



# Every Church's Mandate – To Serve!

True North Series #9

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,  
which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

Last week we talked about why we believe God has established his church and what the church (large and small – universal and local) has been mandated to be doing. You might remember the big 5...

- Worship
- Evangelism
- Fellowship
- Discipleship
- Service

Every church has this same mandate! It doesn't matter if your church is inner-city, rural, or urban. It doesn't matter if your attendance is 50, 150 or 5,000. If you are a church committed to following Jesus Christ these are your mandates. These are ours! And for these privileges God promises to provide. For the next few weeks we're going to look at each of our five purposes individually. In other words, we're going to go from the wide-angle lens to the zoom! This morning we zoom in on our privilege of service / ministry.

Service is often an overlooked answer! Watchman Nee tells the story of a Chinese Christian whose rice paddy was next to that of a communist. Everyday he would use a foot-powered pump to draw water from a canal and onto his field. The communist would come by everyday, pull out the boards separating the two fields and drain the water onto his field. The Christian prayed about what he could do. The thought came to him to arrive at the field two hours earlier so he did. He pumped water onto his neighbor's field and then onto his. The stealing stopped and both fields did very well.

Speaking of overlooked...Back in the days of the space race (US/Russia) it became apparent that the normal ball point pen would not work in zero gravity. NASA spent considerable time and money to develop a pen that would work in that environment. What

about the Russians? They used pencils!

We've read already what Jesus taught and modeled. ***"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."*** That statement flies in the face of our culture! All week long we hear that "you" are the most important. 'Do what it takes to meet your needs.' 'You go girl!' 'Take care of number 1.' 'Buy this, travel there, update, relocate...'

And it carries over to the church. We think there's nothing wrong with choosing a church by asking, "Which church will best meet my needs and bless my family?" It's a rare day to have a guest in any church inform the pastor, "I'm looking for a church where I can serve and be a blessing to the church family." To speak a language of service is often to speak a foreign language in today's culture.

That's part of why people couldn't figure out Jesus. (Matthew 20) He was different. The crowds often left amazed, but also wondering, at his teaching. It wasn't like what they were used to hearing.

You want to be part of a great church? What's a great church look like? Listen to this...(26) ***"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."*** A great church – in Jesus' estimation – is a serving church.

What is Immanuel Church? – "A great place to serve."

## Learning from the Master

### **1. Serving God Means Being Ready**

***Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they***

***shouted, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!' Jesus stopped and called them. (Matthew 20:30, 32)***

If you think of service as something you plan to do and then go do it – drive down to Union Gospel Mission or work at the local Food Shelf – you may drive right by some other chances to serve. That's what Jesus didn't do. On his way to Jerusalem, "he stopped." From Jesus we learn to have our senses alert to for service!

### - **Be Careful to Avoid Self-Centeredness**

***The crowd sternly told them to be quiet.***

***(Matthew 20:31 NAS)***

Number 1 thing that keeps us from being service-oriented? Self-Focus. The crowd wanted Jesus to keep moving. They were excited to be a part of what was happening. But if he stopped, then what? What about me? What are we going to do while Jesus takes time here? And these two beggars aren't important to Jesus! Jesus changed that stereo-type!

### - **Watch Out for Busyness**

***People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. (Mark 10:13)***

Here's another time the disciples miss the point! "Leave Jesus alone; he's busy!" Making a god of busyness is nothing new. It's been around a long time. If self-centeredness is #1 then busyness is #2. Who's got time to serve? Honestly, nobody. Everybody is busy. So how do we get people to teach SS and volunteer in the nursery, take care of the finances and serve on our leadership boards, sing on worship team and work with kids on Wednesday night? People like you make time to serve!

## 2. Serving God Means Being Respectful

*“What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. “Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.” (Matthew 20:32, 33)*

Some of us from the Men’s Ministry were planning to do some yard work for a person I know who has a huge yard and not much time. When I called to ask if it was OK for us to help she couldn’t bring herself to say “Yes.” Even though we really wanted to serve we had to respect the wishes of the one we wanted to help!

- **Avoid the Barrier of Pride**  
*He who answers before listening – that is his folly and shame. (Proverbs 18:13)*

Service always involves a server and a “servee”. If you are the server be sure that you know what the “servee” really needs – not what you think they need.

- **Avoid the Barrier of Irritation**  
*Let us not become weary in doing good...as we have opportunity let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Galatians 6:9, 10)*

“Not become weary” – What keeps the attitude right? The right motivation! If you are serving because you have to, because you feel guilty, because you want someone to notice...or whatever...count on it, you will get irritated! You will develop a bad taste in your mouth for those needy people (especially when they aren’t appreciative of all you are doing for them) if your attitude isn’t right. To serve is a privilege not a duty!

## 3. Serving God Means Being Responsive

*“And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes” (vs.34)*

- **Monitor Your Compassion Level**  
*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22, 23)*

Jesus served from a motive of compassion. But if your compassion fuel light is on then it’s time to admit it and do what it takes to get that compassion back.

- **Squash the Habit of Procrastination**  
*Do not say to your neighbor, “Come back later; I’ll give it tomorrow” – when you now have it with you. (Proverbs 3:28)*

“Could you help out?” – “Sure, OK, I’ll do that later.” Ever hear that at home? Service is not just a God-thing. Where do we learn to serve? Usually in our families. You get asked to do something, do it now...not later. If you aren’t responsive at home it won’t magically appear when you’re at church or school or confronted with a situation that requires service.

- **Refuse to Minister for Visibility**  
*Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. (Matthew 6:1)*

What happens? You lose your reward! The only reward you get is the good words someone else might say about you. What about if you do it quietly, no one noticing? Your Father in heaven who sees what is done in secret will reward you!

Being a church means we serve. We are the body of Christ but are we responding like a healthy body or like one that’s paralyzed because the hands and feet and eyes and ears aren’t serving. It’s a question only we can answer!

Rick Allen, one of our denominational guys, wrote this week about an article that caught his attention. It was entitled, “Attractional Church vs. Missional Church”. What’s an attractional church? That’s what I wanted to know, too. Listen to the definition:

The attractional church is one that, through its presence, programming and marketing – everything from four-color brochures to word-of-mouth – seeks to attract people to its services ... The operative words in the attractional model are “come to.” This type of church is not only attractional but it is also “extractional”, asking people to leave what they are doing to come join them in what they are doing.

What’s a missional church? A Missional church is often called an externally focused church. Where the first one is a “come to” church, the missional church can be considered a “go-to” church. This church goes to the community to demonstrate God’s love and care to people in need.

Which kind of a church are we? Which kind do you think we should be? Attractional is not all wrong. But if that is all we are then we are way out of balance and need to get back that missional emphasis that is necessary in healthy churches!

---

This message was presented on November 14, 2004 by Pastor Mark Coughlin at Immanuel Church of Forest Lake.