

*Come, Lord Jesus – make these words to be for us Your word of life. Amen.*

Chopping onions. That is definitely a job for servants.

You never see any of the family on *Downton Abbey* chopping onions, do you? Yet when I showed up last Thursday to help make vats of German potato salad for Oktoberfest, I was assigned to the onion crew.

And it couldn't have been more fun. Every person in there chopping onions or bacon or tending potatoes was a leader at Christ Church Wayside. And every one of them was serving.

I don't think serving is what James and John were thinking was ahead for them. They were all, "Jesus, I want the window seat!," thinking they were headed for fame and glory once Jesus brought about the revolution.

"We want everyone to know we're with you."

"No, no no," said Jesus – inviting them literally to a "come-to-Jesus" moment.

"Those who want to be leaders in my community will excel in being servants."

"Can you drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with my baptism?"

"Sure!" they say, because they don't have a clue what he's talking about, that the day will come when they don't want to be seen with him.

What is the cup that he must drink? What he's going to Jerusalem for.

What does he say when that moment is upon him, in that garden?

*"Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me."*

That is the cup he is talking about, the cup pouring out his own blood.

That is his baptism. Losing his life to gain ours. Pouring himself out.

"Sure!" they say. But he has more to tell them.

"You will drink this cup and undergo this baptism. But I'm not going to guarantee you window seats in glory! No seats of honor at all. You don't get it:

When you've really become my disciples, you won't care where you sit!

You'll offer up your good seat for someone poorer and needier than you, because that's how much love you'll have. You'll want to serve."

"Those who want to be leaders in my community will excel in being servants."

What does a good servant do? We know this from *Downton Abbey*, right?

They're always on the lookout to see where they are needed.

They know their job and anticipate the boss's requests and the household's needs. And they know who is boss and who is not.

That's what God is trying to convey to Job in our first reading today – Job is a righteous person, just like us, but misfortune after misfortune befalls him. After all of that, and after things are restored to balance and goodness, he wants to talk to God – and God essentially, says, “Who are you? Did you create the world?” God is God, and we are not. That is the posture of a servant of God.

I am looking at a bunch of people who really excel in serving. Who do what needs to be done out there in our gardens and kitchens and offices, putting on coffee hours, washing communion vessels, wrestling with budgets and deficits. Many of those doing the scut work at our lunches and Oktoberfests are our senior leaders. Everyone pitches in – which is great, but there is also a downside. People can feel like they always have to be doing something, fixing something. We've had people leave Christ Church because at our size there's always something to be done, and they feel responsible. I try very hard to invite people to step out of ministries instead of stepping out of church altogether, to remind them that they're contributing by just being here, but it's a struggle. How do we excel in the service, as followers of Jesus and not be consumed?

Remember burning bush that Moses saw when God was trying to get his attention: it was on fire, aflame, but not consumed. The bush was not the fuel for that fire – the Holy Spirit was. Is there a clue for us in how to serve with God, not for God or others? Can we learn how to serve without being consumed?

We might start with our passions – what sets us on fire?

What are we passionate about seeing happen around here?

[Melanie, Peggy, Sandy] ]Danielle and Suzette, who do our flowers, are also doing a whole bunch of other things in the church. But they are also passionate about how beautifully arranged flowers praise God and bless us, so they serve there too.

Some of us are passionate about justice and as we go out of our way to go to a protest or write a letter or convene book group on that subject so passion.

I am passionate about creative worship. Those months where we have had worship series – Celtic Christianity and Celebrating Creation – oh my goodness, it is so much more work to put one of those together and craft all the materials and create all the bulletins and PowerPoint, because they don't already exist from the previous week. But I am passionate about vital, vibrant worship so it is wonderful. It's a gift to me to do it. That's how I know it's a passion.

Serving where we feel a passion is one way to let God light us up.  
Sometimes it's still scut work, but we're passionate about the outcome.

And we need to know our gifts. Paul tell us that the Holy Spirit gives us the gifts  
We need to build up the body of Christ, which is shorthand for the church.  
How do we know what our gifts are? Our spiritual gifts are not always the same  
as our natural talents; sometimes they overlap and sometimes they don't.  
A spiritual gift is something that, when you do it it, it blesses the church  
or another person. You can see the fruit.

There is an ease to ministering out of our giftedness – because we can feel the  
Spirit working through us.

Some of you tell me you are blessed by the birthday and anniversary prayers  
I offer each week. Praying that way is one of my spiritual gifts.

I don't usually know the words I am going to say – the Spirit is prompting me.  
And I could pray like that all day and not get tired.

When we're operating out of a "should" we get tired and stressed more easily.  
When we're operating out of spiritual gifts and passions – we're not drained.  
We're aflame but not consumed.

And when we're serving with God, aligned with our gifts and passions, we feel joy  
and freedom. "In whose service is perfect freedom" is a prayer St. Augustine  
wrote, picked up by Thomas Cranmer when he put together our prayer book.  
We may not feel joy with every onion we peel or mess we clean up if we're caring  
for an infant, an elder, or a pet... but over all we feel joy in that service.

[Steve feels great joy in serving as crucifer; if he's here he wants to be doing that. ]  
If you are serving in some capacity in Christ Church in something that does not  
give you joy, tell me.

Sometimes it's not the right ministry and we'll just trust that someone else will  
come forward; or sometimes we need to adjust how we're doing it.

Passion. Giftedness. Joy. And companionship. That is what I encountered in that  
kitchen on Thursday. It was fun because we were doing it together.

The first thing Jesus did was put together a team, and then he sent them out in twos.  
No one should be working alone unless they absolutely want to.

When we're serving the way Jesus invites us to serve it doesn't deplete us.

We have more energy. We're not responding to a should.

We're responding to an invitation we sent from God or somebody else we  
respect and we are responding to and living out of our giftedness.

There are areas of our church life where I am praying somebody will feel passion and a gift and one of those is nurturing our children. Our Sunday school has completely fallen apart.

Yet Jessica Tompkins has stepped into a space and said “I’m gonna gather our youth once a month.” Her son Dylan is helping and I hope others will join her. It’s not like Jessica isn’t doing a ton of other things – Vestry, finance committee, reading, greeting... and I’m paying attention because she got worn out in a previous church – but she feels a passion to do this, she has the gifts.

So let’s be sure she also has a team.

And if anyone feels a passion to nurture faith in our little ones, please tell me.

We are servants tending the guests in God’s household, which is everybody.  
*Those who would be first must be last, and servant of all.*

“The cup that I drink, you will drink,” Jesus tells us.

But the cup we drink, my beloveds, is the cup He has filled for us.

As we serve the people whom God loves, family or neighbor or stranger,  
we will be filled.

As we let God light us up, we will be on fire but not consumed.

*Amen.*

## READINGS:

### Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. **Are you able to drink the cup that I drink**, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "**The cup that I drink you will drink**; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. **But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.** For the Son of Man **came not to be served but to serve**, and to give his life a ransom for many."

### Job 38

The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man, will question you, and you shall declare to me.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? ["Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together? Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?"]