want to be bothered and felt nature should take its course. After her persistence, we noticed a family of ducks about fifty yards out from the beach and I helped her carry the duckling to the water. It immediately swam to its mother, and she and the rest of her brood quickly swam away. And so, I learned a lesson from a little girl who (at least on that day) decided "it's not all about me."

Granted, that scene on the beach was only about a little duck, and not something as important as a dying mom, but when life is not about me it is interesting how it changes how we respond to the world around me. Contrast that story with the disciples arguing about who gets to sit on the throne, and you get the point.

Disciples always get front row seats, but for a different reason than none might expect, and it is more than we deserve. Faith in Jesus is not about looking for accolades or being patted on the back but learning now to kneel and wash feet. Our call is to serve as we have been served.

As people leave Zion's parking lot they face a sign that reminds, "You Are Now Entering the Mission Field!" What a reminder of our privilege to join in the foot washing, servant love of Jesus! Is there any other way?