

Introduction

Good morning. If you have a Bible and I hope that you do, I want to ask you to take it out and turn with me to the book of John chapter 13, stick your finger there, and then also have a thumb in 1 Peter chapter 4. We will be going back and forth between two different passages of Scripture. Let's pray and we will jump into it.

"Father, we are so grateful for what You are always doing in and among us. God, we can never ever take it for granted. I don't know that we can ever fully understand it, but Lord, for whatever reason, You chose to love us, pursue us, and serve us through your Son Jesus Christ. Thank you for that, Lord. God, I also don't know that I can ever fully comprehend it, but for some reason You decided that I was worthy of being called a child. You brought me into your family. Thank you for that. Lord, I don't know what's happening in this room right now. There are a lot of different hearts, and from a human perspective, I could never effectively minister to all of these people, but Lord, your Holy Spirit can and your Word can. So, God I pray that your Word, through your Holy Spirit, would minister to every hurting heart in this room. Whatever loss or brokenness or difficulty or struggle that they are walking through, God, I pray that You would touch them individually so that they know this. God, I pray that they would feel your presence, that they would hear from You. God, I pray that they would not be distracted but that they would hear from your Holy Spirit today. Correct us, Lord; teach us. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

John chapter 13. What's happening in this chapter? Well, they are about to eat the Passover together, Jesus and his disciples. Peter is there. Peter is that guy that we have been studying, looking at the different callings that are on our lives, and there's Jesus about to eat with Peter. Now, this is an important episode, and we can't sometimes understand it. In our day, if we have people over for dinner we sit at a table. What's the table like? Well, we sit in a chair that's about this high, and the table is about this high. But in the ancient world, they didn't have chairs. It's kind of odd but they didn't. Everyone sat around a table, they reclined at pillows. So, in fact, whenever you read in the Bible, you will often see that people are reclining at the table. What are they doing? Whenever you had guests over, you would lay around the table because the table was about this tall. This was fine unless your feet were in my face (Laughter), then things could get a little dicey. So therefore there was always a household servant whose job it was to wash the feet of the people who were coming over for dinner. People wore sandals. They went wherever they went by walking, most of the time. So when it was time them to eat, even those who had bathed the day before, their feet needed to be washed, particularly before a meal like the Passover because the Passover was this massive ceremonial, important meal. It was vital that everyone would be clean in this particular circumstance. For whatever reason, there didn't appear to be a household servant on duty that night. Whether that was intentional on the part of Jesus or whether Jesus simply saw this as an opportunity to teach, we don't really know. But in that moment, at that point of no servant being around, this is what happened in John 13:3: *"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, do You wash my feet?' Jesus answered him, 'What I am doing, you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.' Peter said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no share with Me.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'The one who has bathed does not need to wash except for his feet but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.' For He knew who was to betray Him; that was why He said, 'Not all of you are clean.'* When He had washed their feet and put on his outer garments

and resumed his place, He said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and your Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do, just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.'"

Jesus washed their feet. He got up, He wrapped a towel around his waist, He filled a basin with water and He washed their feet. It's an important lesson, don't you think? Do we get it? Do we understand the example that He says in verse 15: "I have given you an example. In fact, you are not greater than Me. I am your Teacher and your Lord, and if you want to obey Me, follow me, exemplify me. If you want to do these things, let Me tell you what you have to do. You now have to go and you have to wash the feet of the people around you. You have to be a foot washer."

Pride leads us to refuse to serve. (v.3)

Why don't we serve more often? I've been thinking about that a lot this week. The fact that once we are called into a relationship with God, one of the pieces of being called, of being formed, is that we start to serve in the same way that Jesus serves. I think one of the reasons that we don't serve is because we are prideful. So what's pride? Well, there's a lot of different ways that we could define pride, but I really think that one of the best definitions for pride would probably go something like this... pride is this: "Pride is believing that my feelings, my time, my opinions, my ideas, they are more important than the feelings, ideas, time, or opinion of those who are around me. Let me say that again. Pride is believing that my feelings, my opinions, my ideas, and my time is more important than the feelings, ideas, time, or opinion of those who are around me. I begin to elevate myself, my feelings, my things, and my needs higher than those who are surrounding me, and as a result, I refuse to serve them. So Jesus looks around and He sees none of these jokers are going to wash the feet. I mean, there's no servant here. There is no one coming around and so what does He do? He says, "I'm going to show them something." So, He gets up and He begins to wash. Why don't you and I serve more often? I think that most of us, whenever we are prideful, do you know what we do? We see the world as a pyramid or a hierarchy of some sort, or maybe as a ladder, and this is basically our thought: "The higher up that you are in the pyramid or the hierarchy or the ladder, the better you are, and if I'm up really high, then everyone down below me will serve me." Right? So, the goal of life for most people is simply this: Get as high in the ladder or as high in the hierarchy as I possibly can. The goal in life is to have as many people as possible serving me and for me to be serving as few people as I possibly have to, because if I'm serving someone that means that they are more important than me. But Jesus turns that on its head, doesn't He, because He's way more important, way more significant than the disciples yet He chooses to wash their feet. Pride prevents us from serving because many of us believe, either subtly or explicitly, "I don't want to have to make people think that they are on a higher rung than I am. I don't want to serve them." Think about it. Do you ever go to a restaurant and maybe it's the first time you've been to this restaurant and there sometimes comes this awkward moment where people will say this: "Do we clear the table ourselves, or do they come do it for you?" Has anybody ever said this before? Four of you. (Laughter) That's good. I'm sorry the rest of you have never gone out to eat but that's alright; maybe one day you will get to do that. I seriously have had this kind of conversation with people. It's funny. Maybe I have said these words...maybe you have. I've heard these words said before: "Don't worry about it; somebody else will get it; that's not my job." Right? "It's not my job." Pride loves to say, "Somebody else will get it; that's not my job." I bet that that night when the disciples were gathered together for the Passover and whenever people were looking around to see, "Is anyone going to wash feet?" I guarantee you someone thought in their mind, "Well, that ain't my job, so I'm not going to

do it." I wonder how they felt when Jesus got up and started putting water in the basin. "Ahhh... failed." But there is that sense inside of us, when many of us believe that "It's not my job"... Now I know some of you right now, "Steve, you don't understand. If I start serving the people that I work with, I'll get run over. I'll be manipulated. There will be all kinds of problems." Okay; do you know what? Maybe you're right. I don't know. I don't work where you work, but I would just say this... Many of us, I think, use pride as an excuse to prevent from serving, and as a result we find ourselves never serving, period. You see, pride begins to build us up and we begin to say, "I am too important, I am too significant to serve the people around me" because pride is when we begin to view people around us as objects or as problems to solve. We stop viewing them as people created in the image of God who are to be loved. You see, "I don't want to serve someone if I view them as someone who's going to help me get my job done." But what if they are simply someone who needs to be loved because they are human? Maybe I should serve them."

You know, Paul talked about this in Romans 12:3; he says, *"...I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think."* There comes this moment now when Jesus gets up and He starts washing the feet. You can kind of feel the embarrassment in the room. People are like, "Man, I can't believe this is happening." He gets to Peter. God bless Peter. I mean, this guy... He reminds me so much of myself. He's the "stand up and say things before he thinks" guy. Peter stands up and he says, "No, Lord; You will never wash my feet." You know, some of us, this is a word that we need to hear today. Some of us, we struggle with pride, but it's a different kind of pride.

Pride leads us to reject the service of others. (v. 4)

A lot of times, in my profession, I will find myself making phone calls that go something like this: "Hey, we heard that you had such-and-such of a need... someone died or you had a baby in your family or someone has a severe illness, or something like that... and I'll often say these words, "Is there any way that we could serve you as a church family?" Now sometimes I hear these words, "Our Life Group is taking good care of us. We have friends and we have family here." But do you know what I hear 90% of the time whenever I say, "Could we do anything to serve you?" You already know because you have said it yourself... you bunch of guilty people. I see it all over your face. What do you say? "No, we're good. I got it." You've got nothing... (Laughter) ...but you say it anyway. Why? I don't know if it is a Texas thing or a Christian thing or just a human thing, but you know what it is? We begin to put out this view, "I don't need anyone to serve me."

One time I was working in a little church in a town out in east Texas, and one night a massive storm moved through the area. I mean, it was a big one. Power was getting knocked out all over the area. In fact, Ben at the time was probably two or three. He woke up and we didn't have any power in the house. Joy was still sleeping. The storm had kept her up through the night, so I thought, "Hey, you know what? I'm going to win the father of the year and husband of the year award. I'm going to take my kid out to eat." Well, of course, if I would have thought about the fact and realized that there was no power at any of the restaurants in town either, so I had to drive to an entirely different town to take him out to eat. So we go to this local café. We sit down at the café in this little town, and there's a man from our church that's there. He worked for the local electrical co-op, and he was on call. He had been up all night long. He had been restoring power to homes whose power had been knocked out, so he had been restoring these fallen electrical lines all night long. We talked for just a little bit. We get to the end of the meal, and I was sitting there talking with Ben. Ben had pancakes and bacon and all this kind of stuff. We get to the end of the meal, and I'm just sitting there chatting with him and asked the server, "Hey, would you please bring me my check?" She said, "Actually, someone has already paid for your breakfast." I kind of look around and there's only one person in this room that I know. It's this guy. His name is Paul... Paul Comacho. So I say,

"Okay, that's fine. You bring me his ticket, and I am going to pay for his breakfast." So, she brings it over to me. A couple of minutes later, before I could pay her, Paul walks up and he stands next to my table and he says, "I can't let you pay for my breakfast." I say, "Why not? You bought my breakfast, and I'm going to pay for yours." He says, "Because if you pay for my breakfast then you rob me the joy of blessing you." "What?" "Steve, you don't want me to serve you right now, but you're going to let me serve you whether you want to or not." How many of us refuse to be served because secretly we say, "Oh, I'm good; I don't need anything." But do you know what we are really saying? "I'm too proud to receive your service." How can the church be a group of people that washes one another's feet and serves one another if we never allow people to serve us?

I'm looking out here to the back, and I see my friend Basa. Basa, will you come up here? He's like, "Dang it... I can't believe this is happening." (Clapping) Alright. This is my friend Basa. For those of you who don't know Basa, Basa works at the Y right across the way. We have become friends. "Basa, did you know I was going to ask you to come up here?" No, you did not. Alright. That's good. So I want to ask you, "Would you just come and sit right here on this stool for just a second?" (Laughter) So this is my friend Basa. Basa encourages me on a regular basis. For those of you that are in this worship service, Basa is the guy that gets us fired up. He likes to clap for us and this kind of stuff. Yeah, I love this guy. (Clapping) "So, Basa, would you allow me right now to wash your feet?" "Sure." "So, I'm going to take off your shoes. No, you just sit there. I've got it. He has a bad leg. Alright. So I'm going to take this off, alright? No guarantees that I can get your socks back on, but I'm going to take them off. No. You can't do anything. I know... it's hard." (Laughter) "Now we only use filtered water for foot washing around here. Just letting you know that. You just put your foot right there." (pouring water over feet). [Basa:] "That's cold." (Laughter) [Pastor Steve:] "I did not get this out of the refrigerator, I promise. Now, Basa, tell us right now... How do you feel?" [Basa:] "Weird." (Laughter) "Why is it weird? Did you come in here today expecting someone to serve you?" [Basa:] "No, I did not." [Pastor Steve:] "Did you come in here today asking for someone to serve you?" [Basa:] "No, sir, I did not." [Pastor Steve:] "Uh huh. So right now it feels kind of odd that I'm doing this because there's no way you can really pay this back, right?" [Basa:] "No." [Pastor Steve:] "Yeah, that's true." So, I think that this is the way that Peter felt because on that day Peter realized that he had someone that was about to serve him in a particular and specific way that he could never ever repay. There comes this moment in the life of the Disciples there where Peter says, "No, Lord, You can't wash my feet because if You wash my feet, I'm going to owe You. I don't want to owe anyone." And Jesus was saying, "You don't understand. That's not the way that service works." You all give Basa a hand. (Clapping) You can go now, yes. (Laughter) Thanks, Basa. (Clapping)

This is the interesting thing about this. You see, what happens is that some of us need to learn this lesson. We can't have church unless we allow people to serve us, and we can't have church unless I serve other people. So what happens? We have to be willing to love and to serve the people that are around us, so I have to be willing to receive it. You have to be willing to receive it. Some of us are like Peter. "No Lord; You will never wash my feet." Listen. Jesus has already washed your feet at the cross of Calvary. It's already happened. It's a done deal. So will you stop trying to keep Him at an arm's distance and say "Yes," and will you serve and love the other people around you?

Pride leads us to manipulate service. (v. 9)

What happens next? What happens next is then Peter says, "Well then, Lord, not just my feet but my head and my hands as well." Jesus said, "No, you've already had a bath; you don't need that." Do you know the other funny thing about service is that some of us, we're the opposite of Peter. We want to receive service. We like being served but do you know what we do? We are service manipulators. We're like Peter

in this situation. People come up to us and they want to serve us and they say, "I'd like to give you a gift of A, B, and C." Do you know what we do? "What I'd really like is D, E, and F." Have you ever heard this before? "I'd like to help you in some way." "Well, what could really help me out... I know you were going to give me this, but what I'd really like is this." Now sometimes that is an appropriate response, but sometimes people come to service and do you know what we do? We manipulate the service so that it makes us feel better, and it turns in the way we want it to turn. What's funny is that Jesus says, "Look, you don't understand. I want to serve you and there's a very particular and specific way in which I want to serve you." So, I want you to think... now, you're Peter. This has happened to you. You've been served in this way. Jesus has been crucified. He's been resurrected and now you have been commissioned as the chief bishop of the Church of Rome, and now you're writing a letter to Christians all over the world, and you want to give them just a brief word about service and why service matters. So we look at 1 Peter chapter 4. After a lifetime of meditation, in 1 Peter 4:7, we read and we understand about service. Now, before we start that, I just want you to think now. It's not just Peter who talks about service. In fact, I could read you Scripture from biblical author after biblical author who would tell you about service. In Galatians 5:13; this is Paul: *"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but... serve one another."* Romans 12:10: *"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."* Philippians 2:3: *"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others as more significant than yourselves."* Think about that. What would happen if you just went about your day and every person that you encountered you assumed that they were a celebrity? Think how you might treat people differently. Luke 22:26-27; this is Jesus: *"...Let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as one who serves. For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the One who serves."* Jesus says, "Do you want to see my role in the world? Go to a restaurant and don't look at the people sitting at the table, look at the waiters. That's who I am." 1 Peter 2:21: *"For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps."* Ephesians 5:21: *"...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."* All through the Bible, "Serve one another." He said it in John 13:15. He says, "I have now given you an example so that you should serve one another. I am your Master. I'm your Teacher. I'm your Lord. You're not greater than Me. I'm greater than you, and yet I'm serving so why won't you serve as well?" 1 Peter 4:7: After a lifetime, Peter now reflects on this and says this: *"The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."* We need to serve. This is just is a real short meditation on why we should serve other people.

So why should we serve others?

Serving restores relationships. (v. 8)

So why should we serve other people? First of all, because serving other people restores relationships. Think about the verse here, what Peter says. He says, *"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins."* If you go through the Bible, you can pretty much see that the word "love" and the word "serve" oftentimes are interchangeable. Loving is serving and serving is loving. Now, they are different words, but they have the same core and central concepts in the New Testament. In other words, when I serve people, it's good. So what does Peter say that that does? He says that loving other people and

servicing other people covers a multitude of sins. Now this phrase "covering a multitude of sins" also shows up in James 5:20, leading some scholars to believe that this is actually an unwritten saying of Jesus... that Jesus talked about love covering a multitude of sins, but it wasn't ever recorded in any of the Gospels but the early Church used it. I don't know. Maybe so; maybe not. It doesn't really matter. We know that both James and Peter referred to it, so it must be an important concept. So when we read, "Love covers a multitude of sins." What does that mean? Does it mean this: "If I serve you then God will forgive your sins"? No, it does not mean that. Does it mean, "If I serve you then God will forgive my sins"? No, it doesn't mean that either. Do you know what it means? It's kind of like this...

Whenever I was in student ministry, I was a youth pastor for many years. Invariably I would deal with teenagers that hated their parents. Just kind of part of being a teenager, I think. Basically, every teenager at some point thinks that their parents are crazy or dumb or whatever. Invariably I would have these teenagers sitting in my office, and they would say something like this: "My mom is so mean. My dad is so mean." Now, I want to be very careful. Sometimes these were crazy situations involving abuse or neglect. Those are not the situations I'm talking about. I'm talking about just typical teenage issues, power struggles in the home. They would say, "I don't know what to do. I don't know how to fix it. Why won't my mom leave me alone? Why won't my dad be kind to me?" You know... these kinds of things. Do you know what's funny? Over the years I began to give almost always the same sort of advice. This is what I would say: "What's your mom's favorite dessert?" They would look at me. "I don't know... pie?" "Okay, that's good. What is the chore that your mother hates to do over everything else?" "Uh, clean the toilets." "What is the one thing that your mother is always on you about that you never do but you are supposed to do?" "Keep my room clean." "Okay, good. Do you want to make peace with your mom?" "I do." "This is what you need to do. I want you to go home, and I want you to clean your room. Then I want you to go and I want you to clean every toilet in the house. Then, I want you to make your mother a pie. After you do that, I want you to write her a note and say, 'Mom, I did this because I love you.' That's it." Why does that work? Because we stop making the power struggle in the home about who's on top, and instead it becomes who can serve more.

Some of you in this room, your marriages are a fiasco right now. Do you know why? Because you're not serving each other; you're trying to win. You can either win or you can be happy but you can't have both. Right? You can serve or you can domineer. Many times our relationships are broken because we refuse to do the thing that Jesus told us covers a multitude of sins. We refuse to serve each other. If you serve the people in your life... if you just serve them in the way that you're supposed to, do you know what will happen? You take the bullets out of the gun and suddenly healing begins to take place within the relationship. Now listen. I know some of you are like, "I'm in relationships that are abusive or manipulative." Okay... maybe we're not talking about those. But do you know what? I think that service is so extraordinary. Service is so different from the rest of the world. If we decide to serve other people, I want you to think, why would Peter say it covers a multitude of sins? I think he would say that because he knows that if I serve you, even if I get on your nerves, you say this, "At least I know that Steve loves me. At least I know that Steve cares for me." I wonder how many of us in this room could repair broken relationships in our office if we would simply serve our supervisor. How many of us in this room could repair our marriage if we would serve those that we are married to? How many of us could repair friendships or issues in our neighborhood if we would just simply stop trying to domineer or control the people around us and simply say, "I'm going to serve you because it's what God has asked me to do." Jesus said in Matthew 20:28: *"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."* This is the thing. Jesus basically modeled this for us. On the cross, Jesus looked at you and He looked at me, and He said, "Steve is a long way from the Father, but I will serve him through death. I will serve him through my

death, and in doing so I will take his sin on my shoulders." In doing that, in that moment, do you know what happens? He then creates reconciliation between Steve and the Father. He serves. Whenever you serve people around, do you know what you do? You bring reconciliation. Not between them and the Father, only Jesus does that, but you show them the sort of service that Jesus gives. So when you serve them, you create reconciliation between you and the person around you. What happens is relationships begin to be healed in a very powerful and rich way. On top of that, it brings you joy. Proverbs 11:25: *"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and the one who waters will himself be watered."* In other words, you think that whenever you serve people you're going to hate it. This is the crazy little secret: whenever you serve people, the Bible says you like the way it feels. Have you ever done something generous at Christmas just because it's Christmas and afterwards you're like, "Man, I wish I felt like this all year long"? Do you know how you would? If you serve like that all year long, because God has hard-wired you to believe and know that when you serve, you are joyful on the inside. The funny thing is that the lie of Satan is, "I need to be selfish. I need to get mine. I need to keep mine. I've got to keep it to myself." That is a lie. The truth is, "The more I serve, the more I experience who God is and the greater it feels inside of me." We're actually wired to serve other people because we have been wired to truly love.

Serving displays God's grace. (v. 10)

So then verse 10, *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."* What does that mean? The Bible uses a lot of different metaphors to talk about this. It talks about the Church being a body. Every person is a different part of the body with different bodily functions. There are other things that the Bible talks about. It says that we each have different spiritual gifts; gifts that are given to us by the Holy Spirit. Every now and then we have these bulletin inserts, these pieces of paper we stick in your worship guide. In fact, you've got one today. If you open up your worship guide, inside this you'll see there's an insert. It says, "Hey, we need you. We need help." What's that about? These are things that we do from time to time to show you ways that you could serve. Why do we do that? Because we believe what 1 Peter 4:10 says: "That every person has been stewarded... in other words you've been entrusted with... to manage a little piece of God's grace." So God has given you a little piece of his grace: a gift or a talent or an ability or something like that. Maybe it's some extra money. Whatever it is, God has given this to you and then He says, "Okay, now I trust you and I want you to use this in a way that will put Me on display." I haven't even looked at that sheet; I don't know what the needs are, but I would bet that there are things like preschool needs and student ministry needs and creative arts ministry needs, and we need greeters and this kind of stuff. If you look down through that list and you say, "I could do some of those things..." Do you know what's happening in that moment? You are realizing that God is saying to you, "You could take the grace that I've given to you, that I have stewarded to you, and you could use it to put Me on display."

Whenever you come in here on a Sunday morning, most of the time, there are people standing at the doors around and they are greeting people. Have you ever thought about that? You go to Olive Garden, that girl is paid to be nice to you. (Laughter) Okay? But these people out front, they don't get paid. They may get a cup of coffee out of the deal, maybe... if the coffee is made by the time they get here. Do you know what they do? They hand out worship guides, they shake hands, they greet people, they smile... Do you know why they do it? Not for the glory; not for the money. They do it just because it brings them joy, and they put Jesus Christ on display when they do it. Vocalists, instrumentalists... they just do it to bring God glory. The people who are teaching in the preschool department... they're not getting paid anything. They are just doing it to put Jesus Christ on display, to give God glory. Over and over and over, all throughout our campus, people have been stewarded with these sort of handouts of God's grace, and then

they do it so that they can show people who Jesus Christ is. This is the thing that is beautiful and truthful, and I want us to understand this.

Sometimes you go to an art show and you walk in and you'll see these paintings or these sculptures and you say, "Wow, she is an incredible artist. Look at all the talent that she has. She is able to paint. She is able to sculpt. She is able to do these different kinds of creative things. This is incredible. I can't believe this." What talent the artist must have.

A photograph of Pope Francis went viral this week. I don't know if you saw this photograph, but we are going to put it up here on the screen. I want you to take a look at this photo. This was not a staged photo op, from what I've been able to gather. I suppose I could be duped, but the understanding that I have is that this gentleman on the right has a medical condition, covered in some sort of sores or boils. The Pope was walking by or driving by... I don't know exactly what it was... and just took time to stop, approached this man, put his hands on him and blessed him and kissed him. The internet exploded with this this week. It was posted all over Facebook, Twitter, news pages. I actually ran across this this week for the first time on a political website. I want you to listen to this. This political website posted this picture, and a reader saw the photo and wrote an email. The website posted the reader's email. This is what it says, "This is the first time I have ever been compelled to write you about a nonpolitical issue, but your link to the article about Pope Francis embracing a horribly disfigured man really hit me. I am a complete and thorough atheist. I was raised religious but I went away from it very consciously and actively, as I rejected the entire logical foundation of religion. I am still as confident in my atheism as I have ever been. I preface my thoughts this way merely to put into context the awe and the admiration I have at the actions that this Pope is taking. Acts of profound and sincere compassion are all too rare in this world." You saw this man, who says he is a representative of Jesus, placing his hand on a disfigured man, blessing him, and what happened next was he took his face in his hands and he kissed him. Some of you when you think about kissing this man you think, "I don't want to get that on my mouth." Why is the atheist taken aback by this? I mean it's a truly kind thing to do, but why ultimately? Because at the end of the day, this is a unique way to respond to humanity. We can talk about charities and nonprofits and all this that we want to. But listen; at the end of the day, Christians are supposed to treat people differently. Why? Because they have a grounding and a belief that humanity is created in the image of God. You see, people that are secular atheists don't have that strongly held belief. They believe that life is, for whatever reason, a random lottery or whatever is taking place, whatever their convictions are, but they don't believe that it's a created good. But if Christians believed that life truly is a created good, then guess what? We treat life differently. We treat people differently. We serve them. So what happens in this moment? The Pope blesses and kisses this man, and people that don't believe that God is real say, "I don't understand why that guy is doing that." And it gets posted on political websites. Why? Because a man who has power and prestige blessed and loved a man that the rest of the world would have cast aside. My dream and my goal for Houston Northwest would be that we serve one another and we love one another, not looking for return, not looking for a gift, not getting people to notice us, but we only do it for one thing: so that we can steward God's grace so that when people walk in they have the same reaction that you and I might have if we went to an art showing. That we would see people greeting and people teaching children and people singing and people playing and people loving and people worshipping, and they would look around and they would say, "How great is this artist that has given talent and beauty so that service might take place in this way." That would be amazing because then Peter goes on and he says, "All glory and honor to God through Jesus Christ." Listen. Glory is a fancy Bible way of saying who gets the credit. God gets the credit. How does that happen?

Let's pull that photo back up one more time. I want you to look at this photo again. I want you to think of this photo in one of two ways for just a second. Look at this photo and pretend that the person on the left is Jesus Christ, and pretend that the person on the right is you. You see, what the Bible says is that there was a time, if you are a believer, there was a time when you were disfigured and you were isolated spiritually. You were removed from God. Some of you who are in this room right now, you are spiritually disfigured and isolated. You are removed from God. Some of you have said, "I don't believe that there is a God." Others of you, you believe there is a God. You are just living in rebellion to Him. Whatever it is, it doesn't matter. But what the Bible says is that Jesus, in his grace, sought you, put his hands on you, blessed you and kissed you. He received you. Now think of it in a different way. What if the disfigured person, after the blessing and the kiss, was suddenly healed? What if he stood up and he was transformed. If that's you and if that's me, do you know what we should be doing? It should now turn into a different photo where we are now the person on the left, and we're looking for any broken, disfigured, and isolated person that we can find. We say, "Do you know what I'm going to do right now? The rest of the world thinks that I'm 'goody-two-shoes.' The rest the world thinks that I'm 'holier-than-thou.' But do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to find the broken. I'm going to find the disfigured. I'm going to find the hurting. I'm going to find the people that are always out to get me; the people that are always trying to manipulate me, the people who are trying to start war at the office, the people that are always trying to get involved in a power struggle... I am going to find those people, and I am going to bless them and kiss them through service. Because love covers a multitude of sins and through all of that I can point people back and show them who Jesus really is. (Clapping) That's what I'm going to do.

Serving gives God glory. (v. 11)

So the belief that I have is this... it is if we will truly understand what service is about, we will not only put Jesus on display. We will also be able to give Him credit because whenever people say, "Why are you doing this?" "Jesus. The reason I am doing this is because I was lost, I was wandering, I was broken, I was hurt... and God saved me through his Son Jesus Christ. And because of that, now I don't serve you to get anything back. I don't serve you so that you will like me more. I don't even serve you so you will come to my church. Do you know what? I just want to serve you so that you will go... "Why are you doing this?" So that I can just say, "Jesus Christ." That is the only reason we serve. It is so that He might, through everything, receive the glory. That's it. So that He will receive the glory.

So as we get to the end of this, I want us to understand this. It is that sometimes I think that churches can be dangerous when they talk about serving. You can sound kind of manipulative. "Hey, we need to get some work done around here, so help us out." Okay, I mean... that's true. We can always use help. I think that sometimes serving can be dangerous because sometimes people can stand up and they can say, "Hey, we need people to serve," and we begin to feel guilty. But listen... none of that stuff should matter. You should only want to serve so that you can show people Jesus. I will tell you this right now. I would love it if you would help us out with stuff here at church. You see that bulletin insert, and you want to help out? But do you know what? Maybe the best way for you to serve is in your office. You get done with a meeting this week, and everybody leaves their coffee cups on the table. You start going around and picking them up. They say, "Hey... that's not your job." "You're right but I'm going to do it anyway." "Why?" "Jesus." You stop and you help someone on the side of the road. You're kind to someone in your neighborhood. Any time that you do those little things, what you are doing is you say, "I'm going to do for you what Jesus did for me and when you ask me, "Why?" The answer is, "Because I have been saved by Jesus Christ." Period. Don't buy into the argument that that's just what good people do because no they don't. People are selfish. We're selfish, left to our own devices. But when we think about the cross, we respond with grace. When we

think of the cross, we respond with service. The greatest act of service of all time was the cross of Jesus Christ. If you've not received it, today is your day. Serving others is the only true and appropriate response I can give to the cross. I worship through serving. Will you serve today? At the end of the day, there is one key truth and this is it: *"In everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory (He gets the credit) and dominion (He gets control) forever and ever."* And then Peter says, *"Amen."* Amen means "so be it; may it be so." May we serve in response to the cross. May we receive the service that others give us. May we give it freely but may we always recognize that we are giving credit to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen. (Clapping)

Let's pray together. "Lord, You are the One that serves us when we don't deserve it. Lord, You're the One that seeks us when we are lost. Lord, You're the one who heals us when we're broken. God, I remember there was a time whenever I was broken. There was a time when I was smug in my spirituality. There was a time when I thought I was too smart for all this. Thank you for showing me how wrong I was. Lord, there was a time when I needed to be served, and even though I was too proud, You served me. Thank you, God. Thank you. Father, I pray right now for the people in this room who need to be served. I pray that they would receive the grace of your Son Jesus Christ. Father, I pray right now for the people in this room who have been served but have been selfish, and God I pray that their hearts would be changed. God, I pray that in all ways we recognize that serving does not hurt us but it makes us joyful. We pray this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."