

Abide – The Hands and Feet of Jesus

3/7/21

Ephesians 4:1-13

Sunday AM

Video – Ford Fusion Commercial – Flying Car

No. I'm not here to sell you a Ford Fusion, although, Dave Burnett probably could help you if you're in the market – he just became the new owner of the old Alan Vigil Ford dealership in Fayetteville. Nor do I think cars can fly... at least not yet. But did you notice the disclaimer: *Fictionalization. Professional driver on closed course. Do not Attempt. Cars Cannot fly.*

After 30+ yrs serving in the local church, I've found that when it comes to ministry that far too many people think the mission of the church is to be done by the professionals on church staff. The hired guns! To be fair, some ministers think they're the only ones who can do it – that ministry shouldn't be attempted by the avg. Christian. We've even developed language to reinforce this distinction – clergy/laity.

This isn't to say having a church staff is a bad thing, but rather, it's understanding that God has a calling on all of us to serve His kingdom. It means church isn't (nor has it ever been) a spectator sport where the professionals do the work of ministry while the rest of us cheer them on.

In fact, let me show you an important Scripture Paul offered the Ephesians about ministry and Church.

As a prisoner for the Lord, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received... But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors/teachers, to equip his people for works of service, that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back/forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Ephesians 4:1-13

Speaking to the church, Paul says, let me help you understand that to live a life that pleases God requires that you discover your God-given calling – your place of ministry – and then live it out. B/c your place not only contributes to the mission, it contributes to your spiritual health and to the health of the church – b/c we're stronger together when we all do our part.

Notice also, that while He has called us to join in serving His mission, He gave the church the gift of **called out** leaders to **equip** the saints for service. Apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors/teachers – called to help God's people to discover/use their gifts to serve in/thru the local church.

How it works. Once a person surrenders to Christ and begins the abiding life, God reveals His calling for them. Some, like me, God has called to serve w/in the church to support, equip, and mobilize the saints; while for most, their primary calling is to the world. Now, all of us have a responsibility to minister in/to our church and to the world, but for some, like pastors/deacons, their primary calling is inside the walls, while for most, their calling is outside the walls.

For what purpose? So that together, we can help one another to abide in Christ and serve others to Jesus.

W/ this in mind, I want to start this AM w/ a big “Thank You!” for all of you who give of your time and talents to make our church work. For each of you who teach, serve on a committee; work w/ our kids/students or in our guest services area. To our Deacons, tech team, musicians, singers, for the people who pack lunch bunch meals, serve at the Bridge, go on mission trips, and serve in the kitchen – thanks for your service.

If you’re just joining us, we’re in a series on the abiding life. Jesus said, *I am the vine and you are the branches, if you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing.*

The key to abiding is living under the influence of the H.S. following His leading in your life. As we abide, God will use our lives, gifts, talents, and abilities to serve/minister to others in His name.

I The MANDATE for Serving

A servant’s mandate is ministry? *Ministry is caring for others at the point of their need to point them to Jesus.*

Catch – ministry requires a personal investment of Jesus in you working thru you.

To qualify as ministry (1) *it must meet people at the point of their need*; and (2) *it must point them to Jesus*. If these aspects aren’t present, then it’s not ministry. It might be good will, kind, and helpful, but to be ministry, it must bring people to Jesus. *Like the men who lowered their friend thru the roof to Jesus.*

I tell you this b/c servicing is a BIG deal! Serving reveals the condition of the heart, the quality of your spiritual character and the intimacy your walk w/ God.

Can I be honest? In our take, take, take world, it takes heart/courage to choose to serve instead of to be served – to be a giver instead of a taker.

In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul says we’re *saved by grace to serve by grace*. That is, once we’ve been rescued from sin into a relationship w/ God, we become His workmanship created to serve others to God.

workmanship – His poem. We’re the creative genius of God – instruments in the hands of the Master Craftsman. As His hands/feet, we serve His will/plan.

Like our witness, ministry should be the result of the overflow of Jesus in me living thru me. IOW – if I’ve been rescued from sin and if I am living an abiding life, then it’ll show. **Consider the words of James.**

What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is w/out clothes and daily food. 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? In the same way, faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith w/out deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder. You fool, do you want evidence that faith w/out deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, his faith and actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. The scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see, a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. James 2:14-24

James was clear. He said, our faith, if it’s genuine, always results in service that meets people at the point of their need to point them to Jesus.

Yet far too many people see *service* as “**serve us.**” It isn’t about what they can give away, but only about what they can take. Meaning... serving is a choice!

I call this **BASIN Theology**. Do you remember what Pilate did when the occasion arose for him to acquit Jesus – he called for a basin of water and washed his hands of the situation. But Jesus, on the night he was betrayed by Judas and handed over to death, called for a basin of water and washed the feet of the disciples – including Judas. Basin theology. It asks – will you seek to serve to save others, or are you only concerned w/ saving yourself. ***Our mandate is to know Christ, abide in Him, and serve the world.***

God created us to be contributors – not consumers; givers – not takers. We’ve been created to make a difference. It doesn’t matter how long you live, but how you live. It’s not the duration of your life that matters, but the donation. *unknown*

II The **MODEL** of Serving John 13

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer robe, he sat down and said to them, "Do you realize what I've done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right b/c that's what I am. So, if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you must also wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you may do as I have done to you. John 13:12

A Jesus Took **INITIATIVE**

Jesus modeled that a servant doesn’t wait for others to do their part; they step up and do what needs to be done for the well-being of the others.

Understand the context. In this time, whenever someone hosted a dinner, there was often a person present to wash the feet of the guest as a sign of hospitality/respect. At the Last Supper, apparently, there was no such person. Even more, not one of the disciples even thought about serving everyone else.

So, wanting to teach the 12, Jesus grabbed a towel and a basin of water and went to work. He taught them that no matter who you are or think you are – putting others before yourself is your highest calling.

It was as if Jesus was saying that ***the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in service to others.***

B Jesus Modeled **HUMILITY**

In taking off His cloak to wash the disciple’s feet, Jesus was showing His disciples that the greatest trait of a leader/servant is humility. Humility is putting others before self. ***It’s seeing yourself honestly and not thinking more highly of yourself than you ought.*** In this instance, Jesus chose to perform a menial task reserved for slaves to make his point. Which according to **Philippians 2**, was His purpose for coming.

You must have the same attitude Jesus had. Though he was God, He did not think equality w/ God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; took the humble position of a servant and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.

If the Creator of the Universe humbled Himself by incarcerating Himself in flesh to lay down His life to give us life – if He was willing to wash the feet of His disciples – then what does that mean for us? It means that we don’t live for ourselves but for Him/others.

C Jesus Offered **GRACE**

Jesus also taught us that serving is about being willing to care for all people no matter the circumstances – including his enemies/critics. In washing the feet of the 12, we see that serving others requires grace.

Don't miss it. Not only did Jesus wash the feet of a doubting Thomas and an indignant Peter, He also washed the feet of His betrayer – Judas.

IOW – A person w/ a servant's heart holds no grudges and relishes the opportunity to shower grace on those who need it most. Why? B/c a servant serves. They serve b/c they're compelled, not b/c it is convenient.

LBH – It's not easy serving others to Jesus who'd spit in your face and just as soon hurt you. But a servant serves to introduce others to the One who served them to the point of death – b/c we're ***saved by grace to serve by grace.***

In closing, if you have an interest in discovering how God has wired you for serving His kingdom, send me an email or call my office, and I'll meet w/ you to help.

When Jesus comes into our lives, He doesn't seek to make us a sensation, He seeks to make us servants. He calls/gifts us to serve His kingdom. Therefore, we must choose this day who we're going to serve.

If this is true, then what I can assure you is God's plans are not just for someone else – His plans are for you.

He's the wisest man in the church, there is nothing he can't do. If you turn down your ministry, He'll be there to do it for you. He's also a very faithful member, and shows up right on time. If you don't honor your commitment, He'll cover you every time. He's obviously very wealthy, the plate is always passed his way. If you choose not to give a cent,

He'll all the expenses pay. Who is he? You may ask, this one with such acclaim? Thank God he's in every church, "Somebody Else" is his name.

God isn't looking for somebody else – He's not looking to the professionals – **God is looking for you.**