

# Servants of Christ

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Preacher: Kate Dommett

[0:00] Let's just pray together for Kate as she brings God's word to us this morning. Father we thank you for her. Thank you for her ministry, her servant heart. Thank you for his willingness to stand in from Mike. We just pray now Holy Spirit you'll come and fill her anoint her we pray. May the words she has prepared. Lord be magnified tenfold as it were as she brings them to your people.

Lord feed us we pray and we thank you Father in Jesus name. Amen. So we're probably all tuned in but in case we're not it's the start of Lent.

And traditionally it's a time for those of us that have Christian faith to reflect.

Strengthening faith through prayer, maybe fasting, confession, self-reflection.

Often it's a time of reset and looking to the life of Jesus for renewed inspiration and hope.

[1:18] Well at Christchurch we're following a series from cover to cover and it's called Centred on Christ. I just want to say thank you to Julian and the team.

The worship this morning has centred us on Jesus, on Christ. This study takes examples from Paul's life in his letter to the Philippians.

And it really challenges us to reflect on the practical implications of embracing Jesus as a humble, loving servant.

And consider how the impact of following Jesus can profoundly change how we choose to live and do life.

And today we're starting with this theme. Servants of Christ. Servants of Christ.

[2:26] What did this mean for the church in Philippi? And what does it mean for us in our 21st century lives? Well we know that Paul is writing from the confines of a prison cell.

Interestingly, he clearly identifies himself as a servant of Christ Jesus. And despite his circumstances, his joy is really apparent and actually quite infectious in this book.

And the secret of his joy is revealed. It's grounded in his relationship with Christ. He describes his years of devoted discipleship.

Apprenticeship to Jesus. Where he's acquired those skills. By daily and intimate relationship with Jesus. He'd experienced abundant wealth, excruciating poverty and everything in between.

But whatever the circumstances, Paul has learned to be content. He has learned to be content.

[3:39] Finding real joy as he focused all his attention and energy on knowing Jesus. Well I don't know about you.

But I notice that I think our human condition seems to come with a real longing to fit in. Maybe to find our tribe is a phrase commonly used.

I actually believe this is a God-given gift. Not for us to fit in.

But for us to be fitted in. By him. He has the place and space for every one of us to serve.

To be fitted in to his good, good plans as we seek to serve him. And this letter is to all God's holy people.

[4:45] Not to some of them. To all of them. I'm just going to start by reading this poem which I love. It's by someone called Gerard Kelly.

It's Spoken Worship. And I'd like to use it as an invitation to us all to stir our hearts this morning with expectancy of what God might want to say and draw our attention to.

It's called Fit Me In Somewhere. Fit me in somewhere in this giant jigsaw God. Somewhere in this work of art you're working.

Select a space my shape can fill. And with a puzzle maker's skill let my contours find their fit without contortion.

Teach me which patch I am God in this cosmic quilt you're quilting. Show me where my square of selfhood is of use. Let the colourful complexities of the pattern that is me find their purpose in the placement that you choose.

[5:56] Show me my position God in this group photograph. Stand me where you want me to stand. Put me next to whom you will.

Make me stand for good or ill precisely in the place your plan demands. Tell me what I am God in this body you are building.

A tongue to taste, a nerve to serve, an ear to hear. Give me grace not to be gracefully the parts I'm not called to be and to play with elegance the roles I'm given.

Fit me in somewhere in this giant jigsaw God. Somewhere in this work of art you're working. Weave your wonderful tapestry until the twisted, tangled threads of me surrendered to your artistry form an image that is beautiful to see.

I guess this speaks to me of our calling to serve our living God every day.

[7:16] I wonder what comes to mind for you when you think of serving. If I'm honest, the first thing that came to mind for me was a disastrous, short-lived career as a waitress.

A silver service waitress where I was taught how to use like two spoons to serve things whilst you're holding about 12 platters at the same time.

I know. And my most vivid memory is me trying to deliver a roast potato between two spoons onto the plate of a very smartly dressed gentleman and actually just watch it kind of shoot, hit the plate which was already full of gravy and yes, land in his lap.

It was short-lived. It wasn't my calling. We talk a lot about serving in church community and I wonder how often our minds just jump to that being like a job on a rotor.

Really, really important for us to fully function as a functioning, welcoming community. We've all got our part to play, every single one of us.

[8:33] But I guess what I'm most curious about is when I look around this room and think of those that aren't here today and beyond these walls, the servant heart of people I see who follow Jesus is an inspiration to me.

And as we mature and journey in our own Christian discipleship, because if we've chosen Jesus, that is the journey we're on, we have opportunities to learn more of who we are as servants of Christ.

We heard in John's word today, whoever serves me, whoever serves Jesus, must follow me, must follow him. Following Jesus means being a servant.

So we're going to unpack this in three parts, exploring who we serve, exploring why we serve, and exploring how we serve.

So, just a little question to get you started. Who do you serve? Who do you serve? I was asking myself this question.

[9:45] If who or what we serve is the first main motivation in our getting-out-of-bed lives, who or what do we honestly serve?

As Christians, just like Paul, we are called to serve Jesus first. This God, who as Martin has reminded us this morning, is a healer, a provider, and is our peace.

That's who we serve. Jesus, who showed true humility when he set aside all his rights as God of this universe, all his privileges as God, and came to be human, and walked on this earth just like we do.

And he lived a life of obedience and loyalty to his father God. In Psalm 25, David cries out to the Lord, Show me your ways.

Teach me your ways, Lord. Guide me in your truth. Teach me, for you are my God and my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long.

[11:12] To be a servant of Christ means to place him at the very centre of our lives, to get to know him through his word, through the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, fellowship with one another, and follow his teachings.

And in doing this, we learn to serve just like he served. But why? Why be a servant of Christ? In the job I do, I work for a Christian charity, we talk a lot about knowing our why. Knowing our why means we have a far greater chance of actually making something a priority and working for it. Jesus himself exemplified this servanthood through his ministry, and we are to do the same. He washed his disciples' feet.

He cared for the needy. He welcomed those who were outcast. The list is endless of what Jesus did. And he was clear when he said, these words are in Mark, 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.

[12:45] The verses we had this morning from John are Jesus talking about the end of his life, about him giving his life, the need for him to die and be resurrected so that we may be forgiven and we may have life.

Jesus reminds us our why is not to seek our own greatness, but to serve with love and compassion. I think it was Mother Teresa who said, we are called to be Jesus' hands and feet on this earth today.

And being a servant of Christ is not always easy. It requires sacrifice often, patience, and a willingness to put others before ourselves.

Yet, it is through this loving service that we grow closer to our Father God. And we get to reflect his love to this world.

I love the work, the words of Henry Nguyen. I'm just going to read a little bit from, maybe you say Henri, I think. He met Mother Teresa.

[14:06] How cool is that? Quite a few years ago, he says, I had the opportunity of meeting Mother Teresa of Calcutta. I was struggling with many things at the time and decided to use the occasion to ask her advice.

As soon as we sat down, I just started explaining all my problems and difficulties, trying to convince her of how very complicated it all was. And then when, after about ten minutes of elaborate explanation, I finally became silent, she looked at me very quietly and said, well, when you spend one hour a day adoring your Lord and never do anything which you know is wrong, you will be fine. When she said this, I realized suddenly that she had punctured my big balloon of complex self-complaints and pointed me far beyond myself to a place of real healing.

how do you serve? How do we serve?

Serving Jesus is about listening for his guidance, being ready to help where there is need and doing so with a joyful heart.

[15:36] And this is made a whole lot easier if we're not alone. And how blessed are we because Jesus promised to never leave us.

We are never alone. We have the advocate, the Holy Spirit with us. We can rely on him, his presence as we serve.

And I love the bit in Mark 6 where it talks about Jesus sending out his disciples in twos. He sent them out in pairs.

Relationship and connection was so important in the life of Jesus, in his ministry. So we need to encourage and support one another as we serve.

We are stronger together. In Ecclesiastes it says, two are better than one. Years and years ago, some of you might remember, we've been doing our coaching in St. Nick's for years now.

[16:42] And years ago we painted a bench in all these beautiful colours and in gold we put those words for it to be in the playground. It's still there.

To remind children to extend friendship to one another. The bench is there so you can go to the bench at playtime if you're feeling a bit on your own and it says two are better than one.

If either of them falls down one can help the other up. But another priority of how Jesus served was taking himself to a quiet space of solitude.

he says to his disciples come with me to a quiet place and rest. And rest.

I wonder how we might learn more of how to serve out of a place of resting in God. Christ's attitude in serving others reminds us to renounce personal recognition and merit.

[18:06] When we give up our self interest we find ourselves serving with joy and love and kindness and being blessed as we do it. It is very clear

in the life of Jesus that laying aside self interest is essential and so a central theme for us as we follow Jesus.

I don't know about you but I think this one's quite tricky in our human condition. Very counterintuitive at times we feel like we just need to kind of get ourselves sorted or do what we need first and then we can serve God.

it doesn't really help kind of living where we live in the way we live. There's literally signs aren't there? Self service. We've kind of moved towards a culture where we're encouraged to kind of just do things for ourselves.

I'm just picturing myself stumbling around trying to check out at the supermarket really wishing I'd chosen to go to the one where someone could help me a little bit. there's also those signs those sort of signals around that we're moving more to that encouragement to just look after self first. The separation from one another. Become more self reliant. Jesus' service is different.

[19:46] in serving him we are called to love him first and love our neighbours. Love him first body mind and spirit and then love our neighbours.

In following him we are to be alert through the gift of the Holy Spirit to where God is at work to notice where God is at work and join in.

In the reading today it says whoever serves me must follow me and where I am my servant will also be.

Let's be where Jesus is. It really was a privilege to be with Sally yesterday morning to spend time hearing about Chris's life and it occurred to me over and over as she was speaking and I'd been preparing for this morning that the man she described truly was a servant of Christ.

Jesus was first in his life and serving him was his daily motivation in life. In Galatians 5 where it speaks about the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the message version it says what happens when we live God's way it invites us to be curious and to notice and then it lists it says we find ourselves involved in loyal commitments not needing to force our way in life.

[21:49] I wonder are we am I in a place today where we are awake and alert enough in our faith to notice his call.

Are we ready to serve from a place of utter reliance on him. Lots of you know that I was a teacher for 12 years Pete and I met teaching I just thought that's what I would keep doing I loved it and then I had a very clear call it was the first time I think it had happened in my life really that I recognized it as a call from God to work for the church and in exploring that someone gave me this verse from 1 Thessalonians he who calls you is faithful and he will do it and I to this day I can remember that kind of and breathe the one who calls me the one who calls you to serve him is faithful and he will do it he is with us every step of the way so as we come to the end

I'd like to just draw our attention to the words of Paul at the beginning of his letter and he says grace and peace to you grace and peace may we strive each day to be faithful servants following Christ's example and embracing the opportunities to serve others but with the grace and the peace that God gives this grace is the powerful difference in our lives as servants of Christ so I'm just going to finish with another piece of this spoken worship and it's called this grace I'd like to invite you to see it as a prayer if you would like to or just a space to reflect on perhaps what you're noticing

God is stirring in you this morning so I'll just read it and then we'll just have a time of quiet as the group then come back to lead us in our final worship this grace we have been given is enough when the mountains set before us won't move by faith until by faith we start to climb it is enough when our cry for heaven's miracles ring hollow like a doorbell howling through an empty house it is enough when from our waiting rooms of weakness we say yes yes to pressing on it is enough when we have reached the end of our energies and face the end of ourselves but can't yet see the end of our task it is enough enough to know that you have loved us enough that we are called before all time enough that every fingerprint is valued enough that you remember every name so we will embrace this grace and turn our hearts to face grace we'll make each home a place of grace and we'll drink from your wells we'll speak out your words and we will live to love you until our lives are laced with grace down dark and dingy alleys we will chase grace we will hold as something precious every trace of grace and we will celebrate and consecrate this grace because this grace we have been given is enough