



United Methodist Church OF GENEVA

Serve

An Lent sermon by Pastor Rob Hamilton in the The Walk Series
Delivered on March 20, 2022
on the following text:

John 13:1-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4 got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." 11 For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." 12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. 16 Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Preamble

Today is the third Sunday of Lent and the third in our series on the 5 core Christian practices of United Methodist Christians. Lent is an appropriate season to explore the essentials, so that we can examine ourselves and make course corrections as we journey to the cross with Jesus and the new life we receive on Easter.

If you'll find a chart in your bulletin or on screen, you can see where we've been so far. The first core spiritual practice is a two-fer worship and prayer; the second is study, today we're going to explore serving and then the rest of the month we will look at giving and sharing. I want to ask you, if you haven't already, to assess yourself and mark the chart where you believe you fall in each of these core areas.

	SEARCHING	EXPLORING	BEGINNING	GROWING	MATURING
WORSHIP & PRAYER 	Searching for something more, have prayed in a crisis or at a meal when led by others.	Attend worship on occasion. Have tried praying and talking with God on occasion.	Begin worshipping regularly. Pray for my own needs and the needs of others.	Attends weekend worship as much as my schedule allows and find ways to worship & pray during the week.	Attends worship weekly, find ways to worship every day, practice different forms of prayer or pray 'without ceasing'.
STUDY 	Curious about spiritual things, have big questions and are searching for answers.	I've done some reading, watched videos, picked up the Bible in search of answers.	I've committed to reading Scripture. Attend a study. Committed to going deeper.	Frequently read Scripture or other edifying literature, attend studies regularly.	Spend time daily reading and studying Scripture, willing to teach others formally or informally.
SERVE 	Notice the needs of others and the world and feel like you should help.	Have volunteered before or on occasion.	Find joy, gratitude and contentment in serving others on occasion.	Search out regular opportunities to volunteers and offer my gifts to better our world.	Offer yourself to God in service everyday. Service brings joy and deepens your relationship with God & neighbor.
GIVE 	Notice or experience the generosity of others and it stirs your heart or mind.	Feel good spontaneously donating to worthy causes when I feel moved to do so.	I like putting money in the offering at church. Same is true of other causes.	Intentionally set money aside to give to my church & other causes. Make an estimate of giving to my church.	Find joy living below my means so that I can give freely and abundantly & want to help others find the joy of giving.
SHARE 	Openly recommend something you find good or worthwhile to others who are interested.	Would be willing to talk about God, faith or church with a trusted person if they asked.	I would be willing to recommend my church to or discuss faith with an interested person.	I look for ways to share about my faith in thanksgiving for what God has done for me.	Find joy in sharing about my faith with others, inviting them to know God in Christ and to my church.
	PREVENIENT GRACE	→	JUSTIFYING GRACE	→	SANCTIFYING GRACE

I offer this chart because the goal is for all of us to be in the growing and maturing areas of the five core practices and you can see how those are loosely defined on the chart. If you are looking to improve in the areas we've already covered, I invite all of us to pray at least 5 times a day as part of our worship and prayer practices. I also invite us to read just five verses of Scripture each day as a way to deepen our study. Not five chapters or five books of the Bible, but five verses of Scripture each day and we've offered you some online resources and tools to help all of us do that.

Today, I'm excited about talking about serving as the next core spiritual practice of those on the spiritual walk with Jesus. Let's pause here to pray for the Spirit's help focusing on the Message. Please pray with me:

Prayer of Illumination

Holy Spirit, you move as freely as the wind. We cannot control or contain you, but we do invite you to come into our lives in these moments to speak to our heart and minds so that we can continue in the transforming work Jesus is seeking to do in our lives and in the world through us. May it be so for the glory of God, our creator. Amen.

Sermon

Did you ever have a favorite teacher or a teacher that you were close to? I always appreciated and enjoy the teachers throughout school that noticed me and invested in me. I remember Mrs. Emery in 3rd grade. The clawfoot bathtub she had in her class room as a reading nook. I like her because she wasn't rigid and made learning fun. Mrs. Washington in 5th grade was a good listener and I appreciated that she would empathetically listen to me when I was facing struggles. Mr. Mo (Molinvich) middle school shop teacher was fun and easy going and inspired me to work harder and improve my skills. Mr. Tieri was my high school choir teacher and I always found him a safe person who tolerated my mediocre music skills and didn't give up on me even though after four years I never could figure out how to read music or clap on two and four. I've told you a little bit about my teachers growing up. I hope some of your special teachers have come to mind; that you've been able to picture them with fondness.

Now could you imagine one of these special teachers putting on work clothes and asking to wash your feet? I struggle with that one too. And yet, that's what the disciples encountered.



Now, it was a bit more common to wash feet in public back then, but still foot washing was an act meant for servants to do to their masters and guests. There was certainly a power differential between those who served and washed and those who received the cleaning. And now Jesus was inverting that power differential with his disciples. The teacher is serving the student, the Master serving the apprentice. Most of all, Jesus then

commands all who follow him to disregard power and privilege in order to serve others as he has demonstrated us.

We see this selfless service all throughout Jesus' ministry. Jesus taught his disciples -and teaches us- to see the world with compassionate eyes. To not ignore those who hurting, forgotten, or oppressed and instead calls us to offer what we have to help ease suffering, seek the lost, resist the forces of injustice. And to do so with humility, compassion, mercy and justice. Just as Jesus shows us in each and every gospel account of his life. No task is too low for the Son of God to do. No person is untouchable to Jesus. And Jesus simply says to us **“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”** Jesus walks the walk and then talks the talk and we are called to follow in his steps of serving others.

United Methodists take the call to serve others in the Spirit of Jesus with the love of Jesus very seriously. In fact, service has been what historically has united Methodists. Not doctrine or the mass, but mission. As a denomination, we have multiple, large global organizations that empower people to serve. The largest and most well known is UMCOR. The United Methodist Committee on Relief. When disaster strikes, United Methodists use the vast network of 42,000 churches and 13 million members worldwide to bring aid, recovery, supplies and volunteers all around the world to help out. UMCOR is even responding to Ukraine and Russia, right now. United Methodists are so effective at serving in disasters that the Red Cross and US Government come to UMCOR to help deliver aid in the wake of a disaster. Locally, we've been a part of UMCOR multiple times through our vast network through giving and serving.

We also fight diseases of poverty as United Methodists. In 2001, we joined the Imagine No Malaria campaign, primarily in Africa. When INM began 21 years ago, a child in Africa died from malaria every 30 seconds... then 45 seconds... then 1 minute. One child still dies every 2 minutes but the progress is reason for hope and celebration. In the past 20 years, with God's help, United Methodists have treated 2.7 million people for malaria and have saved an estimated 6.8 million lives from a disease that disproportionally affects those living in poverty. United Methodists are known as the people who love and serve like Jesus does, especially in Africa, but I also hear that about United Methodists in Geneva.

There are many ways to serve close to home too, I know nearly everyone has offered their time and talents to serve others. It's something we humbly brag about at UMCG. I want us to hear about service in our community from Jim Manos. [Click here to watch Jim's story.](#)

As Jim said, we can serve any day. It can be as small as a smile, or choosing chocolate that doesn't come from child labor, it can be packing relief kits, or packing your bags for ASP or an international mission trip. You just have to be willing to love your neighbor as your self.

In the book, we are reading and studying in Lent we are challenged to do 5 acts of service per person per week. Any act big or small that puts the needs of others above our own that is meant to heal, comfort, bless or fight injustice or resist oppression in the Spirit and love of Jesus counts as an act of serving.

If each of the people that are connected to UMCG did 5 acts of Christian kindness over the course of a year that would be over 57,000 acts of kindness. Can you imagine how different our community would be? Imagine if the 261,360 purported Christians in Kane County joined in serving 5 times a week. That would be 1.3 million acts of service per week and almost 68 million acts of service per year. I think our county would look more like the kingdom of God than what we see in our society today.

We offer ourselves in service not simply because Jesus tells us to, but because of how he has served us in love and have found our calling to love others in service as molded after him. May we this week seek to live into the challenge of finding 5 ways to serve others in Jesus' name.
Close with prayer.