



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for September 4, 2022**  
**“Making a Difference: Our Call to Serve Others”**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: I Peter 4:7-11**

## **Our Vision**

Our vision as a church is to *“make a difference by following Christ, offering hope, serving others, and loving everyone.”* We understand this to be God’s preferred future for our common life together. Here in the weeks of the late summer and early fall we are talking about that vision.

To date, we have talked about what it means to follow Jesus. This is foundational to what we are about. We have also talked about what it means to offer hope to those around us. We have a message of hope for a world that so desperately needs to hear it. This morning we talk about serving others, which is a natural outgrowth of a life lived following Christ.

Jesus was all about serving others and he wants us to do the same. He says succinctly in Mark 9:35, *“If anyone wants to be first that person must be the very last and the servant of all.”*

When it comes to serving others there is no sitting in the stands. Serving others is not a spectator sport. When it comes to service it’s pretty much a *“okay coach, put me in”* sort of thing, and, of course, we know who our coach is.

## **So Much Sewing to Do**

On Friday, I conducted the funeral of a dear friend. We had worked together at St. Paul for years. Among other things, my friend, Laverne, was quite the seamstress. Most of the sewing she did was to help others. She was always altering wedding dresses for brides who were getting married. Laverne used to say, *“There is just so much sewing to do.”* For Laverne, that was by choice. For you and me, it might not be sewing, but it certainly should be something. When it comes to service, *“there’s just so much sewing to do.”*

Today, we turn yet again to the Book of I Peter. In I Peter 4:7-11, we find that Peter has a challenging word about service. In so many words, he states that when it comes to service we need to *“get in the game.”* Let’s here then our scripture for today, I Peter 4:7-11.

## **1 Peter 4:7-11**

*The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

## Living for God

The first part of I Peter 4 is given over to a consideration of what it means to live for God. It talks a lot about good conduct, and how that plays out for those who follow Jesus.

Peter talks about how those who follow Jesus should deport themselves. You know the word deportment. Years ago, kids were graded on deportment. Today, it is called conduct.

## Loving Others

In I Peter 4, Peter talks about the importance of loving other people. *“Above all,”* he says, *“love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”* (I Peter 4:8)

Forgiveness borne out of love goes a long way toward covering the strains in our relationships.

## Offering Hospitality

In I Peter 4, Peter also talks about the importance of hospitality. He writes, *“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”* (I Peter 4:9)

Offering hospitality has everything to do with offering your home. There is no doubt about that. Offering hospitality though has more to do with offering your heart to all people. That’s the purest form of hospitality.

## Serving Others

Peter gets to talking about service in I Peter 4:10. Peter offers a word not only about the part we play in serving, but the part God plays. Here that verse again. *“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”*

In a word, we are to use whatever spiritual gift we have received from God to serve others. These days there are all sorts of spiritual gifts inventories to help you to discern how you are best fitted for ministry.

I have always appreciated Rick Warren’s inventory where he encourages people to discover their **SHAPE**.

Warren talks about:

- **Spiritual gifts**
- **Heart**
- **Abilities**
- **Personality**
- **Experiences**

An understanding of these five things will help you discover how you are best suited for ministry.

When it comes down to it, our ability to serve is God-given. He bestows upon our lives just the right set of gifts and abilities to accomplish what he wants us to get done. God has given you something to give back. In a word, you were created serve. God made you to make a difference, an eternal difference.

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

How we use the gifts and abilities God has given us is a matter of stewardship. We can squander those gifts by doing our own thing **or** we can use them in service to God. When that happens, others are not only helped, but God is glorified.

Paul offers yet another word on the subject. This time in Romans 12:6ff. *“We all have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If your gift is prophesying, use it in proportion to your faith. If it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is encouraging, then encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, give generously; if it is leadership, govern diligently; and if it is showing mercy, then do it cheerfully.”*

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents where the right investment of talents was important to the master. If you remember the man with the one talent did nothing with his and his master was furious. God has given you something to give back. Don’t squander it like the man with the one talent. Invest your talents wisely.

I like what Erma Bombeck has to say about such things. *“When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say I used everything you gave me.”*

John Wesley lived by this motto throughout his ministry and encouraged others to do the same, *“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, by all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”*

You get the idea. We need to get to it when it comes to serving in the name of Christ.

### **All Sorts of Excuses**

People offer all sorts of excuses when it comes to them failing to serve. It’s almost like we could do a family feud on the subject. What are some of the most frequent excuses for not serving?

Survey says:

- I am too busy.
- I don’t feel capable.
- I enjoy my life, service would just mess things up.
- I am content to let somebody else do it.
- I am perfectly okay with staying comfortable
- I am just fine with letting somebody else to serve.

### **All Sorts of Reasons**

Conversely, there are all sorts of reasons people do serve. Some of them are noble and some not. We could do a Family Feud on that as well.

What are some of the reasons people serve?

Survey says:

- It makes me feel good.
- It helps in building my resume.
- It keeps me from feeling guilty.
- People recognize me when I serve.
- I can get Beta Club hours.
- I often receive a blessing when I serve.

That one has everything to do with attending to the Means of Grace. When we serve, we almost always receive a greater blessing than the one we offer. That's simply because God is involved.

- I am able to give glory to God.

I call that one the three G's, **G**iving **G**lory to **G**od, which is always the right thing to do.

- Above all things, Jesus wants us to serve.

### **When It Comes to Service**

When it comes to service it is not so much a 9-5 thing, but a 24/7 thing. When it comes to service it is not so much about the duration of one's life, but the donation of one's life that counts. When it comes to service it is not so much about getting noticed but making sure God is. When it comes to service it's as much about ability as it is availability.

God is good about taking both our abilities, along with our availability and turning it into something beautiful. Let me encourage you carve out time in your already busy schedule to serve. Let me also encourage you to put your abilities to good use.

Regarding such things, think about this?

Ability + Availability = Making a Difference

or

A + A = MD

St. Louis Cardinal, Albert Pujols, is having a great end to his legendary baseball career. He hit eight homeruns in August along, bringing him to within six of hitting 700 for his career. On Wednesday it wasn't about homeruns for Albert. In the bottom of the 13<sup>th</sup> against the lowly Cincinnati Reds Albert hit a long sacrifice fly to score the winning run. Sacrifice has a way of winning the game as well.

If you are not serving as you should, let me encourage you to review what God has done for you. I am confident you too will want to "*get in the game*" of serving God by serving others and that your pray will be, "*Put me in coach.*"