

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2024 EPIPHANY 5 "Ready to Serve"

Joshua 24:14-18 Luke 5:1-11

When you think of the word SERVE what do you imagine? This word is used in different contexts to describe an action. In the games of tennis, volleyball, or badminton the ball or birdie is served over the net to the opponents' area of play and they are supposed to hit it back. But to serve others food is the task of waiters. However what is often taught to young people is to be of service to others, that is to be ready to assist another and do what others ask.

In our reading from Joshua 24, we learn that Joshua a great leader who came after Moses has lead the people into the Promised Land. But the people are uncertain of what they are to do and know as they being their new life. Joshua makes it clear his intentions, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." What does this kind of serving mean? IT means that Joshua's family given the choices of following God or not, they will choose to follow God's path laid out for them. Each of us are also given choices but the choices we make not only make a difference in our lives as individuals, but also in the lives of those with whom we work, learn and spend time. Joshua makes it clear that he is going to serve God because God has lead his people to their own land. But there are other options. But what are those options? In today's thinking the other options are what we call the small gods of today- money, possessions, power. And like the people settling into the new land, they had to make choices—who to serve and why? Joshua was please when the people responded, "We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God."

Today we hear about poor customer service vs great customer service. You know when you are on hold for 25-30-40-50 minutes to end up with a response that is maybe 30s. Or when you have someone go beyond what is expected in order to make your day-there is a difference in how one serves another person.

But what does it mean to be ready to serve? Each of the youth have shared their promises and renewed them in our presence. These promises are what each beaver, cub, scout, spark, ember, guide, pathfinder, ranger and leader have said what they will do in order to do many tasks—from taking caring of the world to be true themselves, to do their duty to Canada, to help others and to be kind doing these. All these tasks are ways and means of serving one another. That is, assisting another person in doing something important.

Readiness for service involves gaining experience, showing others what it means to serve others. And it means giving of oneself for the sake of the needs for others.

Jesus was walking along the lakeshore one day and saw two boats; one of which belonged to Simon. The crowd of people was growing around Jesus. The fishers were washing their nets and so Jesus asked Simon to take the boat out into the water just off the shoreline so that Jesus' voice would be heard from the shore. SO Jesus was sitting in the boat and facing the beach as he taught. When he finished teaching he told Simon to go out further into the lake and put the nets out. Simon didn't want to; they had fished all night and caught nothing. But because it was Jesus, he did this. Soon the nets were full of fish and were breaking. Simon called the other boat's crew to help pick up the fish. The nets were emptied and the boats were full of fish.

Those present marvelled at the number of fish caught. Simon Peter fell down at Jesus' feet and said I am a sinful man—go away from me. But Jesus did not leave. He said to Simon, don't be afraid, from now on you will be catching people. As they came to shore, the fishermen left everything and followed Jesus. They were ready to serve Jesus.

How had they been made ready? They saw what Jesus had done—and believed. They experienced Jesus as the one who made the fish swim into the nets which were then caught and kept and eventually sold at market. Yet when they saw the fish, they knew they had experienced something amazing- they were ready to follow Jesus; they were ready to serve.

Each of no matter how old or young are ready to serve- whether it is to something easy or difficult each of us is called to do something. We are made ready for the tasks given because of learning, training, knowledge shared and this begins when we are young—like Sparks or Beavers or as children seeking to learn more about the world in which we live. Getting ready to serve takes one step at a time and this what we are grateful for—that these leaders are sharing their gifts with these young people so that they will be ready and willing to serve in all kinds of ways. As they learn and grow there is no limit to what they may do as people growing in leadership abilities.

When Jesus called Simon Peter, Andrew and James and John the disciples did not know how they were going to serve Jesus or serve others in Jesus name; they just did. We too need to be ready to serve, to answer Jesus' call and to know that you are not alone as you do this. Jesus guides us always. Thanks be to God.

PRAYER Holy God of love we ask for you blessing as we serve others in the way Jesus teaches- in love and with hope. We pray that you would enable us to grow in faith and in our abilities to serve one another. Call us o God for we are ready to serve with faith and hope. Amen.