

SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

TEXT: MARK 9: 30-37

THEME: A SERVANT OF ALL

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" **34** But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. **35** And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." **36** And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, **37** "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

In the name of Jesus:

The television series *Downton Abbey*, portrays a great household, divided between nobility and servants. There is little doubt who is number one in the pecking order. Lord Grantham is number one, with the other members of the family underneath him. The servants are beneath the family. The servants give their lives for the comfort of the family. They slave away to provide the family with a life of comfort, ease, and luxury. The lowest person in the house is the kitchen maid named Daisy. She is the one who has to kneel down to get dirty as she cleans the fireplaces. She is the last person in the pecking order. She is last of all, and she is a servant of all.

The world has its own pecking order. Those who are powerful, are of a certain social class, who have the means, hire others to serve them. One of the

greatest adjustments a former president of the United States has to make is becoming a private citizen once again. While in public office, the President has all of his needs met. His daily schedule is arranged, food prepared, butlers serve, and drivers taxi the President and his family to anywhere they need or want to go. But when the President is no longer President, then he has to fend for himself. The secret service staff is cut to the bare minimum. There is no one to drive him from one place to another. A former President, while still held in honor and esteem, needs to learn to live life in as normal a way possible, to blend back into society.

In our text for today, the disciples are arguing among themselves, they are trying to determine who the greatest among them are? Who is it? Peter, the rock? John, the beloved disciple? Each disciple has a reason to state his own case for greatness. On why others should deem that disciple as important, and why the others disciples should all get in line to give their due to the greatest disciple among the twelve. Jesus, though, turns their world upside down. Listen to what Jesus says: ““If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”

A servant of all. This according to the ways of the world is all backwards. Pride gets the best of all of us, and we think that we need to be heard and our needs met over and against someone else. We place ourselves

above others, sometimes measuring ourselves by things that we think make us better than someone else. We like to justify our actions and our lifestyles, saying "well, at least I am not like so and so." Like the disciples, we have the wrong idea of greatness, thinking greatness is measured by what someone does for me and in what others can do for me.

Jesus shows the true measure of greatness. Whoever would be first, must be last of all and a servant of all. And who is a servant of all? Jesus! Jesus is the Servant of all. He showed that He was as servant of all in the miracles He performed, placing others first and His needs last. But chiefly Jesus showed that He was the Servant of All by allowing Himself to be handed over to die on the cross.

Greater love no one knows than this type of love, that a man will lay down his life for His friends. Jesus laid down His life because He loves you and calls you His friend. Jesus explains His life, His ministry, and His death by saying: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Jesus didn't come down from heaven to be worshipped and glorified, He came down from heaven to become a human being, to live His life for you, to die His death for you, and to rise again on Easter morning for you. All so that your sins are forgiven by the blood of Jesus.

The sins of selfishness and pride, the sins of neglecting the needs of others, the sins of not loving the Lord with all your heart and serving Him alone.

Jesus has served you with His life, suffering, death, and resurrection so that you can be truly free, not to serve your passions, lusts, and sinful desires, but to serve the Lord in all you do in serving others.

In Baptism you have been joined to Jesus. You belong to Him. He has laid a claim on your life so that you are now free to serve Him. You have been set free from sin, Satan, and death so that you can crucify the sinful desires that you have. Jesus gives you a new you by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that by faith in Him you are purged of pride and now can live a life of greatness in God's sight, through the humble service for others. Jesus has called you to be His servant, so that all that you now do you do to the glory of God.

Martin Luther, in his little book called "The Freedom of a Christian," said that the Christian life is a paradoxical life. Two things are true. They may seem to be the polar opposite, but they are true and run together in living the Christian life. Luther wrote: "The Christian is a free lord and servant to none." He also wrote: "The Christian is a bound servant, subject to all." Jesus has set you free from sin, death, and the power of the devil. You are truly free in Christ! But you are not to use your freedom to serve yourself. Luther writes

that you are now to use your freedom in serving God. And how does one serve God? By living his life in service to others.

To summarize, let's use one more quote from Martin Luther, shall we? In speaking about the importance of doing good works, and our reason for doing good works, Luther said: "God does not need your good works, your neighbor does." And that makes sense, now, doesn't it? Because God is all powerful and has everything. He has no needs or wants. But God has placed us on earth, given us faith in Jesus, so that we can show our faith by doing good things for our neighbor, who has all sorts of needs. And so we are called to live our lives for God, not serving ourselves, but serving others, in the name of Jesus, and in doing so we are servants of all.

Amen