Where Do We Go From Here? #4

**It’s Your Serve**

Dr. Marty Baker | Mark 10:35-45 | 8/28/16

 When I was 23 I was like a lot of you, I had big dreams. Patty and I graduated from college and we moved to Birmingham for graduate school at Samford University. While we were living in Birmingham, I had dream of starting a ministry for business leaders. Here’s the problem with that dream, I was 23 and my only business experience was working in the garden shop at Kmart.

 Around that time, the cutting-edge technology was satellite broadcasts and business leaders were using this medium to get their message out. It was during this season of my life that I learned of Zig Ziglar. He was one of the greatest motivational speakers of all time. In 1984, he launched a satellite Sunday School Class where he would teach business principles and the Bible.

 When I heard about this class, I knew that was for me. So naturally, Patty and I raised money and bought a satellite dish. It was one of the big ones …a 10 foot satellite dish. I rented a restaurant in Vestavia Hills and I put together a plan for a new ministry called, “The Success in Life Club.” I was 23. It had been less than a year that Patty and I lived in government-subsidized housing and was on food stamps. We were there, in the richest part of Birmingham, to start the “Success in Life Club.”

 As fate would have it, Zig Ziglar rented out the Birmingham-Jefferson County Civic Center for a Motivational Seminar. People came from all over. I could not afford tickets for this event, but I printed up fliers and put them on the cars in the parking lot. I also called Zig Ziglar’s office and talked to his secretary. I asked Zig to announce my new ministry. Well, he did.

 The following Sunday, I had 60 business leaders, real estate agents, bankers and so forth so up at Mr. Ghatti’s Pizza in Vestavia Hills. The Success in Life Club was born. I was 23. It took me six weeks to shrink that group of business leaders down to two people and I finally told them that it was over. The Success in Life Club officially went out of business.

 This was clearly a set-back, but in reality it was a set-up because God used this failure to teach me some principles that have helped me along the way. Looking back, I still remember some of the things that Zig Ziglar taught. He said,

*You will get all you want in life,*

*if you help enough other people get what they want.*

 Helping others, serving others, putting people first is a motivational concept that is actually rooted in the Bible. We see this in Mark 10. In this passage, Jesus uses a skirmish within his team to teach a lesson about servanthood and putting people first.

 This conflict developed when James and John tried to push their way to the top.

 James and John were brothers and like most brothers they were also competitive. They probably grew up racing each other, wrestling each other and arguing over who could catch the biggest fish each time they hopped into their fishing boat.

 Like most of us, they wanted to be on top whether they were competing against each other or competing against anyone else.

 History tells us that James and John probably came from a home that was relatively well-off. I like to think of them as the "millennials" of their day – they felt entitled with big dreams and little experience. So, it makes sense that they'd think to themselves, "We should ask Jesus to promote us! We're smart, we're awesome, and he'd appreciate our expertise." They were driven.

 There's nothing wrong with being driven. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be your best and there is certainly nothing wrong with boldly asking God for big things.

 The problem arises when we want those things more than we want God. Too often we see our identity in terms of a worldly ranking system. When we do this, we lose sight of the fact that our identity comes from God and not from our job title. When our ambitions blind us, we start seeing the people around us as competition instead of brothers and sisters we're called to love and serve.​ That’s what happened to James and John.

**Mark 10:35-45**

**35**Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

**36**“What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

**37**They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

**38**“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

**39**“We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,

**40** but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

**41**When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

**42**Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

**43**Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

**44**and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

**45**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

 Jesus used this whole scene to create a teaching opportunity. Their desire for "greatness" was a God-given desire, but they were going about it with the world's value system instead of God's. They were looking around at the Roman empire with all of its wealth and ranks and they wanted that kind of greatness. They wanted the titles and trinkets of worldly success. Jesus was offering them, and he offers us, a more enduring form of greatness. It's a greatness that any of us can achieve. It includes people and loves people instead of using people. It's a greatness that can only come through serving.

 In these verses, Jesus laid a foundation for Christian leadership. Jesus said the exact opposite of what the world says as what a real leader is. In the world, you build a pyramid and you climb to the top. But Jesus said, “No, he who serves best leads best.” Servanthood is leadership. Some people struggle with the concept of serving.  *If serving is below you, then leadership is beyond you.* The better you serve the more God raises you up to leadership.

 Leadership is not a matter of getting people to serve your interests. Leadership is a matter of serving the best interests of others. Jesus said, If you want to be great, you learn to be the servant of all.

God is much more interested in ***why*** you do what you do than He is interested in what you do.

 Jesus came to serve. He calls us to do the same. We will never change the world by playing by their broken rules. We're representing a kingdom that is not of this world and unlike the world, God's kingdom will endure forever.

 James and John learned that lesson. They decided to go **all-in for Jesus**. They gave their lives for the cause. James became the first apostle martyred for his faith and John endured many hardships before being exiled on an island in his old age where he wrote the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Both of these men gave their lives serving others as a reflection of their faith and love for Jesus.

 As a result, we esteem them as heroes two thousand years later. We name our sons "James" and "John." Had they pursued worldly greatness, their names would have been quickly forgotten, but because they served in obedience to Jesus, they are part of a kingdom and a greatness that will never end. You can be great too if you're willing to trust God's plan instead of your own. You've got to be willing to build His kingdom instead of your own.

Here’s the big idea for today: **When people start to serve, God works.**

**Here at Stevens Creek Church, I believe that serving God can be modeled by doing these five things.**

**1.     Give God the first day of your week.**

            You serve Christ by showing up. Make a commitment to attend one service a week. There is something special about Sunday. It is not like any other day of the week. In the Old Testament, the people worship on Saturday, the Sabbath. That’s why one of the Ten Commandments says, “Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.” After Jesus was crucified, he rose from the grave on Sunday. The early church changed their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday and they called Sunday, “The Lord’s Day.” In the future, we may have services on Saturday and Sunday to accommodate the congregation, so my point is that you need a day set aside for worship. This is the day that we gather from all over the region to worship, to learn and to connect with one another.  Give God the first day of you week.

**2.     Give God the first part of your day.**

 We are responsible for our own spiritual growth. I want to encourage you to carve out time.  Give God the first part of your day. Carve out time for prayer, scripture and reflection. Learn to listen to his voice.

[**John 10:27**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A27&version=NIV)

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

**3.      Give God the first part of your pay.**

The Bible teaches us that God gives us the ability to create wealth.

**Deuteronomy 8:18**

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

When we give to the Lord’s work, we are saying “Thank you” for financially providing for our needs.

**Proverbs 3:9**

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops;

Notice the word “first-fruits” … that’s why we say the first part of your pay. Malachi re-enforces the concept of giving by saying:

**Malachi 3:10-12**

**10** Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

**11** I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty.

**12** “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

We return the tithe to the Lord and he promises to take care of us. I have seen his provision in my life over and over. We serve Christ by investing our money in His work.

**4. Give God your relationships.**

 Get connected with people of faith. Join a small group. When you join a small group, you will develop close relationships with other believers who will walk beside in this journey. We all need friends. We were made for community. Over the years, we have seen that life change happens best in the context of community. Small groups will help you understand the Bible better through group discussion, and you will be able to apply it to your own personal situations. You will find answers to the needs in your life through group prayer. You will get support in times of crisis from people who really care for you. You will be able to demonstrate to your lost friends the love of Jesus in a non-church setting.

 If you are not in a small group, this Wednesday night is Connect night. Be here at 7:00 PM. It will model what a typical small group will look like and it will help you get connected to one. If you can’t be here Wednesday night, you can stop by the welcome center and talk to someone in a purple shirt. You can go to StevensCreekChurch.com and sign up. Don’t miss this opportunity.

**5.     Give God your talents and gifts for a greater good.**

 You are made for a mission. I believe that you can be great in the kingdom of God by serving Christ and his Church. I realize that many of you look around the church and you think that everything is covered. It’s not. We need your help. Stevens Creek Church is a volunteer-intensive organization. It takes around 750 adult volunteers every week to do the work of the ministry. Right now we need 250 new volunteers…175 here at the Augusta Campus and 75 at the Southpoint Campus. To be specific: Creek Kids needs at least 25 new volunteers by the end of September. We need around 30 volunteers on the Data and Tech teams. We need 22 on the parking team to cover morning and night. We need another 20 between Volunteer Center and Check-in. We also need volunteers for Monday night and Wednesday nights. I realize that this is a lot so stop by the Next Step Center and there will be people that can help or email **NextStep@stevenscreekchurch.com**.

 When you serve, I believe that you will experience the Presence of the Lord in a significant way. You will help people find hope. People need the Lord and you are there to help them take their next step.

 Think about it this way. Can you imagine that **single Mom with three kids** walking through the front door for the first time? She never planned on doing this alone, but ultimately it was not her call. Now, she carries the burden of being a Mom, a Dad and a breadwinner at the same time. As she walks through the front door, there are **friendly greeters** who are willing to ***serve*** her and help her check her kids in. Then, they point her to the sanctuary where she hears music that touches her soul and a message that gives her strength for the week.

 Can you imagine that **young college student** that has been inundated with secular philosphy and a liberal world view yet they feel like something is missing? Intrinsically, they know that these ideas do not add up. We will ***serve them*** by presenting ***the truth of God’s word and helping them take their next step.*** That’s why we are here.

 We are here to ***serve*** that **40 year old over-achiever** that has already accomplished more than his or her parents combined, yet they wonder why they were placed on this earth. They struggle with their life’s purpose.

 We are here to serve the **military folks** that are separated from their extended families and they need a place to call home. They need a spiritual family. We want to be that spiritual family. We have an opportunity to join with God in his work in our community. Now is the time. We must do our part. God wants us to be willing to say, “Here's my ability. Here's my time. Here's my money. Here's my life.”

 **So many of us are waiting for God to do something for us while God is waiting to do something through us.**

 God wants to use you to make a difference in His work and in His world. God wants to do **greater** things through you and me.

Are you willing to take that step? **Are you willing to serve?** We have to be willing.

 I’m asking you to get out of the bleachers, roll up your sleeves, discover your spiritual gift, and serve. You can join a worship team, point a camera, hold a baby, greet a guest, host a group, park a car or offer a prayer. I want you to serve. Here’s another way, take out your worship guide. On the bottom of the worship guide is a connect card. I want you to fill it out. At the top write, ***I want to serve.*** **When people start to serve, God works.**

 There are lost people who are looking for a way out. There are children who need to be loved. There are students who need somebody to cheer them on. **Has anybody noticed it's getting harder to be a teenager these days?** The Bible says,

**Psalm 78:4,7**

**4**…We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.
**7**Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

 The next generation needs somebody who loves them enough to let them know about this God who would take care of them. It's a strange thing. **You experience God when you serve … in a way you never will if you just watch.**

 So if you're willing to find out more about serving (this doesn't commit you to anything yet), I'm asking you to sign your real name and contact info, and then make plans to attend the Next Step Class. Then when we receive the offering at the end of the service, put the connect card in the offering bag.

 This is not a push for volunteers, this is a push to impact the next generation. Are we, Stevens Creek Church - a church that God has richly blessed, going to be part of a movement to roll back a sweeping tide of the secular progressives and unleash the message of hope, peace and forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ?

 Will we be part of a movement to tell the children, grandchildren, and friends we love, and from there all around the world about him? And are you going to be a part of that?

 Here's what I believe. I believe the best is yet to come. I believe our God stands ready to pour out ***greater*** blessings than we have yet seen.

**John 14:12**

**12**I tell you the truth, anyone who has **faith** in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even **greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father.

**Closing Comments**

When you boil it all down, you can do two things with your life. You can waste it or you can invest it.  Don’t waste your life.

              One day you’re going to stand before God and He’s is going to ask you two questions. This is your final exam per se.

The first question is: **Why should I let you into heaven?** The answer to that question is that you have trusted Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

The second question is: **“What did you do with what I gave you?** This is a question of stewardship.

 This life is a test. You’re being tested and God is seeing what kind of faithfulness you have. You’re going to spend far more time on that side of eternity than you do in the years you’re here. How you spend your time here is going to determine what’s going to be done with you in the next life for eternity.

Someday I want to stand before Jesus Christ and I want to hear Him say, **“Well done thou good and faithful servant**. You were not perfect, but you did your best. You gave it your best shot. You tried to make your life count for Christ. You gave it away. You had mistakes and bloopers and did all kinds of things that were worthless, but you gave it your best shot”

 At that point, when Jesus says, “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” it will be worth it all.

**Prayer**