

Thursday, June 11, 2020

**Servants of all**

**- Pastor Hank French**

*He asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:33-35).*

Jesus' disciples were so very human—imagine arguing with each other about who among them was the greatest while they plodded along the dusty roads of Galilee behind Jesus. Obviously, they were a bit embarrassed—and should have been—because, when Jesus asked them what they had been arguing about, they were silent. Then Jesus, matter-of-factly, said something extraordinary and completely countercultural: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

Interesting—I wonder how long it took them to figure out that, if they all became last and servant of all, then they all would be first. No need to compete for the position of #1. I have seen the reality of Jesus' unconventional thinking in every church I have served, most definitely including First Lutheran whose motto is "First.... Servants of All!"

So many times, I have seen women of the church prepare, serve, and clean up after funeral lunches to provide space for families and friends to grieve the loss of a loved one. They are "first," but I know they don't see themselves that way; they simply do what faith and love move them to do.

So many times, I have seen members of the church—all the way from our youth to our seniors—prepare a meal, serve a meal, visit with those who come to Share-a-Meal, and then clean up when the meal was over. And I have seen so many from other churches and civic organizations do the same. They are all "first," but I know they don't see themselves that way; they simply do what faith and love move them to do.

I have seen members of FLC make masks for others during this pandemic; I have seen the quilters and those who make prayer shawls using their gifts to comfort others; I have seen our people serve the homeless by supporting Oasis and serving at the Empty Bowls Fundraiser; I have seen our staff go the extra mile over and over again to keep the church serving our members and friends and community. They are all "first," simply doing what faith and love move them to do. I could go on and on and on! It is deeply humbling and inspiring. Visible signs of the kingdom of God.

As the Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr wrote: "If God operates as me, God operates as "thee" too, and the playing field is utterly leveled forever. Like Jesus, Francis, Clare, and many [others...] we then rush down instead of up. In the act of letting go and choosing to become servants, community can at last be possible. The illusory state of privilege just gets in the way of neighboring and basic human friendship. Richard Rohr.

Prayer: Jesus, servant of all, today may I "rush down instead of up." Amen.