

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *Serving Compassionately*

SERIES: *Core Values*

SCRIPTURES: *Mark 10:36-45; Philippians 2:5-8; Romans 12:1*

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**Credit to “Focusing our Faith” (Paul Lehman-Schletewitz, Chap. 7) for valuable insights regarding this message!*

Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you.

We’re spending several weeks this year, talking about the Core Values of the Brethren in Christ church. Said really there are two reasons for this series. One, is that many of the Core Values take us back to some of the key themes in Scripture. And so this series is just a great way to look at some important Biblical themes.

Second, we said, as families, individuals, or even the groups that we are part of there are certain, principles, or ideas, concepts that are at our core, help to define us, and our identity. And so these core values help us focus on the emphasis of our faith, what’s most important to us as a church.

The BIC has identified 10 Core Values. Many that all different kinds of denominations would affirm and support, but 10 things that are just important to us and how we practice our faith. Again, if you’re interested in more reading about these, please let me know we’ll get you a copy of a book called “Focusing our Faith”, which talks in detail about these 10 core values.

Last week we were looking at Core Value number 6: **Witnessing to the world.**

This morning we want to take a look at Core Value number 7. **Serving Compassionately**: We value serving others at their point of need, following the example of Jesus.

So first, why is this one of our core values? Why is serving compassionately important to the BIC and here at Five Forks? And for us the answer really begins with the belief that...

I. Serving compassionately is the heart of God.

And I kind of thought in reading about this core value, that this is one of those values that distinguishes the way we live, act, behave, talk as followers of Jesus from the surrounding culture. Because we live in this world and most have been taught to think about me first.

And we measure ourselves by our social status, labels on our clothes, our bank accounts, our twitter followers, your Facebook friends. And this core value kind of flips that idea on it's head. That as followers of Jesus we value putting others ahead of ourselves and helping to meet needs. And the reason we do this...is because we believe that's what God is like. Giving up rights, status and privilege to serve others.

All kinds of examples of this, throughout your Bible.

When you go back and begin looking through the **Old Testament**, God's instructions for his chosen people. You find all of these instructions related to serving, taking care of the needs of others.

Deuteronomy 24 - ¹⁹ When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a

second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. ²¹ When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

Psalm 146:9 – The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow...

From the start, God elevated service to others as a vital characteristic of his people. (pg 115)

And then you head to the New Testament and you see that serving compassionately was at the core of Jesus ministry.

There's a story in Mark 10 where two of Jesus disciples, James and John come to Jesus...

³⁶ “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷ They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

Jesus has come as the Messiah, the king of the Jews. And these two guys know that the King will one day sit on the throne of Glory. And they just want make sure they get the seats beside him. They are after...honor, accolades, power, wealth, status.

Kind of thinking that if you look around our world, those are some of the core values in our world. Make sure you get all you can for yourself, meet your own needs, gain power and status and wealth.

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

You get the feeling the other disciples are upset because they didn't think of this first. And I kind of picture this argument breaking out in front of Jesus about who deserves to sit by Jesus on those two great places of honor.

And I wonder if Jesus just sort of stood there shaking his head...they weren't getting it. Jesus realizes that his disciples have missed the whole point of his life, they've been following him for 2 years, but they didn't get it.

And I wonder if he just stood there for a moment, just hoping one, one of them would step forward, recognizing that His followers have a different core value.

But they just argue, they all want the front of the line, the best seat, the glory...

⁴² Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

The world values, having power over others, being better than others.

⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

It's really very simple. Jesus says, my followers value something different.

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

My follower's value giving up their status in order to serve compassionately.

I was reading a story about the renowned theologian...**Henri Nouwen** who taught at highly respected universities like Harvard and Yale and Notre Dame. But Henri came to believe that those settings (status, prestige, personal accolades) did not-for him- bring out the person God intended him to be. So this famous writer spent the last 10

years of his life caring for physically and mentally challenged people at a small community called L'Arche.

While he was there, Henri made friends with a resident named **Trevor** who had many mental and emotional challenges. One time when Trevor was sent to a hospital for evaluation, Henri called to arrange a visit. When the people who ran this hospital found out that the famous Henri Nouwen was coming, they asked if he'd meet with **some doctors and other "important" people**. He agreed, and when he arrived, there was a fabulous luncheon set up in a special place called the **Golden Room** – but Trevor wasn't there. "Where is Trevor?" Henri asked. "He cannot come to lunch," they told him. "Patients and staff are not allowed to have lunch together, and no patient has ever had lunch in the Golden Room."

"But the whole purpose of my visit was to have lunch with Trevor," Henri said. "If Trevor is not allowed to attend lunch, then I will not attend either."

Somehow, they suddenly found a way for Trevor to attend the lunch.

The Golden Room was filled with staff and really important people who were really excited that the great Henri Nouwen was in their midst. Some tried to get up close to him. They thought of how great it would be to tell their friends, "I got to hang out with Henri Nouwen the other day..." Some pretended to have read books they hadn't read and to appear smarter than they really were. Others were upset that the rule about separating patients and staff had been broken.

Trevor didn't take notice of the fuss; he just sat next to Henri. And at one point when Henri was talking to the person on his other side, he didn't notice when Trevor stood up to speak to the crowd.

"A toast," Trevor said. "I will now offer a toast."

The room grew quiet. What in the world is this guy going to do?

Then Trevor began to sing: If You're happy and you know it, raise your glass. If you're happy and you know it raise your glass. If you're happy and you know it, if your happy and you know it, If your happy and you know it raise your glass.

At first people were unsure how to respond, but Trevor was beaming. His face and voice told everyone how glad and proud he was to be there with his friend Henri. Henri, understood, realized, this concept about giving up our status, wealth and prestige to compassionately serve. ("The Me I want To Be" pgs. 18-19)

That's kind of the example Jesus sets for us, that's a picture of God's heart. Apostle Paul wrote to these words to the church, the group of people who follow Jesus...

Philippians 2 -

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

In world full of Golden Room dinners, and special invitation events...in a world of ruled by self-glorification and status. Our Master, leaves his throne, enters our world, becomes like us that he might serve compassionately.

We value serving compassionately because God values serving compassionately.

Second, we believe that....

II. Serving compassionately means meeting needs.

Specifically, when we talk about meeting needs in relation to serving compassionately, we are emphasizing **meeting physical needs**. Not that spiritual needs are not important. As you read through the core values, you'll know there are places where the emphasis is on spiritual needs. Jesus often met both needs. But as it relates to this core value, we value serving others (the world, our brothers and sisters) at their point of physical need.

If your neighbor is hungry, give them food. If thirsty, a drink. If they need clothes, clothe them, if they are sick or in prison, visit them.

James says it this way...**James 2 - ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?**

This is the life Jesus lived out.

"Rather than exclusively 'saving people's souls' and transporting them to eternal bliss, he continued his Father's plan and reached out to all types of people, right where they were." (pg. 116)

When Jesus came across a paralyzed man in Matthew 9 listen to what happens...

² Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"

In Jewish theology only God can forgive sins and so Jesus in offering to forgive this man's sins, is "assuming God's role." And Jesus meets the man's spiritual need. But the story continues.

⁴ Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ⁶ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." ⁷ Then the man got up and went home.

Jesus heals the man's physical ailment as well.

Mark 1 - A man with leprosy^[h] came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

⁴¹ Jesus was filled with compassion.^[i] He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

Jesus touches and then heals a leper because that meets his physical need.

Jesus gives the blind man sight, because that meets his physical need. Jesus saw hungry crowds and fed them with loaves and fish, because that met their physical need.

"Christ has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion for the world is to look out; yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; and yours are the hands with which He is to bless us now." Saint Teresa of Avila

That's what we mean when we talk about valuing "serving compassionately." We look around at the needs in our world and we find ways to meet/fulfill those needs.

This is a picture of my little niece Hadley. She is about 4 years old. And Hadley has a little sister, Madie. Yes, it get's a little confusing when my nieces are around Hadley, and Madie and our daughter is named Ady☺

Anyway, the other day my sister shared this story...she said...

"As I was washing dishes Hadley comes running up to tell me that she heard Madie crying on the baby monitor. So I asked her to go tell Madie I was on my way, hoping that would distract Madie for the few seconds it would take me to finish wiping the counter down.

A few moments later when I got to the monitor, I no longer heard any Madie cries, but I did hear this... *"Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are..."*

She says...

When I walked into Madie's room, and there was Hadley with a big smile on her face, singing lullaby's to calm down and comfort her little sister. She looked at me and said, 'Mama, she likes my singing!'

I thought, now that's a little girl who understands "serving compassionately". She saw her little sister, crying, in distress. And she thought, you know I have something to give in this situation. I can help. Maybe I can't pick her up and rock her to sleep. Maybe I can't carry her out to mommy, but I can sing to her. Mommy sings to me when I feel lonely and afraid. And maybe my little sister she is lonely and afraid, and I can sing to her and that will remind her that everything's gonna be ok. And it will keep her from crying.

I'll just tell you we live in this broken world. Just makes us feel like crying sometimes, and we look around and we see, we notice other's...lot of people, families, hurting.

And what this world is looking for, a group of people, who will step in and meet these needs.

Somewhere in your world is a single parent. A father or mother, working full time, trying to make ends meet, and just needs a break from work and the kids and the stress of paying the bill. Just needs a few extra bucks or someone to babysit her kids on a Friday so she can go out dinner or get her done, or some way to treat herself. And she's waiting for someone to hear her crying, who won't just say "wow that's tough were praying for you." But instead will say, "Can I watch your kids for a while?" "Can we take your family out?"

Somewhere in your world is a teen whose world is coming crashing down. Her parents aren't getting along, her father scares her, her peers don't accept her, she dreads school, she's struggling with her grades, she contemplating drugs as an escape and what she's really looking for is someone who will hear her crying, and just wrap their arms around her and hold her tight.

Men...Somewhere there is a wife, who works full time and also keeps things running at home. And she's just waiting for her husband to step up and help with the dishes or vaccum the floor, or write her a love note, or take her out for dinner...

Ladies...somewhere there's a husband, weighed down with expectations and stress and he's just waiting for some encouraging words, "Thank you for all you do around here. Thank you for how hard you work. You don't get nearly the appreciation you deserve."

Somewhere in your world there is someone who just returned from the doctor with hard news. And just needing someone who would step up and offer to make a meal.

See, we live in a broken world. And all around there are people crying out and God has assigned his church you and me to notice and step in to sing lullabies to our crying world. That's what we are here at Five Forks, a group of people whose desire, goal focus is meeting the needs of those around us.

We're gonna have some opportunities as we finish up the year as a church to serve compassionately by meeting needs.

There's a group, "Operation Christmas Child."

Towards the end of November, we'll be collecting items for our Thanksgiving service. We have Church Christmas dinners in December.

I thought it'd be kind neat this year...as we think about our Christmas Eve Services...what if, what if everyone in here came up with one family or person, you could invite to our Christmas Eve services. Give someone a place to be, a community to worship with that night.

Third, kind of like a warning about this core value. Serving compassionately often involves...

III. Sacrifice

When you put someone else's needs ahead of your own, it often means you don't get what you want. You choose to do without one of your desires, so that someone else gets their desire.

Paul wrote to the church in Rome...**Romans 12 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.**

When we look to Jesus, our example we are immediately aware that Jesus service to us ended on a Roman Cross. Jesus looked at humanities greatest need...reconciliation with the Father...and he went to the cross, he gave his life to meet that need.

News had reached the northern frontier town of Deerfield in the Massachusetts colony, informing the people to anticipate an attack from the north. For several months they waited, but nothing happened. It snowed early that year, so no one expected an army to cross 300 miles of rough frontier and attack them now! On the night of February 29, 1704, snowdrifts began to form. The snow fell gently and the watchman slept. The drifts grew against the town's outer wall, forming a huge ramp. Without warning, two hundred Indians and French soldiers rushed over the walls and entered the town. The slaughter that followed was ruthless and widespread; men, women, and children perished.

Some survivors were taken captive and gathered in the newly occupied house for John Sheldon. Cold and bleeding, they huddled together. A young French officer, wounded in the fight, lay dying in another part of the room. One of the captives, Mary Catlin, who had just lost her husband and two sons in the battle, arose at his call and gave him a cup of water. Her neighbors criticized her for caring for the killer of her family. Quietly she replied, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink."

Such a willingness to serve, even at great sacrifice to ourselves stands in contrast to the heart and actions of our world...but it is in perfect harmony with people who claim to follow Jesus.

Who could possibly look upon the killer of her husband and children and willingly choose to serve them? Who could possibly demonstrate such compassion to the least worthy of individuals? Only a person whose heart has been filled with the love of Jesus. Only a person whose heart has embraced a radically new set of values. (Pg. 117 – 118).

On the night that Jesus was betrayed and washed the feet of his disciples...did you know...did you know Jesus washed the feet of Judas. Jesus knelt before the man who would betray him and turn him over to his death, that he might have clean feet.

Christian service by its very nature is costly. (Pg 124)

We are called to be cross-bearers more than cross-wearers...the cross means voluntarily choosing to live our lives for others, letting the life of Jesus show us what true spirituality is. (Howard Snyder 124).

We may never be asked give up a cup of water to our enemies or wash the feet of our accusers...but in the daily routine of life, regularly we are faced with giving up our rights for the sake of others...that's called sacrificial service.

EXAMPLES??

And certainly we can't meet every need that crosses our paths and we can't say "Yes" to every service opportunity. There are moms, dads, employees, all over our world...who have completely given, given, given and need to learn at times to say no.

But there is a tension...and we must be careful to not let ourselves off the hook. Serving compassionately will require sacrifice. Sacrifice of our time, our resources, our energy, our schedules and routines. If we never find ourselves in this tension, there is a good chance we are not "serving sacrificially."