

You may be an ambassador to England or France
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls.

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody,
It may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.

-Bob Dylan, *Gotta Serve Somebody* (1979)

For those of you who are fans of Bob Dylan, you may recognize those words from his song *Gotta Serve Somebody*. Whether you're a fan of Bob Dylan or not, I think you can agree that if you listen to what he is saying there is something challenging in the words of his song, something prophetic in these words written way back in 1979.

His words – and the whole meaning of the song – challenge us, and challenge our culture, I think because we in the West, we in Canada have a deep uneasiness with the notion of service or serving. After all our society prides itself on individualism, on individual responsibility, on the right of the individual to determine their own future, to make their own decisions, to be in control of their own life. Serving somebody, or being a servant to somebody suggests that a person does not have complete control over their life; serving somebody suggests that something or someone else takes precedence over their needs and desires as an individual. Service and serving just don't seem to mix with our culture's emphasis on individualism.

Tied into our culture's difficulty with the notion of serving, is I think a growing mistrust of those in authority, including those in the Church. Time and again we have heard stories of corrupt politicians, leaders being caught in scandals. In the past few decades in the Church we have witnessed the uncovering of the horrific details around sexual abuse, which we in our own Anglican are not immune from. The mistrust and rejection of authority runs deep, and so notions of service or serving are rejected because why would you want to serve someone, why would you want to put yourself under someone else's authority, particularly someone's authority that you don't respect or trust.

Into our culture which prides individualism and which is marked by a rejection of authority Dylan's words present a challenging and sobering reminder:

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody,
It may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.

No matter who you are, no matter what station in life, no matter if you reject authority or embrace it: you're gonna have to serve somebody.

In the passage that we heard this morning from Paul's letter to the Ephesians he embraces this fact. Paul writes that "of this gospel I have become a servant according to God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power." Paul became a servant of the gospel, he became a servant of the Good News of Jesus Christ so that the Gentiles might hear the boundless riches of Christ. Paul has put himself under the authority of the Gospel, put himself under the authority of God, Paul chose to be a servant of God so that others might know the riches of Christ. Paul did so by the grace of God, he did so by the power that God gave him and in the promise that he had been adopted into the family of God in Christ. Paul's service flowed from the gift of life he received at God's hands, flowed from the redeeming and reconciling work of Christ on the Cross.

We as Christians, as Grace Church Scarborough, as part of the universal Church, have through "Jesus Christ our Lord access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him." We are invited to recognize

the loving and merciful Lordship of God in our lives, we are invited to experience the redeeming and reconciling love of God in Jesus Christ and we are invited to participate in God's great redeeming work by being becoming servants of the gospel just as Paul was. As servants of the Gospel we are invited to share the good news that we have received with the wider world, to share the riches we have received and not hold on to them and keep them for ourselves alone. As servants of the Gospel, the Church cannot stay turned in upon itself, it cannot keep the good news of the riches of Christ's grace and mercy within itself – the Church must be outward facing, the Church must be seeking to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world, to share the blessings it has received at the hands of God, through Jesus Christ.

As servant of the Gospel the Church is to be marked by service, the church is to be marked to be marked as a place that serves God. The Church which serves God, is a worshipping church, a church that gathers together to give thanks and offerings for the riches of God's love and mercy but worship cannot be the Church's only or primary characteristic, the Church must also be actively serving the world around it, serving the needs of the community and bringing the joy and hope of Christ into the world.

As servant of the Gospel the Church needs to challenge our culture's insistence on individualism, challenge the structures of our society that allow people to be exploited or marginalized. Here at Grace Church, we need to find ways to challenge the structures in our community of Scarborough that allow for children and youth to fall into drugs and gangs. We need to challenge the structures that allow for poverty and isolation to remain unchecked. If the Church is marked by service, then we have to get to know our community, we have to get to know the people who live around us, we need to seek to love them and serve them – even if they will never become members of our Church. We need to reflect the love of God into the community, we need to care for the poor in our midst, we need to comfort the lonely and isolated.

This is what Paul meant when he said that “the wisdom of God in its rich variety might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” The Church's role as servant is to challenge these authorities, to challenge these rulers and reflect God's wisdom into the world, to reflect the love, and mercy of God that we have experienced in Christ into the broken and oppressive corners of our world. Paul expressly states that this is one of the primary reasons for the Church's existence to be a place of service where God's wisdom is made known. Anglican theologian, N.T Wright suggests that we do not primarily challenge the rulers and authorities by our words, and not even by our actions, but most notably by through what the church is. The Church is a place where men, women and children of every race, colour, social and cultural background come together in glad worship and service of the one true God. Our mere existence as a unified body of people dedicated to service and worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, challenges the oppressive and exploitative structures of our world.

I think that Grace Church in many ways exemplifies these qualities, we are a diverse community of people from many walks of life, ethnic backgrounds and cultural norms. Through the amalgamation we have grappled with what it means to be a unified community in light of different pasts, different traditions and different expectations of what it means to be the Church. While I strongly believe that we exemplify facets of what it means to be the Church, I know that we also have a long way to go, we also have a challenging road ahead as we continue to grapple with what it means to be the Church here in Scarborough. I am however confident we will be the Church that God intends us to be, not through our own power, not through our own ingenuity or inventiveness but because we can trust God to be faithful and loving and merciful. At the end of most the Eucharistic services we say this Doxology “Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.” We say these words (which, by the way come from the end of the third chapter in Paul's letter to the Ephesians) to remind ourselves that we as the Church serve a God who is infinitely good and loving, and who sustains and keeps us through all things. And so as we continue to worship together as the community of Grace Church, as we continue to grapple with what it means to be Grace Church here in Scarborough, I ask you, who will you serve? Who will we, as the Church serve? Since after all, “you're gonna have to serve somebody.”

Amen.