

I Will Serve

I WILL SERVE CHRIST

John 12:23-26

JANUARY 2, 2022 A.M.

HDBC

Being a Christ-follower is not complicated. It may not always be easy, and at times it may be unbearably painful. But it does not have to be complicated. We tend to make things more complex than they are.

Ask a group of chemists to describe water. They will tell you that a water molecule is made up of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, and it can be split into its constituent elements through electrolysis.

Ask a group of children about water and they will tell you it is something you drink when you are thirsty and play in on a hot summer day. Both answers are right.

The more you study the Bible the deeper your knowledge will go, but knowing what it means to follow Christ is simple. So, let's not make it complicated. There are three foundational, repeatable steps in the process of living as a Christ-follower.

Love God, Connect with Others, Serve the World

We **say**, **post** and **print** them often. But they are not just words.

They explain the process we use to lead people to become Christ-followers.

They define the expectations we have of each member of HDBC.

They determine the ministries, activities, events and programs we do.

In that simple statement of purpose there are three verbs. All are critically important for the Christ-follower.

Love defines our relationship with God and with others.

Connect defines our ongoing fellowship with other believers.

Serve defines our calling in this broken world.

As we enter a new year, I want to remind us of that calling. It is really easy to forget that calling and to lose our way as we drift in a culture that is driven by selfishness.

We are called to give ourselves in service. We were not saved to sit but to serve. We are not reserves waiting to see if we are needed. We are called to active service.

Serving does not come instinctively, for most people. Our tendency is to want to be served. We want to be served by others. Service is not something that will be automatic. Requires an intentional decision. The decision is not simply to change what we do, but to change how we think. Attitude and perspective are the key. This morning I want us to consider some of the most challenging words Jesus ever spoke. They challenge our selfishness. They challenge our natural way of thinking.

JOHN 12:23-26 (Read the text)

In verse 24 Jesus uses an interesting illustration to point out what many people miss. It is taken from common life experience. Most were farmers. Raised what they ate.

They knew about farming, so that is what he used to teach them. They understood that a seed has to be buried in the ground and die in order for it to be productive. Once it is allowed to die, it is reborn into something greater, better, superior. They all understood the picture. **The question is . . . What does it picture?** 3 things

1. Jesus' Death (23-24)

Note verse 23. This is a clear reference to his crucifixion. Rapidly approaching the time of His death. The grain of wheat, the seed, was a picture of Himself.

The disciples and followers of Christ would have done anything to prevent his death. He knew this. So, he is helping them to understand the importance of it. He was the grain of wheat that was to die and be buried, but which would produce great fruit.

Were He to remain alive with them, He would ultimately be alone, for in Heaven there would be no people. It was only through his death that we were able to be brought into His kingdom and family.

He was making a statement about the necessity of his impending death. It would be difficult and heart-breaking, but the ultimate result would make it worth it. He would die so that others might live.

2. Life Options (25)

Remember the truth. **For a seed to bear fruit it must die!** With that as a backdrop, notice the next words of Jesus. He points out that every person has a choice to make about life. The seed is a picture of your life. What will you do with it? **What can you do with a grain of wheat?** What can you do with a seed?

First Option: You can eat it and enjoy it for the moment. But then it is gone. If a person takes that option, the seed will have temporary value. It can sustain life for a short period of time. It can bring pleasure for a short period. But then it is gone.

Second Option: You can bury it in the ground and let it die. You can plant it. In that case it has no immediate value or pleasure. It will do nothing to sustain life in the moment. But in time, it will produce fruit that is many times greater. Through its death it produces new life that is far superior to the previous life.

In verse 25 Jesus points out two life options, which are illustrated by the seed. Every person must make a choice about his or her own life.

First Option: *Love your life.* Jesus is using extreme words of love and hate to prove a point. *Loving your life* is an indication that you will live for this life only, consuming your life in the here and now, with no concern for the future? Getting everything out of this life that you can for as long as you can. Like eating the grain. That is an option.

But there is a price to pay. If your entire focus is on this life you will have pleasure for a season, but you will lose your life for eternity. If you decide to consume your life on yourself, you will actually miss the best that life can offer. If we cling to our present life, indulging self at all cost, we will ultimately lose the very things we are seeking to keep. **What we cling to we will normally lose.**

Second Option: *Hate your life.* Again, Jesus is using extreme language to prove a point. In the first option you are placing all your focus on yourself in this present life. In this second option, you are willing to die to self with a view toward something that is in the future. Willing to die to selfishness and give up things in this life because there is something so much better. Realization that there is more than this life. More than what we see and touch and experience with our bodies and minds.

It will be costly in this life, but will bring great benefits in the future. Jesus says your rejection of self in this life will mean you gain eternal life. **What we let go of we will ultimately keep.**

This is a picture of **personal salvation**.

When a person comes to the realization that he cannot save himself and puts his complete trust in Christ, **he die to self and be born again**. No one comes into God's family without a willingness to let go of self and embrace Christ.

When I was 12 years old I decided that I wanted Jesus Christ to be the Lord of my life. I surrendered my will to His. I became a grain of wheat that died in order that the Lord might be able to bring new life into me.

Had I not chosen to do that, I would have remained alone, separated from the God who created me and I would have slipped off into a dark, dismal & agonizing place called Hell. I'm so glad that I was willing to die to self then, that I might live forever. **The seed is a picture of . . . Jesus' Death & Life Options**

3. Humble Service (26)

Verse 26 brings it into the context of service. As Jesus was willing to die and be buried those who serve Him must follow in His example. True servants are like the seed of wheat that is allowed to die. Only when we die to self are we ready to serve like Jesus served. Only when we are willing to die to self is our service really effective. The seed is a picture of a person who is **answering the call to serve**.

Throughout the NT we are taught to serve.

Jesus said that He came not to be served but to serve . . . and repeatedly we are called to "follow Him."

The night before his death Jesus washed his disciples feet, then challenged them to go and wash the feet of others. It was a call to serve.

In his letter to the Corinthians Paul makes it clear that God has given every believer spiritual gifts or abilities that are to be used in service.

James says faith without works is a dead faith. Service is a fruit of true faith.

We have been called to serve.

We have been gifted to serve.

We have been shown how to serve.

It is in dying to self that we are prepared to serve Christ.

What is this calling me to do?

1. Plant the Seed

The farmer has to decide what to do with the seed. Consume it in the present and enjoy it for a season or plant it in the ground and let it die, trusting a future harvest. The seed is only valuable when allow to die and be buried.

Your life is the seed. What will you do with it. Focus on self, pleasure, this life? Or give it all away for a greater life. Fall out of love with self and in love with Jesus.

2. Look to the Future

Fall out of love with the temporary and keep your eyes on the eternal. It will be a daily struggle. The culture will continue to draw you back toward selfishness. It is as if the seed, once buried, continues to be lured back to the surface by this world. Don't give in to that lure.

3. Start Serving.

Ask Jesus what He would have you do, every day. Yield to His will.

Find a ministry. Try something. Stop waiting. Serve Christ in some tangible way every day.

Show the Video "I have decided"