

(John 1:43-51 NRSV) The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." {44} Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. {45} Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." {46} Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." {47} When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" {48} Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." {49} Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" {50} Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." {51} And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

There is an interesting commercial that I think fully captures the American Psyche. The tag line is "I want it all, I want it all --- and I want it Now!" Anybody know who that is for?

Value City Furniture.

Isn't that the message that we receive a thousand times a day.

Not only do I want it → but I deserve it!

This morning we conclude our series on the things that God wants us to HUNGER for.

During this season of Lent we have looked at a number of things that God desires us to hunger for.

Some of them → we hunger for, but often don't know how to get them into our lives.

Others → well others are things that we should hunger for, but thus far have not made them a priority.

We have looked at our hunger for:

- Relationships
- Justice
- Reconciliation

This morning we conclude by examining our hunger for service. Next week, Palm Sunday, we will look at the Way of Jesus and try to understand WHY Jesus came to Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday 2,000 years ago. And that will begin

for us our Holy Week celebration as we gather to remember the life and passion of Jesus.

The question this morning is:

Why do we volunteer, or hunger to serve our fellow human being?

It seems to me that we can easily identify two reasons.

Primarily because it is a part of the Judeo-Christian ethic.  
It is who we are called to be.

The scriptures are filled with references calling us to be servants. Let me just share a few.

Proverbs 11:24 (ESV)

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer;  
another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

Matthew 25:35 (NRSV)

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Luke 6:35 (The Message)

"I tell you, love your enemies. Help and give without expecting a return. You'll never—I promise—regret it. Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we're at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind.

Galatians 6:9-10 (The Message)

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.

(Colossians 3:12-17 NRSV)

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. {13} Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. {14} Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. {15} And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to

which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. {16} Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. {17} And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

#### 1 Peter 4:10 (The Message)

Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus

#### Galatians 5:13-14 (The Message)

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself.

Simply put: One of the cornerstones of being a follower of Jesus is to serve God and others!

A second reason, and one that is more pragmatic, is that it makes us better people.

Robert Grimm, of the Corporation for National and Community Service reported:

"A growing body of research demonstrates that volunteering and other community activities lead to better health, more happiness and greater prosperity in neighborhoods and states," Grimm said. "When people volunteer, they not only spread good will, they also solve tough problems and create tangible benefits for their communities. The evidence confirms that volunteering and high levels of civic participation are vital to a healthy society."

One of the interesting findings of the study that they conducted is the church is the primary place many people volunteer.

But the other interesting statistic that I found, is that being a Christian does not make you more likely to volunteer.

That finding is not only disturbing, I believe that it is a big problem today.

Being a Christian should instantly cause you to want to volunteer.

About ten years ago, Mel Gibson starred in a movie called *What Women Want*. Gibson plays a chauvinistic executive, who, after an accident, gains the ability to hear what women are really thinking.

He now is able to read their minds --- so he now knows what women, his natural prey, want.

He knew when to give flowers

    When to lean in close

        When to back off

He knew exactly what to say to get the reaction that he wanted.

He knew what women were thinking!

Most guys are sitting here this morning going --- I wish I could get me some of that!

The problem started, however, when he learned what women were thinking.

He could hear them think about what a jerk he was.

He could hear about their loneliness

When he actually started listening --- he changed

He didn't have to go to crazy extremes like talking about feelings during the Super Bowl, but it got close.

If we could hear what people outside the church say → if we would really listen → we would be as surprised and transformed as Mel Gibson was in *What Women Want*.

What we would hear is that most non-Christians think that the only thing we care about is ourselves.

    I know that it isn't true.

But we should be leading the way in terms of serving.

We should be the ones lighting the path to the others.

We should be the ones making sure the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed and the homeless have shelter.

But, as we all know, serving is hard.

We have so many demands against our time.

Our mission team is working hard to try and make mission opportunities accessible to you regardless of your age or ability.

They want to make sure that we can all get involved. If you are not sure how or where, give one of them a call.

But let me ask you a question:

**If I could give teach you one thing to do that would change your life would you do it?**

One easy step --- that is a life changer.

According to a study done by George Barna, 75% of the people who engaged in this activity reported that it changed their lives in some way.

That is pretty good odds,  
Yet only a small minority of Christians engage in this activity.

Barna notes that only 9% of Americans as a whole and 11% of Christians have participated. What his study showed was that most of those who have done this did it more than five years ago. He said that only 8 million of the 228 million adult residents of the United States have done this in the past five years.

Yet 75% of those who have done this said it changed their lives?

Do you want your life changed?

What am I talking about?

A short-term Mission trip

What was most fascinating to me from Barna's research was that:

"Some population subgroups were more likely than average to participate in short mission trips: adults under age 25, residents of the South and the West, college graduates, political conservatives, and people who are associated with a faith other than Christianity.

In contrast to evangelicals, residents of the Northeast, Catholics, and political liberals were among the least likely to go on service trips. One surprise from the study was that upscale adults were no more likely than downscale adults to have participated on a short-term service project."

Did you hear that → those most like to participate are: **“people who are associated with a faith other than Christianity.”**

It doesn't have to be a trip abroad --- to a place like Haiti --- but it certainly could be.

I know that my life has been molded by my experience as a youth participating in the Appalachian Service Project, then maybe by anything else.

Too this day, remember vividly the things that we did, and the ways that it impacted me.

Growing up, in the North Shore of Chicago, I had no idea that people lived the way that they did in Appalachia. And, I believed, if they lived that way it was because they were lazy . . .

Boy, I learned how wrong I could be.

Most of the people we helped were the working poor --- struggling to survive while working in the coal mines.

We worked on homes that had

- newspaper for insulation
- No running water in their homes and had to get their water from the creek down the way.
- outhouses

I became skilled at digging outhouses, and where to put them so that it doesn't pollute your water supply (believe me they didn't teach me that in my high school!)

I learned how to paint and patch tin roofs.

More than anything else: I learned that the people who lived in such horrible condition were just like me!

Do you want to change?

Last year I challenged everybody in this congregation to go on a mission trip in the next five years.

How's that plan coming along?

I understand that not everybody can do it, but virtually all of you can.

If you are serious → and want to participate, but feel that money is holding you back, come and see me.

We will find a way to make it happen!

For those of you who can't

Volunteer to help at LARRI or Children of Abraham, or any other service agency --- they can all use you regardless of your age or physical ability.

Let me leave you with a couple of final thoughts.

This past week we remembered the anniversary of the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King. In a sermon, he made this comment:

"Every now and then I think about my own death, and I think about my own funeral. ... Every now and then I ask myself, 'What is it that I want said?' I'd like somebody to mention that day, that Martin Luther King Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day, that Martin Luther King Jr., tried to love somebody."

Rev Willie Barrow, civil rights activist once said:

If you really want to be powerful, if you really want to be influential, then just serve.

May we all learn to HUNGER to serve, and in the process, change the world for Jesus.