

Devotion: "To Serve as Jesus Served"

As we come to the final mark in our journey through the *Seven Marks of Discipleship*, we arrive at a call both humble and profound: **to serve**.

From the beginning of this series, we've reflected on how a disciple lives a life that is prayerful, grounded in Scripture, devoted to worship, ready to invite others, eager to encourage, and generous in giving. These practices shape us - but they also *send* us. The sixth mark, "Give," opens our hands. The seventh, "**Serve**," moves our feet.

1. Called to Serve

The prophet Micah captures the heart of service in a single line:

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

Justice. Mercy. Humility. These aren't abstract ideals - they're deeply practical, often messy, and always relational. When Jesus was asked what commandment was greatest, he pointed to love: love of God and love of neighbor. And as we know, love is more than a feeling. Love takes action. Love *serves*.

Jesus modeled this love with his hands and feet. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, washed his disciples' feet, and touched the untouchable. His ministry was not only one of teaching, but of presence - embodied care in response to real human need.

As his followers, we're called to that same posture. Not only because the world is watching, but because **this is how we make Christ's presence real**: by stepping into places of need and showing up with compassion, courage, and grace.

2. Serving in Freedom

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul offers a beautiful paradox of the Christian life:

"For freedom Christ has set us free... do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another."
(Galatians 5:1, 13)

We are set free in Christ - not just from sin and fear, but from the burden of trying to prove ourselves worthy. Yet that freedom is not license to live for ourselves. Instead, it becomes a doorway into a new kind of life: a life of **freely chosen service**, rooted in love.

Paul continues in Galatians 5 by describing what this Spirit-shaped life looks like:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..." (Gal. 5:22-23)

This fruit grows not in isolation, but in relationship. It blossoms when we walk alongside others - especially when we serve those who cannot repay us. That's the Spirit at work.

3. Luther's Paradox of Freedom

Martin Luther, writing in *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), articulates this paradox in a way that has resonated through centuries:

**"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.
A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."**

Luther's insight is that Christian freedom and service are not opposites - they are two sides of the same coin. Because we are free - because nothing can separate us from the love of God - we are liberated from fear, pride, and self-justification. And with that freedom, we are empowered to serve.

In other words, we don't serve to earn God's love. We serve *because* we already have it.

4. Vocation and the World's Deep Hunger

This leads naturally to a word that has become deeply meaningful in Christian life: **vocation**.

Vocation is more than a job. It is a *calling* - from the Latin *vocare*, "to call" - and it's not limited to pastors or missionaries. Every Christian has a vocation. Every life has a purpose in God's kingdom.

Author Frederick Buechner captures this beautifully:

"Vocation: It comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call, and means the work a person is called to by God.

There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Super-ego, or Self-Interest.

By and large a good rule for finding out is this: The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done.

If you really get a kick out of your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you've missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a) but probably aren't helping your patients much either.

Neither the hair shirt nor the soft berth will do. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Listen to that again: **“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”** This is the joy and challenge of Christian service: to discern that intersection, to listen for God’s voice among the noise, and to step forward into work that matters.

5. Everyday Service

Serving as Jesus served doesn’t always mean going far. Sometimes it means showing up for the neighbor across the street, the colleague who’s hurting, the child who needs encouragement, the person who feels forgotten. Service can be grand or quiet, planned or spontaneous, noticed or unseen.

Sometimes, it looks like advocacy and justice. Other times, it looks like casseroles and carpools. All of it matters.

Service is the outward fruit of an inward grace. It is how the disciple lives out the Gospel - not just in word, but in flesh and blood.

6. Final Word: What It Means to Be a Disciple

To be a disciple is to walk in the way of Jesus - and that path is shaped by service. Not out of guilt or duty, but out of love. We serve because we are free. We serve because we are called. We serve because we’ve seen the face of Christ in others - and long to show it in ourselves.

So whether you find yourself at a soup kitchen or in a boardroom, whether you are raising children or tending the sick, whether you are planting gardens or writing letters - ask this: *Does this meet a deep need in the world? Does this bring me deep joy?*

If so, you may be standing on holy ground. You may be standing right where God has called you.

A note from Pastor Greg: I used an AI tool to help draft this devotion, guiding it with Scripture, theological notes, and previous reflections from our series. I then revised and shaped the final version you see here.