

## **Xtreme Lenten Series: Servanthood**

### **March 29, 2020**

**Overarching theme:** In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

#### **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

#### **Core Point:**

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

#### **Start point:**

Lent 2020, the period of 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays), begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26, and ends at sundown on the Saturday, April 11, before Easter. The penitential season of Lent is a season of the church year which commemorates the forty days Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness before he began his public ministry.

During Lent, we enter into a season of preparation, which includes self-reflection and repentance. Ideally, we seek to literally "turn around" and realign our lives and focus towards God. Most people think of Lent as a time to give up things, however, it can be a time to take on new life-giving practices. Lent helps rid ourselves of distractions and our own selfish desires to focus more clearly on God. For example, a person may give up sweets for 40 days and when the temptation to eat a sweet hits, that person instead prays to God for strength.

Practically speaking, Lent is a good way to form a new habit that helps an individual to live and love as more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. I use to hear that it takes 21 days to form a new habit. Actually, for me, it took longer. Only you know how long it takes you to form a new habit. So, the intentional practice of incorporating a new Godly habit during Lent allows time for that habit to become a part of your life.

During the Sundays of Lent, we will focus on the following practices: Compassion, Prayer, Simplicity, Forgiveness, Servanthood, and Discipleship.

### **Gospel of Mark:**

The Gospel of Mark was most likely the first Gospel written and has a date of origination no earlier than 50 A.D. and no later than 70 A.D. The Gospel narratives were probably written to help people remember the story from actual witnesses. Most likely, decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the stories about Jesus had morphed into half-truths. Each Gospel had many similar stories but with a unique perspective from the eye witness. Considerable agreement has John Mark, a close associate of Peter and helper to Paul, as the author. The International Bible Society believes that the recipients were “in the church at Rome, or at least to Gentile readers. Mark explains Jewish customs, translates Aramaic words and seems to have a special interest in persecution and martyrdom—subjects of special concern to Roman believers (and to Peter as well; cf. 1 Peter).”

### **Reflect on this Scripture:**

Mark 10:32-45 (NRSV)

<sup>32</sup> They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, <sup>33</sup> saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; <sup>34</sup> they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.” <sup>35</sup> 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.” <sup>36</sup> And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” <sup>37</sup> And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” <sup>38</sup> 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?” <sup>39</sup> 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; <sup>40</sup> 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.” <sup>41</sup> When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. <sup>42</sup> 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. <sup>43</sup> But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

**Questions to ponder about the passages:**

- What jumps out at you from this passage?
- What was Jesus describing?
- To whom was that going to happen?
- Why was this going to happen? Purpose?
- How did the disciples respond?
- Why do you think James and John would ask what they did?
- What was Jesus saying they were asking?
- How does one become great in Jesus' words?
- What does it mean to be a servant of all?

**Commentary:**

This fifth week of Lent, we are going to focus on Servanthood. In the Mark passage, we see Jesus explaining what is about to happen in Jerusalem. Interesting, in the aftermath of Jesus' description of the future, James and John ask Jesus to place them in the seats on either side of Him when he gets to his place of glory. That takes a lot of guts and pride to ask that when the other disciples are standing around and listening. Interestingly, James and John were probably brothers. They were also present during the transfiguration. Obviously, James and John had an agenda that would move them to the front of the line in regards to power and position over the others. Jesus responded with "hold on boys!" Like so many of us, in times of impending struggle, chaos, change, and uncertainty, we try to serve ourselves by being in the best position possible. Sometimes our initiative and desires are misguided. Jesus used this encounter as a teaching moment about misguided motivations and behavior.

Jesus encouraged them to focus on others instead of themselves. Jesus came to this earth as a servant and to redeem the people of God into having a dynamic, grace-filled relationship with God the Father. Jesus exhorted them to take up the life that he, himself, was showing them. Basically, to be great, one must become a servant to all. This means that we, ourselves, are not put first, but the needs of others are first. We are not encouraged to be served, but to serve others in the strength and power of the Spirit of Christ, who is our example.

During times of uncertainty and insecurity, our true self comes out. We can either respond with grace-filled confidence in Christ that considers the best for all, or self-willed empowerment that only considers what is best for self. What is your go to position in the face of trying times? As believers and followers of Christ Jesus, we are to be the redeemed under God's grace who seek to be servants of one another.

**Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:**

In this passage, what is the main lesson you get from it?

From where, or what, do you get your source of strength in trying times?

What is your goal position?

What does it look like when someone is not living a life of servanthood?

What does it look like when someone is living a life of servanthood?

What does it mean for you to be a servant of God's grace in Christ to others?

**Activity of for the life of a disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:  
Mark 10:43-45 (NRSV)  
"<sup>43</sup> But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."
3. Whom can you serve this week?