



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Today is the fifth and last Wednesday in our Created for Community mid week Lenten series. Our topic for today is “In Community with Christ.” We are reminded that we are headed in this season of Lent to the cross, where we find ourselves in the company of Jesus. And how is it then, that we walk with Jesus on that journey? I believe, we walk by his example of a suffering servant, one who is willing to give His life for others. So in wanting to emulate Jesus, I would like to talk a bit tonight about what it means to be a not a suffering servant but a servant leader.

In our Scripture text tonight we hear the words of Jesus clearly in verse 45, “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This too is our destiny as we walk with Jesus to the cross. We are called to a different ethic, as God tells us that he will honor service rather than power. We are challenged to live in the world yielding to God’s

kingdom rules. And as our story tells us, we are not to put our own needs or wants ahead of those of our neighbor, as James and John did wanting to sit at Jesus' side.

Jesus is clear in word and deed. He is willing to give more of himself than is required, even to death on a cross. And although he does not require the same from us, we follow His example of servant leadership. For Jesus humbled himself in human form, as our sacrifice, as payment to free us from sin and death. Jesus models both service and sacrifice for all his children. He is the only one who can accomplish this feat of serving as a ransom for many in the unique role in the plan of salvation.

Today our society is really struggling with the idea of slavery. Historically, when we speak of being a slave or a servant, we think of the old south where slaves were a commodity to be bought and sold and they worked for an owner. And tonight I don't want to get into the racism issue, but I am here to tell you that Jesus has a very different idea of what it means to be a slave or a servant.

To Jesus being a servant does not mean that you possess no power. In fact the opposite is true, if you can give away your power you are really more powerful. Think about that for a minute. And example for me is Pastor Larry, who was my spiritual mentor as I was considering my call into ministry. Pastor Larry gathered a group of us, 5 to be exact and taught us a bit about the fine art of preaching the Gospel. We studied with him for a few months and picked his brain over and over again. He is a wonderful preacher and many of you have had the opportunity of hearing him at this very pulpit. Well, Pastor

Larry, after we had done some practice, willingly gave up his Sunday pulpit to allow us to preach at St Olaf. He yielded his authority to me, little old me. That is a sacred thing, folks, to give away. And by doing so he empowered me to begin a career in ministry.

Giving away power is not something we are at all used to. We like to be in control, in charge of what is coming next. So we must realize too that being a servant may mean working for someone else, but it does not mean that we do not stop being who we are. We still have our own feelings, thoughts, and ideas.

Do any of you remember the TV show, “The Brady Bunch”? If I were to ask you who was the real star of that show, I would guess many of you might say the housekeeper, Alice. She was the servant. She cooked, cleaned and took care of the Brady bunch. She had her own personality for sure, but the family really relied on her for many things including her advice.

When I was little my great grandpa was a butler/caretaker/driver for a wealthy family on Ohatchee Lake outside of Milwaukee. Once we got to go to the home where he worked and see the cottage he lived in. He was so proud of the work he did taking care of the family and their cars, their home and

their boats. And it was obvious, when we met his employers that they appreciated his efforts in his job as well as loving him for who he was.

You see a servant is one who empowers others. A servant is one who works behind the scenes to make things right instead of stepping into the spotlight. A servant just plain loves helping others and loving them as they work.

And Jesus was a special servant. He was a servant leader. What I mean by that is that Jesus showed us how to be a servant too.

Today we seem to need more of these type of leaders, people who empower others. People who are not bosses as much as they are coaches. People who are not bullies but rather role models. This world is desperate for leaders of this kind who recognize God's blessing in their own lives, leaders brave and bold enough to bless the people around them in humble service.

We are called to serve our neighbors along side Jesus, in big things and in little ones. So don't stop encouraging one another and being servant leaders in your community. Follow Jesus example and serve your neighbor so they too will know the servant and sacrificial love of God in Christ Jesus. **AMEN**