Sermon Notes

Speaker: Patrick Mead

6/22/25

The Discipline of Service

Bernard of Clairvaux was a monk and a mystic who lived from 1090 to 1153 in France. He once said, “Learn the lesson that, if you are to do the work of a prophet, what you need is not a scepter, but a hoe.” Christians have not been called to retreat from this world but to engage it in love on behalf of Jesus. That very often takes the form of service.

The cross is a symbol of submission. The towel is a symbol of service. Let’s look at this story very carefully. You know the story, but try to imagine every scene, every expression, every moment as it unfolds. John 13:1-15.

This was a lesson that Jesus taught again and again. Luke 22:24-27. (also Matthew 20:28)

I’ve often asked you to read the Gospels repeatedly. I’m going to ask you to do that again. This time, I want you to look for the times that Jesus laid aside his own needs and attended to others who asked for or needed his help. Healing the sick, teaching the spiritually hungry, touching the lepers, helping his disciples pay their taxes, protecting women that other men wanted to scorn and punish…it goes on and on. His entire life was service, which culminated, of course, on the cross.

And then he said, “Follow me.”

Before we go on, please notice how all of the disciplines interweave with each other. None of them are distinct silos standing alone. Submission and service are intertwined, but fasting also enters in. To serve others, you have to say “no” to yourself, and that is what fasting is all about. Prayer enters in as we ask for eyes to see and ears to hear, or when we ask God for wisdom in how to best serve. Openness comes in because we are looking for opportunities to do good. (Peter’s sermon to the family of Cornelius in Acts 10:38. Jesus went about doing good)

One of the wonderful things about Our Safe Harbor Church is that our members are all over the world doing good. They find ways to show the love of Jesus as they go about their lives. They join local charities. They volunteer. They write letters, send cards, send emails, or make calls to check on people. They visit jails and prisons. They are bringing pieces of heaven to people on earth.

When you give to OSHC, you are supporting Graceworks and OneGenAway here locally, but you are also supporting Lifeline in Missouri, a widow in Alabama, a woman needing surgery in Tanzania, and a church whose building was knocked off its foundation by a flood in Kentucky. You are sending semi-trucks full of fresh food and water to flood victims in North Carolina and sending volunteers and supplies to hurricane victims across the southern US.

We do not have a building to maintain and insure. We do not have a dozen ministers to pay and a dozen ministries to fund. We do not oppose churches that have those things, but we are a different kind of church. We are very lean and can share whatever our people give. Giving is an act of fasting and an act of service.

No bling. No extras. Think of how the world would be different if we had not poured untold billions into church bling. Was it wrong to build cathedrals? I wouldn’t think so. Was it the best use of the community’s money and time? I think we have some room to discuss that. Perhaps you can answer it for yourself. If you were sick and worried about a bill and your kids needed new shoes for school, would you rather have someone help you with your needs or have them tell you how pretty their choir robes are? Again, all things are lawful for us, but not all things are expedient. (1st Corinthians 10:23)

Look at Matthew 25:31-46. Those who actively served are those God wants to live with forever. They didn’t convert entire nations or cure some horrible disease. They merely served with what they had, caring for those right in front of them. That was all God wanted.

He even said so. Micah 6:8 and Matthew 22:34-40.