

Realign your life
5 of 7 in Realign Your Life: Practices that Transform You
Mark 10:35-45

January 31, 2021

My Facebook feed recently reminded me that it's the anniversary of an award that I got. It was called, "Man of Honour." I got all dressed up, went to a fancy dinner and received the award. I can't lie – it felt nice. It felt more than nice. It felt great.

There's something in us all that wants to be great. We all want to matter. I was reading Richard Foster's book, "Celebration of Discipline" (where I got many ideas for this sermon) and he said, "most of us know we'll never be the greatest; we just don't want to be the least."

The passage that we're going to explore today looks at just that.

What's going on party people, my name is Kevin and I'm YourFriendlyNeighbourhoodYouthPastor here at Cornerstone and we're in a series called, "Realign Your Life: Practices that Transform You." It's a 6-part series that looks at 6 Biblical practices that can help us to realign our lives by God's grace in the middle of this difficult and disorienting time.

Let's just pause there. We're certainly in some difficult and disorienting times. If you agree, type Y for Yes in the chat.

Take a deep breath.

With all that's going on, your mind is probably racing even right now. Take a second to slow down and be fully present in this moment.

Because this season is so difficult and disorienting, it causes us to lose focus on what really matters. What's really important. Why we do what we do. This series, like bringing in a car to get aligned, or your braces to get tightened, or turning off and on your phone, is a chance to hit the reset button.

You with me?

So far, we've looked at prayer, fasting and the scriptures. In the coming weeks, we're going to look at hospitality and giving. Today we're going to look at service.

Our passage for today is Mark 10:35-45

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.'

That should be a red flag for Jesus right there. I was watching Seinfeld the other day and he was saying that the longer the pause, the bigger the favour – short pause, little favour. Hey Jesus, can I borrow a pencil? Short pause.

Hey Jesus...

Vs. 36 - 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked.

Long pause...

Vs. 37 - They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.'

Jesus said,

What planet are you on? Are you kidding me! 3 verses ago I literally told you that I was going to Jerusalem, going to be delivered to the chief priests and teachers of the law. I told you that I was going to be condemned to death and then handed over to the Gentiles – then I said they were going to mock me and spit on me, flog me and kill me. Did you hear that?

Did you hear that I said was going to rise 3 days later? Aren't you curious to know what that means?

Jesus didn't say that. It's important to know the kind of Jesus we're dealing with. That's what I would have said. But Jesus is so patient. He's so loving. He's so present.

I hope you realize that and take it in.

Jesus is so patient with you. So loving. So present

Vs. 38 'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said. 'Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?'

'We can,' they answered.

Yep.

Again, they don't even know what Jesus is talking about. They think he's just using imagery but that he's not really going to suffer. Or if he's gonna suffer, it's not going to be that bad. Or even if it is kinda bad, the fact that soon he's going to take over the Romans and be in charge will be all worth it.

Vs. 39 - Jesus said to them, 'You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.'

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

We don't have time to go into it today but when Jesus talks about drinking the cup and being baptized – he's really talking about suffering – baptized means to be fully submerged in. Jesus

will be fully submerged in suffering – for our sakes – to take our place for the sins we’ve committed that separate us from God. And in following him, the disciples will be baptized in suffering too. It’s a side point but an important point – if you truly follow Jesus, there will be some suffering in your life. But we do it because of the suffering we did for us.

Back to our regularly scheduled program. Our service on service.

You see what I did there? Because it’s a church service, but then the topic is service? Yet get it right? It’s funny right? 😊

The way text reads it tells us that they weren’t mad at James and John because of what they asked, they were jealous of James and John. They were mad because James and John asked first. The other disciples were scared that all the good positions of power would be taken by James and John.

In that situation, Jesus again shows how patient and loving and present he is. He doesn’t get mad at the other 10 disciples. He uses it as an opportunity to teach them and unify them.

Vs. 42. Jesus called them together...

Vs. 42 – I imagine him saying – guys, c’mon, bring it in. Putting his arms around them and bringing them in a circle or something

Vs. 42-44 “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

Jesus is teaching them that it’s not about position for the sake of power. The Romans were in power and they used their position to exert power over those under them. The disciples were hoping that Jesus would go into Jerusalem, overthrow the Romans and then take power away. Then the disciples would be in power and then they would use that power over the Romans – so the exact same system – but different people in power.

But Jesus is turning the whole world – that whole system upside down. Jesus isn’t interested in the system. Jesus is interested in their souls.

Jesus isn’t interested in position for power. Jesus is interested in position to serve.

If you want to be great, be a great servant. That’s our main point for today. If you want to be great, be a great servant.

You are placed in your position on purpose – to serve.

Why does it matter? Why does serving matter?

It matters because as we try to realign our lives – the practice of serving – of service, humbles us like nothing else. You can't just be humble. Like, "Oh, I'm humble." But if you practice service, you will become humble along the way.

Remember that thought from Richard Foster - most of us know that we'll never be the greatest; we just don't want to be the least.

Nobody wants to be last.

The Jesus way is so different from the world. The world is all about coming in first. Top grade in the class, top position at a job. Best car, house, clothes, family, most followers on social media...

When you serve, it forces you to become humble.

The real tension in the passage comes when Jesus says in verse 44 of the NIV, "and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."

That word slave or servant as some translations have it – that's the tension. The Greek for this means, "one who willingly renders useful service to others." That part I'm okay with. I'm okay with willingly being useful to other people. But when you really start digging deep into the word, especially when you go with the harsher word "slave" – it means to forfeit your own rights in order to serve all. That's tough to hear.

But if we really want to be followers of Jesus, that's what we're called to do. To forfeit our own rights in order to serve all.

The disciples wanted to be on the receiving end of service, but Jesus challenged them to be on the giving end.

We should be looking to serve others, not to be served.

If you want to be great, be a great servant.

I don't know about you, but I get scared. I'm scared that if I give up my rights in order to serve, then I'll be taken advantage of. I'm scared that if I give my all to serve others, no one will take care of me.

Are you afraid that if you give up your rights to serve others that you might be taken advantage of?)

Richard Foster says that there's a difference between choosing to serve and being a servant. A servant gives up the right to be in charge – you can't hurt someone who has freely given up their rights. That's how Jesus could do it. He freely gave up his rights. He could have used his

power to control over people. But he chose to serve people. The greatest example of that of course is right at the end of this passage.

Vs. 45 – For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. That word ransom refers to the price of release. Jesus, on the cross gave up freely gave up his rights to release us from bondage to sin and death and separation from God. He paid a price we couldn't pay ourselves. And not just for us. For all. That's good news. He's calling us to accept that gift and then the life he's calling us to life. Like him, to serve others. To It's one thing to serve; it's another thing to be a servant.

I think that if I'm honest I choose to serve. I don't mind serving. I don't even mind serving a lot. But there's a point at which I'm like – okay, that's enough. It's about control. I want to control how much I serve. This passage is challenging me to give up control. It's challenging us to give up control. Are you willing to give up control, trust Jesus and serve – even if there's a cost?

There's an episode of the Fresh Prince – greatest show of all time where Uncle Phil tells his daughter that he wants her to be all she can be. She says, "You want me to join the army?" For those of you under 40, that used the slogan of the U.S. Army.

At this point in the message, you probably feel like I'm calling you to do something big like quit your job or become a missionary or something grandiose like that. I'm not doing that. I can't speak for God but I'm not doing that.

Ironically though, it's usually not the big things that we struggle with. It's normally the small, everyday moments that cause us the most frustration. The real issues are serving at home, in our family, making the small sacrifices that seem to us like little deaths. Giving up our right to be right, choosing to serve and not to be served.

We're going to wind down now so I'm going to give us some opportunities to practice this discipline or serving. Some larger ways out there, and some smaller in here.

As Pastor Steve said in the last message, try to focus on one. Which one do you feel God calling you to? There will be a guide sheet with lots of opportunities – even more than I'm going to mention now - so you can get that resource and take your time going through it and "get your serve on."

Let's start off by serving the community. We're really excited to welcome Bethany Nolsen to the staff team! She's been serving in and attending the church for years and has been a big part of connecting us to community programs to serve. Let's cheer for her in the chat and make her feel a Cornerstone welcome.

In her role as Outreach Director, Bethany will be overseeing local and global outreach, as well as training opportunities to learn how to share your faith. Her focus in the first 6 months of this

year will be on local outreach. She's given us some amazing opportunities to connect to the community. See if any of these speak to you.

These will all be available on our guide sheet – so click the link to access them all.

- 1. CSO:** Support those living on the streets by handing out food downtown, praying for our street friends, preparing food, driving deliveries, or donating good condition clothing. You can email bethany@cornerstonechurch.ca or visit <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/homeless/>
- 2. Grocery Team:** With this new lockdown we have more individuals needing grocery support. You can join our grocery team and pick up and deliver goods to our clients in Markham Stouffville. People can email me or visit <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/icanhelp/>
- 3. Care Team:** Make meals and support those in our community, email care@cornerstonechurch.ca

You can check these out on our website <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/icanhelp/>

It's constantly being updated with new places to serve. The link will also be provided in the guide sheet.

Those are opportunities to serve the community.

With the pandemic there are obviously great needs out there that we need to be a part of.

I would also like to make space for the small daily things right in front of us. Again, sometimes those may be hardest because they require us to constantly sacrifice.

Here are different acts of service that you can practice right from your home – from Richard Foster

1. Being served

Has someone ever tried to do something for you or give you something and you refused? Have you taken the time to think about why? Foster gives the example of Jesus washing Peter's feet. Peter doesn't want Jesus to wash his feet because it doesn't match up to Peter's view of leadership. If Peter was in charge, he wouldn't have washed feet.

Part of service is allowing others to serve us without thinking we have to pay it back. That's the beauty of the kingdom. It's a give and take where no one is always in charge, no one is always receiving. We're serving and being served. It's a divine dance.

Who can you allow to serve you?

2. Listening

How many people are going through something and would love to have someone listen to them?

Foster talks about the fact that we don't need to be trained psychoanalysts to be listeners. All we need is compassion and patience. We don't need correct answers – in fact sometimes answers are a hindrance to listening.

Who can you serve by listening with compassion and patience?

3. Bearing the burdens of each other.

Surely, this pandemic season with extended lockdowns is a season where there are many people going through many things.

If you're like me, sometimes the weight of what you're going through and the weight of everyone's else's problems seem overwhelming.

Foster challenges us to learn to hold the burdens of others without being destroyed by them. The practice is to lift the sorrows and pains of others into the arms of Jesus.

I was in counselling talking about this very issue and the counsellor gave me some great advice. You can ask the person you want to serve, "what can I do for you in this moment?" You don't have to be responsible for the entirety of their problems. Do what you can in that moment, and then you can bring the rest of it to Jesus – he can bear them.

Who can you serve today by helping to hold a part of their burden?

"You have the privilege of being an instrument in God's hands, how will you be used today? Look at each day as adventure." (Carey Neuhof podcast – Rob Pelinka G.M of the L.A. Lakers)

"Great players develop moves in the off-season to use during the game." (Rob Pelinka) That's what we're doing here – developing practices that will help us in our actual lives.

If you want to be great, be a great servant.

Martin Luther King said, "Anybody can be great because anybody can serve."

Here's a breath prayer for you this week as you seek to serve,
"Lord Jesus, bring me someone to serve today – who will you serve?" (Daily Office)