



This is the second of three Sunday Sermons which are reminding church members and informing newcomers of our Church Vision: here at St Paul's we aim to become a "Growing Community of Grace". We will find that building such a community requires us secondly to SERVE. Read 1 Peter 4 : 7 – 11.

The art of 'Good Serving'

- Anyone who has been to America will have experienced the great customer service on offer there:
 - a) Americans are prepared to meet the needs of their clients even if it costs them time and trouble.
 - b) They genuinely get real satisfaction from serving their clients well.
- It is a joy to receive such service too, and so it should be in a church – in our church.
- Peter tells us to **love, host and serve** each other – three things at the heart of all good relationships. Sacrificial love takes up our time, energy and resources. It's costly, but it is the lifeblood of the church

Called to be a Servant (verses 8-10)

- In the society Peter was addressing, the great ambition was to achieve the status of a Roman citizen. That gave you legal rights and an enviable social standing, above that of most people. But Peter says:
- Service is an **Ambition**: The Greek word used for 'servant' is *diakonos* which is different from *doulos*, a slave. It's less about poverty and more about rights. Jesus calls us to alter our ambitions towards becoming a servant: to surrender our sense of our 'rights' and our innate need for status and power.
- Service is a **Ministry**: *Diakonos* can also be translated 'Minister'. Jesus demonstrated that it is only by serving others that we can be used as His agents in the realisation of the Kingdom of God. Those who serve on any of the teams at St Paul's are doing more than a job – they are engaging in ministry.
- Service is an **Imperative** for building a healthy household of God – the church. First century Christians are forming a new community, a new household (**1 Pet. 2:4-5**) built on radical loving, hosting and serving each other, where hierarchy and status don't count. In a community of grace we are all equal and all are servants for each other. We all had a J-cloth to remind us of **John 13: 12–17**.

How do we become Good Servants? (verses 10-11)

- Everyone has at least one gift from God. Peter picks out just two but emphasises how a gift for speaking must acknowledge that the words come from God and a gift for serving must be done in God's strength alone. We are stewards of God's treasure: His 'magnificently varied grace'. (*J B Phillips*)
- Don't be a bad steward who makes excuses: 'I haven't got a gift X would be better than me I'd rather do something else I'm not needed I'm too shy I haven't been asked I'm too busy ...
- A good steward knows how God has gifted them to serve and humbly finds a place for it to be used. They have the joy of serving the purposes of God as he reconciles the world to Himself.
- We have 200 people serving in 70 different serving teams at St Paul's, but there are 300 others who we would like to help discover their gift and find their place of service. There are a number of initiatives to help this term from two Sunday eve. videos, 'Just Try' Mondays and 4 weeks of a 'Serving marketplace' throughout October Sunday mornings showcasing what all the teams do.

Last week we explored connecting – with God and each other. Connecting is an infinite eternal calling. Serving is finite – see **v.7**. The end to hunger, loneliness and grief is coming: serving will be irrelevant. Jesus will return, creation will be renewed, the old order of things will pass away. **1 Corinthians 2: 9**. Meanwhile, our passion, our vision is to serve the purposes of God here and now.

Questions for discussion

- 1 What quality of love should Christians have for each other? What attitude toward guests? How should we serve?***
- 2 Have we ever thought of service as an ambition? ('What do you want to be when you grow up?' 'A servant')***
- 3 Can you think of some of the 70 ministries that are on-going at St Paul's? Which new one would you like to try?***
- 4 Are we guilty of making excuses? Has anyone a story to share of how they discovered their gift?***
- 5 Are we willing to explore the Ministries Market Stalls and see if God is prompting us to spread our wings?***