

## Growing Stronger in Service

*Building Core Strength*

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 20:20-28

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### **Faith Church**

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Well, good morning. It is a privilege to be here with you this morning. For those who don't know me, I am Trey Garner. I am the pastor of our children's ministries here at Faith. I don't get down to this end of the building too much on Sunday mornings because I spend most of my Sundays with first through fifth graders and I love it. They are a lot of fun. But this morning I get the privilege of spending some time with you and so I am really looking forward to that.

This week was a big week for our nation, wasn't it? This week we elected a president. We elected a new governor. We elected who slate of officials to represent us and I know some of you are absolutely thrilled with the way things turned out. Others of you would use a different word to describe your feelings about the matter. But in these election seasons, especially presidential elections you hear a lot of what I call destiny talk, talk about the future of our people and the greatness of America. And each candidate defines America's future and greatness in a different way. And you get to hear a number of arguments on both sides and then comes the choice. Election day, judgment day, if you will. And that is the day when American renders its verdict.

Now the reason I am talking about this is because I see some similarities between the election process and what we are considering this month in our worship services. There is as sense in which each of us is involved in a pursuit of destiny and a pursuit of greatness. And if you polled the room, I bet you would find a number of different definitions for what makes someone great. But a day is coming when a verdict will be handed down on each one of our lives. And on that day, the verdict will come not from a bunch of people staring at touch screen monitors. On that day the verdict will be announced by none other than the King of the universe. That is right. And when that happens our individual destinies, they won't be measured by our definitions. They will be measured by his. And there won't be any challenges. There won't be any recounts. On that day his opinion of the way we invested our lives is all that will matter.

With that in mind, let me ask you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 20. That is found on page 17 of the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you.

If you are with us for the first time this morning, our annual theme this year is building core strength. All year long we have been striving to grow stronger in our commitment to Christ, both as a Church and as individuals. And there in your bulletin you will find the three areas that we have been emphasizing as part of that theme. And I hope that each of us can point to some specific steps that we have taken to grow stronger in our walk with the Lord.

This morning you are joining us in the middle of a series designed to advance our theme of building core strength. Each year at this time we spend about a month discussing the topic of stewardship. And we have given this month long focus on the principles of stewardship the very creative title of Stewardship Month. And this month is going to cap off with an evening of celebration over in the community center where we rejoice corporately in the many ways that God has demonstrated his goodness to us. And that evening of celebration, that is happening next Sunday night at 5 PM. And if you haven't gotten your free—highlight free tickets—to that event, I want to encourage you to stop by the table in the foyer this morning and pick those up today. We want every single man, woman, child, cat, dog, whoever drives by or attends our church, we want everybody at that event. Pastor Viars asked that I push that this morning. Can we agree that I really pushed that this morning? Ok. We want you there at that event. And we need to get a head count so that we will know how much food to purchase. So if you could pick up your tickets this morning, that would really help us.

Now I know that some of you have been around here for many years and you could practically recite the principles of stewardship in your sleep. But for the benefit of those who are a bit newer, I think it would be helpful to review these principles. Now, first off, let's define what stewardship is. Stewardship is God given responsibility with accountability. Say that with me. God given responsibility with accountability. And if you remember nothing else about stewardship, knowing that definition will really help you. But hopefully you will also work at understanding these four key principles of stewardship.

The first is that God owns everything. I own nothing.

Two, God entrusts me with everything I have.

Three, I can either increase or diminish what God has given me. God wants me to increase it.

And, four, God can call me into account at any time and it may be today.

Well, this morning we are going to be looking at a critical area of stewardship. And, in fact, I would go so far as to say that this area shouldn't just be part of our Christian life, that this area actually is what our Christian life should be all about.

With that said, let's look at the passage I asked you to turn to, Matthew chapter 20 beginning in verse 20.

“Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons.”<sup>1</sup>

Now the sons of Zebedee were James and John, that is two of Jesus’ disciples. In fact, they along with Peter were considered Jesus’ closest friends. And their mother was named Salome. She also was one of Jesus’ disciples. She was at the crucifixion right there at the base of cross with Mary. And so this family, they really knew Jesus. Verse 20 says:

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She \*said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."<sup>2</sup>

Now that was a pretty big request. We don’t understand that in our day because if you came over to my house it really wouldn’t matter where you sit if you were having dinner with me, but in that day, in New Testament times, the person who sat closest to the head of the table had the most honor. And that is what Salome was asking for her son. She was asking for positions of honor, the highest positions of honor.

Now I do have some question as to why James and John, the sons of thunder—that is what Jesus called them—why they had their mommy asking this question for them. I mean, don’t you wonder kind of what the behind the scenes conversation was there?

“Now you two boys, you go and ask Jesus if you can sit next to him.”

“But, mom, we are embarrassed.”

I am not sure it went down like that, but I do wonder about it. Look how Jesus responds in verse 22. It says:

“But Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking.’”<sup>3</sup>

Now I think it is pretty clear that they didn’t understand that at this time Jesus wasn’t going to be ushering in his kingdom. Many followers thought that that was an immanent thing. They didn’t understand that there were a number of intervening events that would have to take place before Christ would do that. And it hasn’t happened yet. We are not living in it. The ultimate kingdom is yet to come, but they thought it was happening right away. And in his response Jesus could have asked, “Did you know I am going to have to suffer? Did you know I am going to be scourged and abused? Do you know I am going not be crucified? You don’t know what you are asking.”

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 20:20.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 20:20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 20:22.

What we see here is James and John seeking positions of prominence, of honor, of greatness. And how did the rest of the disciples respond? Well, skip down to verse 24.

“And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.”<sup>4</sup>

They were like, “James and John, of shame. How dare you.”

When I suspect that what they were really thinking was, oh, that was really smart. Why didn't I get to Jesus first.

And the reason I say that is because of the way Jesus responds on verse 25.

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.<sup>5</sup>

If you haven't guessed it already, this morning we are talking about the important topic of growing strong in service. And Veteran's Day is a great day to be considering this topic, because we are especially remembering those who have sacrificially served our country. From this passage I believe that we can find three motivations of sacrificially serving the Lord. The first motivation is that service can satisfy our longing for greatness.

And you say, “Pastor Trey, you keep talking about greatness. First you talked about the election, then the greatness in the kingdom. And I am not out for greatness. I mean, I am just little old me.”

And I would say that that is actually one of the things that I appreciate about our congregation. I think most of the folks around here, they are interested in being people of substance, not flash. They want to do something significant with their lives. But what does it mean to do something significant. Jesus has to reframe his disciples' understanding of that concept. Look at how he responds. It is almost as interesting for what he doesn't say as for what he does say. Notice that he doesn't rebuke them for desiring greatness. Nowhere in Scripture is a desire of success or greatness condemned. The desire to do something significant with our lives is deeply engrained. That is right there I the third principle of the stewardship. God wants us to increase what he has entrusted to us. God put that desire there. But our sinfulness, it corrupts that desire, doesn't it? It causes us to start seeking greatness in things that are self serving, in worldly accomplishments, in bigger homes or nicer cars. And deep down we know that stuff, it can't satisfy us. But still we have this desire and we are looking for a way to fulfill it.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 20:24.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 20:25-28.

And so what Jesus does for his disciples is redefine what greatness is. And the first thing he teaches them is that greatness is not found in position. When their mother asks if James and John can sit on either side of Jesus he tells them. You don't know what you are asking. Greatness is to about sitting in a certain seat or receiving a certain award. He says:

“...but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.”<sup>6</sup>

He says, “You want to be first? Then you need to be last.” And he also teaches that greatness is not found in power. That is 20:25.

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.”<sup>7</sup>

That phrase, “Lord it over them.” That refers to the tyranny of their rulers. But Jesus says, “That is not greatness. Power doesn't make someone great.” You could be the ruler of a nation and not in any way be great. You could be the CEO of a Fortune 500 company and not know anything of true greatness. Jesus says, “If you want to be great, don't consider yourself better than others, consider yourself the slave of others. Serve others.”

Notice also that Jesus is not saying that service is a pathway to the top. He is saying that service is the top. When you are serving, you have reached the pinnacle. You want to sit at the head of the table, then you need to set the table. That is where real fulfillment in life comes from. If you want to find joy, according to the way your Creator made you, then you need to steward the opportunities that God has given you to spend yourself in service to others.

Let me give you another motivation to serve. Service will be rewarded. Jesus said...

“...but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.”<sup>8</sup>

He acknowledges the fact that it is possible to be great in his kingdom. It is possible to be first in his kingdom. Jesus promises to reward those who faithfully and sacrificially serve him. And what are those rewards?

Mark chapter 10 gives us a window into that. Jesus said:

“Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 20:26-27.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 20:25.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 20:26-27.

a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions.”<sup>9</sup>

Notice he says it is not all going to be easy. It is going to require some sacrifice.

“...and in the age to come, eternal life.”<sup>10</sup>

These verses mention rewards in the present. You know, I consider myself as having sacrificed very little for the cause of Christ in comparison to what so many others have done and, in fact, some in this very room to serve the Lord, my sacrifice is miniscule. But I will say that one of the choices that my wife and I have made is to serve Christ in a region of the country that is away from our families. We don't get to see them, our kids don't get to see them nearly as often as we would like. But as part of this church, I now have hundreds of brothers and sisters in Christ who would do just about anything for us and have. See, it is not about blood relationships. It is about eternal relationships.

And you say, “Well, that is the family thing. What about the house thing? Do you have 100 houses?”

No, we do not have 100 houses. We wouldn't want 100 houses. We have one house and that one is hard enough to stay on top of. But I know that if I ever needed a place to stay, if something never happened to our home, we would have hundreds of options. I know that our church family would bend over backwards to help us.

And you say, “Well, that is just because you are one of the pastors here.”

But I really don't think so. I believe that there are hundreds of people running around here even today who would testify to the fact that our church family has stepped up in a big way to serve them in their time of need by bringing means, by watching their kids, by looking after their house and on and on and on. That is one of the rewards of sacrificially serving Christ. As you faithfully shoulder weekly kingdom responsibilities, you become more and more a part of this church community and the bonds of family that you feel here are strengthened. You experience the kind of rewards that Jesus was talking about. But the rewards, they don't stop there. This passage also speaks about rewards in eternity.

John chapter 12 verse 26:

“...if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”<sup>11</sup>

Did you know that there is going to be a huge award ceremony in heaven? Now I doubt seriously it is going to look anything like the Oscars or the Emmys or something like that, but the Bible tells us that we will receive special honors, physical rewards for the way we stewarded the opportunities we had to serve Christ. And on that day we will get to see

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<sup>9</sup> Mark 10:29-30.

<sup>10</sup> Mark 10:30.

<sup>11</sup> John 12:26.

and rejoice in all of the various ways that people have sacrificially given of themselves throughout the centuries to serve the Lord.

Now we don't exactly know what those rewards will look like. Different passages of Scripture speak about believers receiving crowns and special responsibilities, but we can be assured that if Jesus is the one awarding these rewards, they will be unbelievably awesome.

And you say, "Well, pastor Trey, I am not working at all for Christ. I mean, I am not serving anywhere in this church right now."

And, folks, I have got to tell you. If that is the case for you, on that day you are going to feel lame. And I am not saying that to be mean. I am saying that to help you. You are going to be like the guy, the scribe in 1 Corinthians 3:15.

"...He will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."<sup>12</sup>

I mean you are there. You are in Christ's kingdom, saved by the grace of God because of your faith in Christ. But you have not got anything else to show for it. And I am just telling you. That is not a position you want to find yourselves in. You will suffer loss if you are not expending yourself in a regular faithful service for him. And not only will there be physical rewards, but look at another form that these rewards will take. What about verbal affirmation?

In the parable of the stewards upon which our principles of stewardship are based, we see two responses by the master to the service of the stewards. The faithful steward hears, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And just how sweet would that be to hear that from the lips of our Savior? On that day nothing will matter to us more than what Jesus has to say. But the unfaithful steward, he hears, "You wicked and lazy slave."

Now just imagine looking into Jesus' face, seeing sadness in his eyes and hearing him pass that verdict on your life. Imagine the shame of that.

I don't know what your response to that is, but my response is: I must do anything and everything I possibly can to make sure that that doesn't happen. I must avoid that at all costs.

And with that said, maybe now is a good time to talk about some of the enemies to effective service for Christ. Call this the reasons why people don't serve. The first one is a lack of understanding. There may be some people who honestly don't know that they are supposed to be serving the Lord. Maybe you are a believer in Christ and you just didn't know that is what you were supposed to be doing. Well, hopefully nobody is going not leave here this morning in that position. You didn't know, but now you do, so let's get after it.

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:15.

A second enemy to effective service for Christ is apathy. Maybe you are like, “Yeah, I know. There is ways to be serving out there, but I don’t know, you know, whatever.”

I will tell you. If you are in that position, you are in a really bad spot. Maybe if you call yourself a believer in Jesus Christ and you don’t care about the fact that Christ has called you to serve, I have got to be honest. I seriously have to question your heart. I have to question your standing before the Lord.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says that:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.<sup>13</sup>

It is God’s intent, his design that every person who calls themselves a follower of Christ would serve him. And if that is not your heart, you need to do some work on that issue like right now. And I would say, contact us. Or, you know what? Contact one of our deacons. We are holding deacon elections this morning over in the gym and if you are a member of our church over the age of 18, I would strongly encourage you to participate in that. We are so thankful for the men on that ballot. They are tremendous examples of faithfulness in service. And they could really help you, if you are struggling in that area, to take some steps of growth. If apathy is your problem, let’s start handling that like right away.

Now a third enemy to service is consumerism.

You say, “What do you mean, consumerism?”

We live in a culture that revolves around consumption. Every TV commercial, every store, every product, every restaurant, every everything is tailored to fit your desires, your needs, your personal preferences. That is just how our culture has wired us to think. And what do we do? We bring that mentality right into the church house.

In their book *Renovation of the Church* authors Kent Carlson and Mike Luken write, “We should be more truthful with each other here. People come to church because their high school kid likes the youth program or because their children don’t get bored or because they like the music or because the pastor preaches the Bible the way they believe it should be preached or because they happen to get greeted by a smiling face one day or because the worship leaders look like Brad Pitt. No comment.” It goes on to say, “This is the hard, raw, reality of life in the North American church. The people who come to our churches have been formed into spiritual consumers. This is who we are. It is our most instinctive response to life.

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<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10.

Now that paints a pretty grim picture, doesn't it? And I think we should be clear about something. Our pastors don't think that this statement is true of most of the folks who attend our church. I think that is evidenced by the fact that we just held sign ups for our living nativity and over 700 people volunteered to serve. We are so thankful for that. But would you agree that to whatever degree this is true of us, we need to do some work here. Do you agree with that? I hope so.

So let's talk about how this kind of consumer mentality might evidence itself in relation to service.

I think most people around here are on board with the idea that they need to be serving. But could I ask. When you think about service in Christ's Church, what is the first question that comes to mind? For some people the first question is: Well, where do I want to serve? Where do I feel like serving? And I think that is the wrong question to ask. Why? Because it is self focused. That is consumerism. That is self styled Christianity. Instead of asking where do I want to serve, where do I feel like serving, some better questions would be: Where is there a need? Where can I be most effectively deployed to help our church accomplish its mission?

Do you see the difference there? Now please don't understand. I am not saying that you are only truly serving Jesus when you are doing something you hate. Don't walk away with that idea. Ok? I am saying that desire and personal preference, they shouldn't be the first criteria that we use in determining when, where and how we serve. Service is, first and foremost, about sacrificially meeting needs to help Christ's Church accomplish its mission.

Now let's talk about that for a minute. The mission of Faith Church is to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ and equipping them to be more faithful disciples. Did you know that the largest group of regularly attending unbelievers within our church who need to be won to Christ and equipped to be more faithful disciples, the largest group is children. They are here every Sunday, every Wednesday. And they provide us with a golden opportunity to accomplish our mission.

Now I am the pastor of children's ministries here and can I just share my heart with you for a minute? I am concerned that there are some folks around here who view children's ministry as that thing that happens over in the nursery area and over in the first wing of the education or the school building over there. It is something that other people do. You know, they are glad somebody does it, but they are also glad it is not them, that kind of thing.

Can you imagine why that would be a concern to me? I will tell you why. Thank you for asking. In our church we serve between 350 and 400 kids on any given Sunday or Wednesday. Now what that looks like is during the school year that takes 39 different classes to serve them between Sunday morning and Wednesday night. We need roughly four servants per classroom. Now some classes need more. Some classes need less, but on average we need about four to serve those kids. That comes to about 156 service

positions during the school year. During the summer we don't have Wednesday evening ministry so we have 28 classes on Sunday mornings. Each of them needs about four servants. That brings the total to 112 service positions during the summer.

Now that is for ages two through fifth grade. We also do a little something for kids under the age of two. You probably passed it as you walked in. It is our nursery. In our nursery we serve at four different services—eight, 9:30 and 11 o'clock on Sunday morning and 6:30 on Wednesday nights. Now in the nursery there are five rooms. That is 20 rooms in a given week that need to be staffed to serve kids. And in those rooms we need roughly three servants on average. Some services need more. Some need less. That is about 60 servants in a given week to serve and fill our nursery there.

You say, "Well, that sounds about right."

But wait, there is more. Because not everybody that serves in the nursery serves there every week, we put those folks on a rotation so they can be in the worship service, so they can attend ABF and things like that. They serve once every four weeks, so there is four rotations. That brings the number of nursery servants that we need in a give month to 240. So we add all of that together we have got 240 nursery positions, 156 school year positions, 112 summer positions. That is 508. And I haven't even mentioned the folks that we need serving in children's check in as special needs aids, musicians, coordinators, that sort of thing. That is an additional 62 individuals. That is 570 positions that we need throughout the course of the year to help us carry out our mission to kids.

Now that is a good number of positions that need to be filled, right? Where are the servants for that coming from? Well, let's just look at the available servants. By God's grace we have a church family of about 2000 attendees. We are so thankful that for each and every one of you that God has brought to us. Now because we don't believe in running a Lord of the Flies thing around here, the 400 kids can't serve themselves. So that leaves about 1600 individuals who could serve around here. Now of those 1600 there is about 200 folks who aren't yet members of our church. They are somewhere in the process toward becoming members and we hope they will. And one of the standards that we have set—because we want to keep kids safe and serve them well—one of the standards is that everyone serving kids will be a member of our church. So that leaves about 1400 folks around here to serve kids. And then we have got about 100 additional folks, whether they are senior citizens or folks in a physical condition where it is just not a good idea for them to be serving, whether it is they can't life kids or things like that. So that leaves about 1300.

Now you divide 1300 by the 570 servants we and you get 2.19. We need roughly one out of every 2.19 people to be serving in our children's ministries around here in one way, shape or form. Now I don't know what conclusions you draw from that. But the conclusion that I draw from that is that serving in children's ministries can't be something that other people do. All right? If it is not you, it has got to be the person sitting next to you, right? And .19 percent of the person sitting next to them, right?

And you say, “Well, pastor Trey, that is outrageous. I mean, you can’t expect that many people to serve kids in our church, not with all the other ministries going on around here.”

Hang on. Cool your jets. Remember. About half of these positions are in the nursery. They only require like an hour and a half a month to serve in that position. I hope that we wouldn’t think that holding a baby for an hour and a half a month is too much service for Jesus, would we? I hope not, because I really don’t think he would.

And you say, “Well, what is the situation like now?”

Well, again, it is not Lord of the Flies, but, there is certainly room in our church for growth in this area. But that is the idea of consumerism. Would you agree that there is no place of that kind of mentality in Christ’s Church? Do you agree with that? Ok.

There is one more big enemy to service and that is busy-ness, not business, but busy-ness. Can I just be honest with you? Because up to now I have been lying to you, right? You got that. Busy-ness. That is so lame.

You know, like, “But, pastor Trey, I am busy.”

I know. Everybody is busy. I don’t know of a single individual here this morning who isn’t busy. The first through fifth graders that I am with every week they all thing they are busy. We have probably got kids in the nursery who think, man, my feeding schedule this week. Have you seen that? It is a real bear. Everybody is busy. But think about it like this. If Jesus were to walk up to you and say, “Hey, I have got some important responsibilities that you could really help me out with, some kingdom responsibility that I would like you to steward.” Are you going to say to him, “You know, Jesus, I would like to, but, man, my schedule this week. Come on.”

I hope that isn’t what you would say to him.

And you say, “Well, no. I wouldn’t say that to Jesus, pastor Trey, but he is to asking me. You are asking me that question.”

Now I want to be careful here, because I don’t want to overreach, although I am pretty sure there is not any real chance of you confusing me with Jesus. But do you realize that God is sovereign? That means he is in control. That means that everything that comes in to our lives happens at his direction. It is part of his plan for your care and growth. So whenever a pastor contacts you or whenever someone that a pastor has deployed to speak with you, whether it is a deacon or a coordinator, a key leader, or whoever, whenever someone contacts you about a service opportunity in Christ’s Church you need to view that as a direct request from God. He allowed that conversation into your life. It was part of his sovereign plan. And he wants you to seriously, prayerfully consider answering that call to serve.

Now I didn't say you answer every call and you do every thing because you will end up dying. There won't be anybody to serve in your place. But you prayerfully consider those opportunities.

Now we are going to hear the testimony of a couple this morning who did just that. I would ask Dan and Jeannie Kirko to come and to share their experience.

[ Voice ] Good morning. My name is Dan Kirko and this is my wife Jeannie. We have three children and we have been members of Faith for 14 years. During our time here we have served in the nursery, in the youth group and in children's ministries. Currently we serve as coordinators for the toddler ministry. That position involves everything from staffing classes with teachers and assistants, helping visitors find their rooms and providing servant training to taking care of overflowing toilets.

[ Voice ] So you might assume we jumped at the opportunity to make a four year commitment to this position. But actually it was quite the opposite. Three years ago we were serving as teachers with the four and five year old class when pastor Trey left a message on our answering machine asking us to call him. My first reaction was: If he is calling us to take that coordinator position, there is no way. We don't have time for that job. It is really out of the question. Danny and I agreed it wasn't going to work into our schedules and he called pastor Trey who did present the offer. Danny told him we wouldn't be able to serve in that way, but pastor Trey asked him if we would pray about it before making a decision. So he said we would.

Later that week the Lord surprised us. The Holy Spirit began to convict me and I began thinking differently about becoming a coordinator. I told Danny what I was thinking when he came home for lunch one day and he said, "That is funny, because I was just praying about it this morning and I believe God wants us to accept that position."

So even though everything that was true about our busy lives just days earlier was still the same, there was a difference. We understand that the Lord was sovereign and that it wasn't just pastor Trey, but rather God himself calling us to serve. We trusted that he knew what we could handle better than we did and we could either choose to obey his call and do what he was asking or disobey by ignoring his call.

[ Voice ] To pastor Trey's surprise I called and told him that we had prayed about it and we decided to say yes. And what a blessing it has been for both of us. We love having an even greater impact on before on reaching the next generation with the truth of God's Word and having more opportunities to show the love of Christ to so many children. We also love working with the people who serve in our ministry. We don't just view this position as working with the kids, but as serving the families that attend this church.

[ Voice ] Our encouragement to you is this. God may be calling you to do more than you think you can handle, to take the next step in serving him. We encourage you to say yes and trust him for the enabling.

[ Voice ] Thank you.

[ applause ]

[ Voice ] Thank you, Dan and Jeannie. I would say this. Look. I know we are all busy. We are all busy. But Jesus says if you want to make a difference, if you want to find fulfillment in your life, if you want to find greatness in my kingdom, it is going to require sacrifice.

Let me give you one final motivation to serve. Service helps us become more like Christ. Scripture tells us that it ought to be every believer's goal to become as much like Jesus as possible. And what is he like? The Son of Man, this Matthew 20:28:

“...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”<sup>14</sup>

That is what Jesus' entire life was about and my question not you is: Is that how Jesus would evaluate your life? If he were to walk in this room right now, put his hand on your shoulder and evaluate your service, would he say, “Hey, you know how you are serving in my Church? You are so like me”? Is that what he would say? Because if he would say anything less than that, that means we have got a little bit of room to grow, right?

Let me give you some takeaways from this morning. The first take away is that this is going to be a challenging message for some of you to respond to in a sense because you don't yet have a relationship with Christ and that is like component number one necessary for being great in his kingdom. What you need to do rather than planning to serve, you need to accept the fact that you need to receive service. And the greatest act of service ever performed was performed by Christ himself when he died on the cross, taking your sins and mine upon himself and then he gloriously rose from the grave. You need to humble yourself and accept his service to you. Ask him to be your Savior and the Lord of your life. And if you haven't done that, if you have got questions about that, I want to say: Let's get that handled this week. Contact us. We would love to show you from God's Word how you can know with 100 percent certainty that you are on your way to heaven.

Now what about those of you who have trusted Christ? There is a couple of ways I want to encourage you to respond to this. One, would you prayerfully consider the ways God wants you to grow? In your bulletin there is an insert. It is our growing strong in stewardship insert. And on the back of that there is a section that you can fill out. It is specifically about service opportunities. Would you look over that? Take it home. Go with your wife or your husband this week and prayerfully think about that ways that you ought to respond to that. And make sure that that comes back here by next Sunday. Fill it out and put it in the box at the welcome center.

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 20:28.

And also we have our ministry opportunity fair across the way this morning. Jeff and Laurie Walters have done a great job organizing that. All kinds of ministry opportunities that you can sign up with in addition to children's ministries, believe it or not. So I would encourage you to go over there if you haven't been already with your ABF. Each of the ABFs is going to be taking a trip through there, so you can go with your class. But if you are not yet a part of an ABF, I would encourage you to step in there after this service.

Let's pray together.