“Set Free to Serve”

[Mark 10:32-45](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2010.32-45)

5th Sunday in Lent

March 17, 2024

KITIMAT/TERRACE (Reading Service for Quesnel)

I want to start out our message today with a little quiz.

* Multiple-choice.
  + Which of these two statements is true:
    - a) “A Christian is a perfectly free person forgiven and subject to none,”
    - or b) “A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”
* Which one is true?
  + Well, this is somewhat a trick question.
* The correct answer is
  + c) “both of the above.”
* A Christian is both a perfectly free forgiven person
  + and a perfectly dutiful servant of all.
* It was Martin Luther
  + who set forth these two seemingly contradictory propositions
    - in a treatise called
      * “The Freedom of a Christian.”

And this idea was not new with Luther.

* Our Lord Jesus Himself says as much
  + in our text today from Mark chapter 10.
    - Here Jesus tells us two things:
      * 1) that He came as a servant to set us free,
        + and 2) that the way to live out that freedom

is by being servants of one another.

* So today we want to deal with both aspects of the Christian life,
  + both to celebrate our freedom
    - and to grow in our servanthood.
* Because of Christ the Servant,
  + you and I have been “Set Free to Serve.”

In the multiple-choice question I just gave you,

* we had a) “A Christian is free,”
  + ) “A Christian is a servant,”
    - and c) both of the above.
      * And we said that the correct answer is
        + c) “A Christian is both free and a servant.”
* But if we look at ourselves according to our old sinful nature,
  + we find that the answer is actually
    - d) “none of the above.”
* We were not free,
  + nor were we servants of one another.
    - According to the sinful nature,
      * we were slaves,
        + not free,

and we were slaves to self,

not servants of one another.

Look at the Apostles in our text.

* They demonstrate this self-serving attitude.
  + Take the brothers James and John,
    - for example,
      * seeking their own interest.
* They tell Jesus,
  + “Teacher,
    - we want you to do for us
      * whatever we ask of you.
* Grant us to sit,
  + one at your right hand
    - and one at your left,
      * in your glory.”
* In other words,
  + give us what we want,
    - Jesus, let us have our way.
      * We want to sit on royal thrones,
        + the best seats in the house

right next to yours.

* James and John are seeking glory,
  + pursuing positions,
    - not in order to give,
      * but in order to get.

Now look at the other disciples:

* “*And when the ten heard it*,
  + *they began to be indignant at James and John.”* 
    - So the other ten
      * are mad at the two brothers
        + for trying to get those positions ahead of them.

And Jesus has to “call out” all twelve of them

to straighten them out.

Which He does.

* First, look at what He tells them not to be like,
  + when He describes the ways of the rulers
    - and great men of the Gentiles:
* *“Those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles* 
  + *lord it over them,* 
    - *and their great ones* 
      * *exercise authority over them.”*
* The way of the world
  + is to lord it over people,
    - to use power to get your way.

So there is plenty of self-serving attitudes all around, we have:

* James and John,
  + the ten other disciples,
    - and the Gentile rulers.
* But now, what about us?
  + Do we ever demonstrate this kind of self-serving attitude?
    - What do we do
      * or say
        + or feel

that shows we have the same kind

of self-centeredness?

* How we treat others?
  + In our life in the home,
    - at the workplace or school,
      * or even in the church?
* It is time to examine our own minds and hearts and lives,
  + our speech and actions,
    - to see if you are like James and John and the others.
      * I suspect you are, as am I.
        + We all think and act and speak in self-serving ways.

It is what sinners do.

But Jesus says to us today,

*“It shall not be so*

*among you.”*

* Recently, I had a discussion with a young man,
  + who has stopped going to Divine Worship
    - mostly because he felt as if the church
      * was stifling his life’s fun factor
        + and he was missing out on too much of life.
* In the course of the discussion,
  + he pushed the idea that he could be just as concerned for others
    - outside the church
      * by self-overriding the natural instinct to always serve himself.
* When I asked him if he was actually doing this,
  + he finally faltered.
    - What I failed to say was;
      * in the church,
        + you receive the knowledge, strength and power

to change the mindset

that always wants to default

to the me-first attitude.

PAUSE A MOMENT

You know,

* so far we’ve looked at James and John,
  + the ten other disciples,
    - and the Gentile rulers,
      * and we have looked at ourselves.
* But there is one person we have not looked at yet,
  + and that is Jesus.
    - Jesus, the Son of Man,
      * who came
        + *“not to be served but to serve,*

*and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Jesus calls Himself “the Son of Man.”

* That messianic title is found
  + in a prophecy in the Book of Daniel,
    - where there is a vision
      * of *“one like a son of man”* 
        + *who comes from heaven*

*with “dominion and glory and a kingdom,*

*that all peoples, nations, and languages*

*should serve him.”*

* So if ever there was anyone
  + who rightfully could have demanded that others serve him,
    - it was Jesus, the Son of Man.
      * That was the kind of Glory-Messiah
        + the disciples were expecting,

and as His closest followers

they wanted a piece of the action,

to share in that kind of glory.

Yet Jesus says that the Son of Man

* came not to be served but to serve,
  + and to give His life as a ransom.
* The Son of Man,
  + as Jesus describes Himself here,
    - sounds more like another figure
      * prophesied in the Old Testament,
        + namely, the “Suffering Servant” from Isaiah 53.
* This Servant would make Himself an offering for sin.
  + He would pour out His soul unto death.
    - This righteous Servant
      * would make many to be accounted righteous
        + by bearing their iniquities.
* This is the kind of Servant-Messiah
  + Jesus came to be
    - and wants His disciples to see.

To serve and to give His life as a ransom:

* This will mean that Jesus
  + must drink a certain cup.
    - *“The cup that I drink,”* He says.
* This cup that Jesus speaks of
  + is the cup of suffering.
    - In His agony in the garden of Gethsemane,
      * He will pray*,* 
        + *“My Father, if it is possible,*

*let this cup pass from me;*

*nevertheless, not my will,*

*but thy will be done.”*

* By this “cup,”
  + Jesus is speaking of the suffering
    - He is entering into.
      * He is speaking of the cross.
* For on that cross
  + Christ will drink the cup of wrath,
    - God’s righteous anger against sin,
      * in our place and for our salvation.

Because Christ drank His cup of suffering,

* that cup of wrath,
  + there is now for us
    - a different cup,
      * the cup of salvation.
* This cup of blessing for which we give thanks
  + we drink from this cup in the Lord’s Supper,
    - where we receive Christ’s blood shed for us
      * for the forgiveness of sins.
* We are strengthened by this beneficial gift,
  + able to drink the cup of suffering
    - that we encounter in this life,
      * especially the suffering for the sake of the gospel,
        + the suffering that James and John

eventually would do

as persecuted apostles.

* + *“The cup that I drink, you will drink,”* 
    - *J*esus tells them.
      * They too will suffer for the gospel.
        + And all of us Christians will,

in one form or another.

*“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,*

* *and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*
  + Christ came into this world broken by our selfishness,
    - and He came as a servant.
      * He came to give His life as a ransom.
* “Ransom” was the term
  + used for the price paid
    - to set people free,
      * to release slaves
        + or prisoners of war,

people in bondage

who cannot free themselves.

* That is us.
  + We needed a ransom.
    - We were slaves,
      * self-serving slaves to sin
        + and prisoners of death.

The Son of Man came to give His life as our ransom.

* Jesus paid the price that sets us free.
  + He frees us from our slavery to self,
    - our bondage to sin,
      * and our prison of death.
* Now we are the redeemed of the Lord,
  + ransomed from the grave.
    - We have been set free.
* Luther says it so well in his explanation of the Second Article:
  + He “has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person,
    - purchased and won me from all sins,
      * from death, and from the power of the devil;
        + not with gold or silver,

but with His holy, precious blood

and with His innocent suffering and death.”

But wait, there is more.

* Luther’s explanation does not stop there.
  + It continues:
    - “that I may be His own
      * and live under Him in His kingdom,
        + and serve Him in everlasting righteousness,

innocence, and blessedness.”

* Christ has redeemed and ransomed us for a purpose.
  + We have been set free to serve.
    - Christ has set us free from our slavery
      * to selfishness, sin, and death.
        + Now we serve in the most blessed kind of “slavery,”

which is really no slavery at all.

* We are slaves of Christ
  + and servants of one another.
    - This is what Jesus is saying in our text: to you also.
      * My disciples will be servants of one another.”
        + *“If even I,*

*the Son of Man,*

*came to serve,*

*then that’s the way it will be among you.*

The Son has set us free,

* and we are free indeed.
  + We are free from our self-centeredness
    - and our resentment.
* We are free from selfishly seeking after position,
  + because our position is secure in the Lord.
    - We are free,
      * to be able to serve one another.
        + So now the way to greatness in God’s kingdom

is the way of servanthood.

* The church is not a business
  + where people climb the ladder of success
    - by stepping on others.
      * The church is not an arena for ambition,
        + where people seek prestige

through positions of power.

* Jesus says to us today,
  + “*It shall not be so among you.”*
    - Rather, we the church
      * we are a community of servants,
        + and as such,

a real counter-culture to the world.

* A serving, loving, Christian community
  + is a refreshing oasis
    - in this self-serving world.
      * People should and will notice the difference.

We have signs of that servant spirit

* right here in our midst,
  + in the people of Redeemer (-Terrace) (Quesnel).
    - As we give ourselves to the Lord,
      * we also give ourselves to one another.
* We see it in the thousand-and-one tasks
  + there are to do in a congregation,
    - when we serve out of a free and willing spirit–
      * whether we are serving coffee,
        + bringing food for the potluck,

helping with Communion set-up,

providing rides to doctor’s appointments

or to services,

visiting our shut-ins

* + in all these ways and dozens more,
    - you, dear brothers and sisters,
      * are being Christ’s servant community.
        + That is how it is

and shall be among you.

Fellow redeemed,

* Christ Jesus
  + the Servant-Messiah
    - gave His life as our ransom.
      * He has set us free.
        + And we have been set free for a purpose,

set free to serve.

* As Christ’s church,
  + we are serving one another now,
    - and we are always being stretched
      * to serve one another even more.
* Look for new ways and new opportunities
  + to do just that.
    - We are indeed “Set Free to Serve.”

AMEN

*This sermon was prepared for the Divine Service at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Kitimat/Terrace, BC Trinity Lutheran Church, Quesnel, BC and was presented on March 17, 2024, the day we celebrated the 5th Sunday in Lent. If you have questions or comments please feel free to call or text Pastor Alan Visser at (250) 552-4685.*