

WELCOME 9th August 2020 – 10 Pentecost '20 A

Matthew 20:25-28 & 1 Peter 4:8-11

Welcome back to the On-line well of Living Water! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you experience God's grace in this brief time on-line. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups. Those are a great way to stay in touch & experience God's Word together!

We're continuing with our adapted worship...as usual there are Group Study/Discussion resources available on our website & I hope you've got those handy. I trust you'll make your way through the songs we've linked to this morning. We're also in the Guide Hall together so you're experiencing here what we've experienced there. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you & those you've gathered in your homes into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into this city to declare what God has done for you.

As we move into this week...

"Do you want fries with that?" For most of us that was our introduction to the marketing ploy "upsizing." A subtle yet convincing insinuation that you really wanted more...bigger is better...more is more satisfying. That upsizing mindset has permeated much of our thinking. Older Australians are encouraged to upsize their homes to protect their pension. Sellers experiment with upsizing their packaging to appeal to a wider customer base. As a society we are constantly told to upsize ourselves. To believe in ourselves, to put our best foot forward. Some churches even tell you to "Live your best life now!" Just look at your resume! The classic upsize...promote ourselves & upsize our achievements.

But Jesus wasn't concerned about upsizing/downsizing because he proclaimed that for God's saving purpose in this world, you are just the *RIGHT* size...In all things, His love would fill you, his Spirit would equip you, his strength would enable you, & his presence would guide you so that the measure of your life would not be its duration but its donation... that greatness isn't found in grand achievements but in humble serving. *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others & to give his life as a ransom for many.*

FAITH FORMED SERVICE is living in the way of Jesus where our hearts beat like his for those in need because the heart of God embraced each one of us.

FAITH FORMED SERVICE is living in the way of Jesus where our lives leave the imprint of self-giving love in every interaction because we've been loved eternally. As his friend Peter would write: *Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other... Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pt 4:8 & 11)*

We'll explore and experience that together today... Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY: PSALM 63 (NLT)

O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory. Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise you! I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer. You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy...through Jesus Christ, our Lord... Amen.

Let's sing together...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Where/when do you find serving others most rewarding/most difficult? Why do you think that is?
2. What is one thing you would do *personally* to serve someone else if money wasn't an issue & time wasn't a constraint?
3. Have you said "Thank you" lately to someone who has served you greatly? How?

BIBLES

10 Pentecost '20 A - FAITH FORMED SERVICE

If you look up “privilege” in the dictionary; don’t be surprised if Marion Mill’s picture is there alongside the definition. Born in Hungary to a diplomatically connected family she enjoyed the best of education, culture, art, music food literature... graduating from the prestigious Univ of Vienna, w/ a PhD in 1932. While there, she fell in love w/ a promising young Dr & she & Otto were married & embarked on lucrative careers. But w/in a few years they immigrated to the US to pursue her lifelong dream of acting in Hollywood movies.

She played a few roles, but was more of a hit on the socialite circuit & lived the BIG life...parties & balls & entertaining the wealthy & well-connected...while Otto tried his hand behind the camera as director/producer. His name & work we remember: Otto Preminger...while Marion spiraled out of control w/ alcohol & infidelities & repeated efforts at self-harm. They divorced & she returned to Vienna to rebuild her life.

It was then she met another promising medical professional, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, on a fundraising furlough from a place most couldn’t find on a map: Lambarene, Gabon, on the west coast of Africa. Marion was awestruck meeting this man who walked away from potential honor, ease & fortune to work in an obscure African village. During his time in Europe they met often & talked about Schweitzer’s desire to make a lasting difference with his life. When it was time for him to go back to Africa, Marion begged to go too...He agreed. Marion, born w/ every human privilege, moved to a little village in Africa to spend the rest of her life doing the grunt work...dirty work...hours-on-end-never-ending work of caring for sick, dying, poverty-stricken Gabonese people. In her autobiography, *All I want is Everything*, she wrote, "Albert Schweitzer says there are two kinds of people. There are helpers, & non-helpers. I thank God He allowed me to become a helper. In helping, I found everything."

There is overwhelming evidence she was right. Studies again & again demonstrate that people who say they are most satisfied/happiest in their lives, who are emotionally/physically healthier & who are most resistant to stress & resilient under stress are those who help others. Those who serve beyond their own needs, who live engaged making life better for someone else (w/o being rewarded), help others, volunteer, assist in nursing homes, food pantries, schools, churches... are measurably higher on every scale of well-being than those who live insulated in their own little corner of the universe & add nothing of value beyond their own home.

I don’t know if Marion knew it at the time, but Jesus said the same thing. *Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, & whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others & to give his life as a ransom for many.* And then 3x times: *If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it. (Mt 10:39) If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. (Mt 16:25) What good will it do for people to win the whole world & lose their lives? (Mt 16:26)* Then on the night he was betrayed he washed his followers’ feet & said, *Since I, your Lord & Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. (Jn 13:14-15)*

It’s clear...we’re designed to serve...built for it...& the deeper into self-alone we travel...the sicker we get on every level (solitary confinement is punishment – our season of isolation is by many accounts doing long term damage comparable to the virus) But what we all know...the human story is written in the ink of self-centeredness...let’s call it ‘sin.’ What sin does is make us absolutely self-absorbed. In the context of Mt’s recount of this event, Jesus draws a contrast b/t that natural human story...how those w/ power prestige privilege & position ‘lord it over’ those w/o it & his way of living that his followers are to adopt. But what makes this moment in Jesus’ life so striking...2 things:

1st – James/John’s mother has just approached Jesus asking if her 2 boys could enjoy those sorts of perks/bennies when he finally establishes his kingdom. *“In your Kingdom, please let my 2 sons sit in places of honour next to you, one on your right & the other on your left.”* She assumed, like most in Jesus’ day, that the kingdom he proclaimed would be a new dynasty where God’s people held the reins of power...& oh by the way if my boys can glom onto some of that reflected glory...well that’s not too much to ask is it?

But Jesus reminds them in that contrast b/t the kingdoms of the world & the Kingdom of God present in him, is that they live w/ a high calling...Jesus says, Your calling is in fact to reflect me to the world...not based on power or throwing your weight around but on self-giving self-sacrificial love for others...least lost & littlest weak & the stranger – outcast & poor That’s your calling & you will fulfill that...well or badly is up to you but to do that well there’s a high cost...He asks the brothers, *“Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?”* Now they boldly say “Yes” but they have no idea that indeed they & every one of the 12 will suffer greatly painfully because they bear the name & news & work of Jesus to the world. James was the 1st apostle to die at the hands of Herod Agrippa. John was the last apostle to

die exiled to the island of Patmos. There would be no Easter w/o Good Friday for Jesus or for his followers. No glory outside of the cross. Secondly...just before their mother approached Jesus w/ her request.

2nd – Jesus has just told the 12 his ultimate destination vss 17-19: *“Listen,” he said, “we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests & teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die. Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be mocked, flogged w/ a whip, & crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead.”* Of all the passion predictions in the NT, this is the most detailed. Jesus is clear about his path in this world & his work in redeeming the Father’s sin-broken creation. Jesus is explicit not only in the gory details but in their significance *“as a ransom for many.”* Here we get a glimpse into the very heart of the Father & the Son. God is love & cares about his lost human creation particularly those who are in need, hurt, suffer, doing it hard, alone or outside the normal safe places of daily life. We find ourselves eternally distant from God if we live like we are the only ones on the planet & our hearts never hurt for outsiders & we never engage in caring loving compassionate service.

But **JESUS’** love for us is so great that his death & resurrection has the power to completely recreate each of us...to put w/in me/you a new heart that beats in time to his own. Jesus dies & rises so that no human heart will have to ever again beat to its own selfish rhythm...& the evidence of the new heart & new Christ-timed heartbeat is seen in the way our hearts are lived out in this world in serving the needs that present themselves every day. The point Jesus makes is NOT that me doing nice helpful things for others is how I earn or deserve my place in his heaven. Jesus dies/rises/rules so that our salvation is secure, but his death & rez also secure for us a new heart & a new way of living in this world. Serving in the way of Jesus opens us to the miracle Jesus will perform in us! As Paul would write: *2 Cor 5:15 - He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died & was raised for them.*

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Right before those words Peter writes...*The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest & disciplined in your prayers. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other...You see...whether we like to admit it or not...this life isn’t very long...time slips past like water spilled from a jug...we don’t always get another chance to make an impact on someone in our path...but **FAITH FORMED SERVICE** connects right now to eternity because it makes the eternal love of the Father & the saving love of the Son present & powerful in the life of whomever we bless w/ our heart & our hands.*

Jesus declared that for God’s saving purpose in this world, you are just the *RIGHT* size...In all things, His love will fill you, his Spirit will equip you, his strength will enable you, & his presence will guide you so that the measure of your life will not be its duration but its donation...your greatness isn’t found in grand achievements but in humble serving. *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others & to give his life as a ransom for many.* And that ransom was for you.

Let’s pray with that in mind: **Father prepare me for whatever you require today and lead me in faith wherever you call me to go. In Jesus’ Name...Amen**