

Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
September 4, 2011
Labor Day

“Labor of Love”
Mark 10:45

A snickers bar for the first person who can tell me what this acronym stands for?

FLSA. Very good. The Fair Labor Standards Act. The Fair Labor Standards Act was enacted by the US Government in 1938 to solve labor problems rampant in this country at that time. For example, back then it was not uncommon to find young children working basically as slave labor in filthy factories. Reformers for years had been fighting to protect the youngest Americans for unsafe and abusive work situations. The FLSA limited child labor and also defined the 40-hour work-week and mandated over-time pay. The law did much to improve working condition in this country and has been largely unchanged over the past 73 years.

If you have traveled to other countries, you understand that such protection for children and workers is not universal. Though certainly not perfect, there is much to give thanks to God for, on this Labor Day weekend.

But let me use that introduce to move us to consider the worker in the church. Who are the workers in the church? And how well do we treat them? Do we tend to abuse them, overlook them, burn them out? Or do we properly appreciate and value them – protect them. What regulates our labor for the Lord? More personally - as workers in the church yourselves, how do you view your work? Do you have a positive or negative attitude? What type of work do you enjoy or not enjoy? What are the most important jobs in the church?

Are you eager to work in the ministry of the local church? Or do you long for spiritual retirement?

SERVANTS OF GOD

Let's start with an easy point. Workers in the church are called servants. "Servant" is a word used in both the Old and New Testaments. John MacArthur has just written a book reminding the church that the word "servant" nearly always means "slave" which is fine, but there is nothing wrong with the word servant, either. We will talk more about what a servant is a little bit later, but for now I want to point out the profound truth that in our culture and society (regardless of how you define it) **a servant is not a valued position.**

A large family was at a restaurant. They kept demanding this and that. Their kids were loud and left a mess. The waiter finally said, "I may be your server, I am not your servant." To be considered someone servant is just about the worst thing that could happen to you, even when you are one.

A friend of mine from seminary worked at the seminary as a custodian. He emptied garbage cans to help pay for school. He told me something I have never forgotten. He said: "As a student people greet me and respect me. But when I put on my custodian uniform, the same people who greeted me before, don't see me. They see I am a servant and they ignore me."

The main labor problem we have, for which we need reform, is that we have a low view of servanthood. We need to elevate and change our view, because to be a servant, is God's highest calling.

Let's see what the Scriptures say about the value of servants. The title "Servant of the LORD" was reserved only for a few people. Only the most faithful to God. And it was given only after a lifetime of ministry. You had to prove your worthiness as a servant. For example, the first time the phrase, "Servant of the LORD is given" is in Deuteronomy 34:5, at the end of Moses' life [Deut. 34:5](#) **So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.** After Moses' death he is almost always referred to as the "Servant of the LORD." But not before.

Joshua, as the new leader of Israel is referred to as the Son of Nun, as Moses' servant as a leader and a general, The first time he is referred to as "Servant of the LORD" is in [Josh. 24:29](#) **It came about after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old.** He is esteemed and honored as "Servant of the Lord". He receives the esteemed title only after a lifetime of service. He is only the second person in the Bible to have this title.

The Roman Catholic Church only refers to someone as "Servant of God" after they are dead – as one of their highest honors for a life well lived. It is the first designation on the way to sainthood. I think they have it right.

The highest complement someone can pay you at your funeral, when this short life is over is to say: "She was a true servant of the Lord. He was a true servant of the Lord." That you and I set aside our own agenda and life, and did whatever it was God asked us to do, in our families, at our workplace, in the church.

When we stand before God, very soon, in heaven. What is it that we hope to hear? We hope that our life will be counted worthy so as to hear those words: **"Well done my good and faithful – SERVANT (Matt 25:21)"**

There is no greater disparity of values between the world and the kingdom

The world says a servant is nothing.

The Bible says a servant is everything.

Which will you believe?

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SERVANT

Well, what is a servant? Let's turn our attention now to defining what biblical service is. In Scripture there are three primary characteristics you must possess if you want to be considered to hold this elevated title.

A Servant IS HUMBLE

The first characteristic of a servant is humility. A servant is humble. You cannot serve without being humble – at least not in a way that is pleasing to God. By definition, a servant submits to others, and prideful people have a very hard time submitting. Jesus tried to teach this to his disciples in Mark 10: [Mark 10:42](#) You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. [Mark 10:43](#) “But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; [Mark 10:44](#) and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. [Mark 10:45](#) “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Great teaching but hard to apply, as James and John argued who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. Peter, not to be outdone, boasted that he was the strongest of them all. To hold the esteemed title of servant you must be humble.

The boxing promoter Don King said, "I never cease to amaze myself. I say this humbly." Author Edith Sitwell said, "I have often wished to cultivate modesty, but I am too busy thinking about myself." Former Texas Governor candidate Kinky Friedman said, "If you have the choice between humble and cocky - go with cocky. There's always time to be humble later, once you've been proven horrendously and irrevocably wrong."

The road of humility is indeed the road less traveled. But the first characteristic of a biblical servant is that he or she is humble.

A Servant WORKS HARD

First - a servant is humble. Second, a servant works hard. A servant is a worker bee - a doer, someone who rolls up their sleeves and puts their hand to the plow. We don't serve hypothetically, but actually. Paul said: [Col. 3:23](#) **Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, [Col. 3:24](#) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.**

Jesus is the boss, we are his servants, and he has a list of things for you this day, this week, this year - will you do them? Heartily? With enthusiasm?

When our church added a new Deacon Board several months ago, I pointed out that the word Deacon literally means "servant." There are tasks that need to be done. In the New Testament we read that work needed to be done to care for the widows; worship services had to be prepared; offerings collected for the poor. There were strangers to be

fed, feet to be washed and prisoners to be visited. Deacons cared for the poor. Teachers prepared lessons. Scribes wrote letters. Disciples healed, preached, cast out demons and bought groceries. Paul made tents.

Have you heard of the Puritan Work Ethic? It is now largely gone, and I fear that some of us, myself included, don't really know what it means to work hard especially in the local church. A professor in seminary said that the previous generation gave three hours a week to the church, Sunday morning, evening and Wednesday night, but today, he said, research shows that most Christians are willing to only give three hours a month.

But a biblical servant is a hard worker, doing what God has called him to do. The Rev Martin Luther King, Jr knew how to mobilize people in the church. Here is how he put it. He said: "If a man is called a streetsweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and Earth will pause to say, Here lived a great streetsweeper who did his job well."

What has God called you to do, as His servant? Be humble enough to do it. Be diligent enough to do it well.

A Servant SACRIFICES

A servant is humble. A servant works hard. Third, a servant sacrifices. Think for a moment about our church. Planting a church is not easy work, and it has required great sacrifice. Some of you given up so much – hours and hours of your time for this church. You give up time with your wives or husbands, time with your children, time building your career or business. You have given generously. You have worked through conflict and compromised for the sake of unity. You have given up the opportunity for programs and

resources of a larger church. If you have ever wondered whether your sacrifice has been worth it – let me affirm - God is pleased with your sacrifice. To sacrifice for the Bride of Christ, is a worthy offering to God!

Now if you spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars on golf, video games, travel or a thousand other hobbies – those may be good things, but I cannot guarantee there will be any eternal consequence to them. But sacrifice to God, for His church is an eternal investment.

The disciples gave up so much to follow Christ and later to grow the Kingdom. Peter said, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You” Mark 10:28. And Jesus assured them, and all those who have sacrificed for the Kingdom, “he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:30).

Jesus expects his followers to sacrifice for Him – and he promises it will be worth it. He gives himself as our example. [Phil. 2:7](#) ...Taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. [Phil. 2:8](#) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And then God exalted Him. Servants sacrifice: [Rom. 12:1](#) Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*.

Being a servant leader is the highest calling in the Bible.
It requires being humble, hard work and sacrifice.

APPLICATION

How can we apply this in our church? How can we make this a spiritual “Labor Day” at LCCC?

1) First – Memorize Mark 10:45

We have been doing a little more Scripture memory this summer, and let me encourage you to continue with the Bible’s #1 key verse on servanthood, Mark 10:45. If you do not have this verse memorized, please do so. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. All three parts of my sermon are in this verse.

Jesus came, not to be served – HUMILITY.

But to serve – HARD WORK

And to give his life a ransom for many – SACRIFICE.

HUMILITY, HARD WORK AND SACRIFICE. It is all right there in this verse. How to live the Christian life. If you already have this verse committed to memory – then my challenge is for you to meditate upon it. What does it really mean for us to be like Jesus as a servant?

2) Seek Low Places

Second – seek to serve in low places. In the Bible, the lower the task, the higher the honor. God calls some to be teachers, prophets, etc., and that is fine, but God is especially honored by those who are willing to engage in the unrecognized and unthanked jobs of ministry. Continually, Jesus said the servant is the great one in the Kingdom. All service is valuable, but on the very night he was going to be betrayed, he took a towel, wrapped it

around his waste and washed the disciples feet. “No Lord!” said Peter. This task is too low for you – get someone else to do it. But Jesus said if you do not let me serve like this, live like this - you have no part with me.

I am so thankful for public roles of ministry – teaching, preaching, leading communion, but those are not usually the hard ministries to fill. Remember that God has a special place in his heart for those who faithfully serve without recognition.

Let me give you an illustration. How many of you ladies have been in a bridal party? It is a great honor, and your job is to take care of the Bride – most of your work is done in private, helping with the dress, the hair. Perhaps spending time in prayer and encouragement. Sure there is the moment of glory in the wedding, but most of the work is done behind the scenes.

In the same way – we are all attendants to the Bride of Christ, the church. We will have our moments of glory – but that is not what drives us. Rather we are driven by our love of the Bride – to prepare her for her groom.

Conclusion:

The FLSA – Fair Labor Standards Act is one of many laws that governs modern employees in the workplace. In the church it is: Faithful Love Serving All! Our desire should be to be a Servant of God. There is no higher honor. A servant is Humble. Hard Working. Sacrificing our lives gladly for the Kingdom - like Jesus did - Mark 10:45 – memorize it – we will check on it next week. And we serve actually not hypothetically. The lower the task, the higher the honor – because we serve the beloved the Bride of Christ – the Church. Let’s pray.