

## **Stewardship Sermon for Faith + Lead in September 26, 2021**

**Text: Mark 9:38-50**

**Theme: Life is for Giving**

**Preacher: Rev. Obias Kilagwa**

Dear God's loved ones; I greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. My heart is celebrating to share the blessing of God that He offers to us on this great day as we join with our fellow believers on earth to worship our Lord God. Thanks to the Holy Spirit who gathers us to worship and to hear the eternal scripture, which is dedicated for us today through this text that we have just read. I remember when Professor Grace Pomroy informed me to speak the word of God today; I felt that she is cultivating my joyfulness and the blessings of God that adheres with the ministry of stewardship. As for me, I thank God that the course, Money and Mission of Church, at Luther Seminary has enriched my insights to understand the main purpose of God to create us in His image and His likeness. It is great that God has made us very unique, beloved and chosen ones in order to worship and to serve Him. And when we talk about serving him, it mainly refers to two main areas of serving; i) Serving God through the church wherever we are, and ii) serving His own people, our fellow humankind wherever we are. Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40). This main understanding was formally announced by Christ, as a New Commandment, when he proclaims, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." He said, "This is the first commandment." And the second one like this says, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39). In his letter, John also writes, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1John 4:11).

Dear God's chosen ones, the text that we have just heard reminds us to serve and to do good for others. This was deeply described by Jesus when he was answering from John's argument that they have forbidden someone who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. He just answered in short that they should not forbid him, because no one does a mighty work if he or she doesn't belong to Jesus. Jesus shows that in God's mission, every believer has an equal part to engage in God's mission.

After that Jesus jumped in describing the core work that God has given us, and that is serving others. He says, "For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will receive his reward" (v.41).

I was asking myself, why did Jesus leave behind the argument of his disciples and jump in mentioning about giving to someone at least the cup of water? What was in his mind that he wanted the disciples to gain? What does the Holy Spirit want to inspire us today from this text?

Jesus reminds the disciples and the beloved followers of today concerning the core ministry that we have in God's calling. Surely, we are called to love and to serve our fellows, our neighbours, and our friends who are in need. When Jesus says, "whoever gives you a cup of water to drink..." Why does Jesus use such a minor aid like a cup of water? Will the needy survive or feel helped just by receiving a single cup of water? When I was sharing this story with Dr. Helina, my wife, she said, "Water is the most helpful aid to any person who is about to die of starvation or unconscious sickness." She said that a person in this situation cannot afford to eat food without regaining just a little water. Even a serious illness in hospitals almost always starts with an infusion drip to resuscitate the sick before further medical checkup.

In my context, food cannot be available all the time in people's homes, except during its time (breakfast, lunch or dinner), but water is there all the time. When Jesus mentions giving a cup of water to someone, he mentions the very basic aid that can support someone to survive and everyone can afford to give. It means anyone has something that can serve anyone who needs help. Jesus encourages us today to celebrate our resources, our blessings, and whatever we have with our fellow people who are in need.

All four gospels confirm that the life of Jesus was to serve others, his teachings and parables reveal that our Christian call, our Christian role, our Christian identity is to love and to serve others. Bishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa, said, "I am, because we are," and also "we are, because I am," which means, as human beings, we depend on each other. It is God's purpose to offer different gifts and talents that we can gratify and benefit from each other. Doing good for others cannot be hindered by any factors, even if we pass through difficult situations, like the pandemic challenges, still God's people will keep on serving God and serving others. The blessings and light of Jesus should not be switched off by any situation. God remains God, and our lives are in His hands, and He has all ways to protect us, therefore, we carry on serving.

Dear beloved ones, in Jesus' teachings, it seems; the Christian fate and the great mission of the church is to serve and support others. We can support people according to their needs: some need spiritual care, we can administer them according to our talents, others need financial or material support, and others just need our time to serve them. When we serve them, we become happy and blessed, especially when we see the positive responses or pleasing progress of the supported ones.

And sometimes; "giving is receiving," "the more you give the more you receive." It is written, "He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed" (Prov 19:17). When I read this verse, it reminds me of the blessings that I have been witnessing in my life, that when the Holy Spirit touches my heart to give for the needy or for church works, I receive even more than what I have offered. And, each giving, I always accompany with prayers, as Cornelius was told by the angel that his alms and prayers had reached before God.

However, it is not a guarantee to receive right here, but the great point here is, giving for God's mission and for God's people, is the great servanthip, and it is noted in God's kingdom. Jesus is highly encouraging of those who keep doing such kindness, he says, "Come O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see a hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see a sick person or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:34-40).

My beloved listeners, let us go and celebrate, give, share, and bless others through our talents that the Holy Spirit has given us, our resources and our time for the mission of the church and cheerfully support our fellow neighbours as the Holy Spirit has reminded us through our today's text.

The grace of God and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever. Amen.