

For the City: Serve the City
Luke 22:24-27; April 18, 2016

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Wasn't last Sunday fun? Both the worship and the Jazz Brunch. Celebrating the great works of the Lord in RHC over the past five years. So far, we've collected \$2,623 for our gift to the Boys and Girls Club (it's not too late to give). One of the things I love reading this past week were your dreams for RHC over the next five years (#rhcnxt5years). Today I want to share with you one of my dreams. I want RHC to have such a great impact on our city that if, for some reason, we were to die, vanish, or cease to exist, our community would take notice. They would care. They would weep. If we're going to be this kind of church, then we've got to pursue greatness. Why greatness? Because true greatness rarely goes unnoticed.

- Who saw Kobe Bryant's last game Wednesday night? He was 37 years old and had played in the NBA for 20 years. He's one of the top 20 best players ever. He scored 60 points (the most in the NBA all year), including the winning shot with 31 seconds left in the game. True greatness.
- Who saw the Golden State Warriors play Wednesday night? They became the first NBA team to ever win 73 games. No team has ever won that many games. True greatness. But additionally, one of the "splash brothers," Steph Curry, hit 10 three pointers to finish the season with a total of 402 three pointers. Want to know the previous record amount? 286 by Steph Curry last year. True greatness.

People want to watch the Warriors...I want to watch the warriors...because they're great! True greatness rarely goes unnoticed.

Transition: how can we become a great church that helps our city continue to be a great city?

The Context: Jesus had a dialogue with his disciples about true greatness at the Last Supper, while he was giving final instructions and preparing his disciples for his death and departure from this world. Think about it: these were the men who would be the leaders of the early church. Listen closely to what he says about greatness.

Read Luke 22:24-27

Jesus' point is simple and clear: Be great by being small and serving all. This is how we will become a great church that goes unnoticed in our city. The pathway to greatness is through smallness and service.

1. Be great by being small (22:24-26a)

Jesus contrasts how he wants his disciples to lead the church with the world's leaders.

- Leadership and greatness by the world's standards:
 - The kings and rulers of the world rule through the exercise of lordship, authority and power and they are called "benefactors," meaning something like "a helper of the people." This title was even given to tyrants.
- Leadership and greatness by Jesus' standards:
 - "But not so with you" (26):
 - Leadership and greatness according to Jesus doesn't happen through the exercise of power but by adopting a certain kind of posture.
 - Rather, the one who is "great" (in a position of authority and leadership) is to become like the "younger." By younger, my guess is that Jesus had a "child" in mind. In Matthew 18, the disciples ask Jesus a similar question:

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven'" (Matt. 18:1-4).

- ◆ Young people can't use their age to exercise authority over others.
- ◆ Young people are unable to advance their own cause apart from the help, direction and resources of others.
- ◆ Young people would've been given the menial tasks of servants.
- True greatness begins with true humility and true humility results in us decreasing and becoming small like children. Jesus is the perfection example of this.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:3-8).

If you don't adopt this mindset of humility, you won't cultivate a lifestyle of serving others because you'll think that people and cities are supposed to serve you. The first step to becoming great is to become small. You've got to die and die daily. Repent today, even right now, of your arrogance and pride toward others and the city. Ask for God help you adopt this mind of Christ.

Transition: Jesus restates his point in different terms to provide even greater clarity. He says, "and the leader as one who serves."

2. Be great by serving all (22:26b-27)

True greatness and leadership is displayed not through power but through service. Not through taking control, but in the ability to give and share.

Jesus continues probing by asking, “[from the world’s perspective] who is greater?” 1) The one who reclines at the table? or 2) the one who serves at the table?

- The one receiving the meal is generally regarded as superior to the one who serves it. Thus, Jesus expects them to answer, “The one who reclines is greater.”
- “But” - Jesus follows with a contrastive “But,” pointing to his example, “But I am among you as the one who serves.”
 - ◆ Look back and recall: what would’ve already happened at the Last Supper? Jesus would’ve already washed the disciples’ feet (see John 13).
 - ◆ Look forward to the cross: in similar passages in Matthew and Mark Jesus says,

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Jesus’ point of further probing is to confront his disciples, and us reading this text, with a choice: If Jesus is great and yet he serves, even to the point of laying down his life, how should his followers live? They should serve as well. If we’re called to follow and imitate Jesus, of all things, we should be servants, and this should shape how we view and approach our city.

- For some of us, we need an entire shift in mindset as we approach the city. It’s so easy to get caught up in the selfish “consumer” mindset of using the city to benefit myself rather than living in the city to serve it.
- But the gospel should destroy this selfishness and rather lead us to sacrificial service.
 - Do you disadvantage your community to advantage yourself?
 - Do you disadvantage yourself to advantage your community?
- And just to be clear: this shift isn’t just for one event or one day, it’s a shift that sees serving and the pursuit of justice as an everyday activity.

If we’re going to a great church for our city, we must be a church that sacrificially serves our city.

Let’s get practical. What does it look like to do this? It’s one thing to talk about serving but it’s entirely different thing to actually do it. You can gain a lot of good knowledge here on Sunday mornings, but if you start getting involve serving, watch out. That’s when transformation really starts to ramp up in our lives.

Who do we serve?

- Who did Jesus serve? When Jesus begins his ministry, Luke records him standing up and reading this from Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

- The gospel is the good news for all people that God is making right that which was tragically lost at the fall. We’re all broken people and in need of God’s grace, but the necessity for the gospel is especially seen in those who are experiencing suffering.
- That’s why Jesus’ mission was to serve the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed. Over one-third of his personal interactions with people were with those who were suffering: healing the sick, defending the weak and caring for those who are most of all undesired. He eats and drinks with sinners and tax collectors.
- The oppressed, despised, marginalized, needy, poor, widows and orphans may seem to be excluded from the blessings of this life, but they are not excluded in the kingdom of God. Inclusion in the kingdom of God has nothing to do with status, wealth or power.
- We should first look to serve the “least of all” because that’s who Jesus prioritized and it most displays the gospel. In the parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14, Jesus tells his disciples this:

“He said also to the man who had invited him, ‘When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:12-14).

- When we serve the least of all, we do it with nothing to gain. This is a picture of the gospel.

1. Serve Neglected Communities

- Entire communities and population segments have been ignored and marginalized.

2. Serve Neglected Neighbors (James 1:26-27; 2:15-17; Isa. 58:6-10).

- Communities our filled with hurting people (widows, immigrants).
- Medford Housing Authority
 - Movies for Seniors (Thomas Berndt)
 - ESL (previously led by one of our CG)
 - Clothing and Food Drives (previously led by one of our CG)
- Don’t “rescue” them. The poor don’t want to be “rescued” and neither do they want to be viewed as a “project.” The poor want true community. They want genuine friendship.

3. Serve Neglected Children (James 1:26-27).

- “Children are often collateral casualties innocently trapped in a web of pain and neglect” (Jeff Christopherson, *Kingdom First*, 172).
- Pregnancy Care, adoption, foster care, tutoring, mentoring.
- Boys and Girls Club

- Department of Children and Families
 - The next MAPP training in Malden starts May 18

How do we serve (from Tim Keller)?

- Relief: giving direct aid to meet physical, material and social needs
 - Temporary shelters, food and clothing services, medical services, crisis counseling.
- Development: bringing a person or community to self-sufficiency.
 - This can include education, job creation and training.
- Reform: seeks to change the social conditions and structures that aggravate or cause the dependency.
 - Advocate for better police protection, more just and fair banking practices, zoning practices, and better laws.

***Keller thinks to local church should concentrate primarily on relief and to some degree development. He said development and reform should be done by believers working through associations and organizations rather than directly through the local church.

When do we serve?

- Individually
 - Think about ways you can serve by intersection and not simply by addition.
 - How can you build margin into your daily schedule for serving. Often times, we're unable to meet unexpected needs because we're so busy going from one thing to the next.
 - My goal isn't to make you feel guilty today about serving. Jesus is our motivation. We don't do this to earn God's favor but because we've already received his favor and just want to display it to others. We all have to serve within our God given roles and capacity in life. If you're serving in the city but not in your home, you've missed the point.
 - The church can't do it all. We're going to plan some ways we can corporately serve together throughout the year, but much of this is going happen by individuals taking the initiative and leading.
- Communally: with your small group.
- Corporately: with your church (look at the back of your worship guide).
 - 4/30: Medford Square Clean Up (10am - 12pm)
 - 5/22: Serve Medford Sunday
 - 6/11: Boys and Girls Club Men's Workday
 - Circle the Square (6/16; 7/21; 8/18)
 - 7/11-15: Soccer Nights
 - 7/23-30: Serve Medford Week
 - 7/29: Community Fun Night
 - Interested: make a note right now on your Connect Card and let us know.

Why do we serve?

- It's a powerful testimony to the validity of the gospel (see Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12).
 - It pictures forth the coming kingdom and greater city to come. The redemption that Jesus will eventually bring will include liberation from all the effects of sin (spiritual and physical).
 - It's a tangible way to show our city how the gospel has changed our lives. "The powerful punch of the gospel message validated by a community whose priorities are transformed by that same gospel has an irresistible gravitational pull on a skeptical world" (Jeff Christopherson, *Kingdom First*, 166-67).
 - ◆ The way we're going to break down the skeptical barriers of resistance to the gospel in Medford is through loving service. We will love and serve you longer than you can distrust us.
 - It will lead nonbelievers to glorify God. Because of this, one of best things you can do is invite your lost friend to serve with you. They'll be a front row seat to the gospel being fleshed out in your life. Through service, we're able to combine what Tim Keller calls *gospel messaging* (urging everyone to repent and believe the gospel) with *gospel neighboring* (sacrificially meeting the needs of those around them, whether they believe or not).
- It results with given influence, trust and relational capital from those in the city.
 - "If Christians seek power and influence, they will arouse fear and hostility. If instead they pursue love and seek to serve, they will be granted a great deal of influence by their neighbors, a free gift given to trusted and trustworthy people" (Keller, *Center Church*, 172).
 - It gives us a hearing among those who would've have otherwised listen. People won't care what we have to say if they don't see any difference in our lives.

Conclusion

- When we become small and serve all, especially the least of all, we will be on a trajectory toward what Jesus calls true greatness and true greatness rarely goes unnoticed. How do we become a church where our community take's notice? We become small and serve all. Just like Jesus.