

Communion Devotional  
District Conference  
June 18, 2022  
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June is the patriotic season of the year. Between Memorial Day and July 4<sup>th</sup> we tend to get nostalgic about patriotism and the military. This is reinforced by Flag Day and parades with lots of Veterans and politicians. Have you ever paid attention to the language we use for our military men and women? We call them servicemen and women. We talk about people who **served** in the military. We use the same language when describing pastors and leaders in the church. Dr. Schmidt was elected to serve as General Superintendent. Dr. Jennings was elected to serve as our District Superintendent. If you are a pastor you have been called to serve a particular church.

The word serve rolls off our tongues with little thought about how it shapes the actions of those to whom we apply it. The corporate world uses different words to describe the roles and responsibilities of their leaders. They are called to lead, to direct, to govern, to execute plans. They are not called to serve but to administrate. We should, and do, talk about leadership in the church – there is value in good leadership training and development. Yet the more I study the Scripture, the more the word “serve” pops out at me. The primary function of church leaders is to serve.

Interestingly enough, the disciples struggled to get the balance between leadership and service correct even after 3 years of Jesus teaching and modeling it. At the Last Supper – the night before the Crucifixion when Jesus embodied service by washing the disciples’ feet – they were still arguing about power. Luke shares with us in chapter 22:14-19:

*<sup>14</sup> When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table.<sup>15</sup> Jesus said, “I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you now that I won’t eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.”*

*17 Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. 18 For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come."*

*19 He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

*20 After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you."<sup>19</sup>*

*21 "But here at this table, sitting among us as a friend, is the man who will betray me. 22 For it has been determined that the Son of Man<sup>20</sup> must die. But what sorrow awaits the one who betrays him." 23 The disciples began to ask each other which of them would ever do such a thing.*

*24 Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. 25 Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' 26 But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. 27 Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.*

This morning we have been called to serve as delegates at the 2022 Conference of The Western NY District. In order for us to carry out this responsibility in a manner that is pleasing to Jesus we must approach our task as servants. We are not here to protect the church from change, or to try and impose change by exerting our will or opinion over the topics on the agenda. We are here, you are here, to serve the church – this particular expression of the church composed of people called by Jesus and aligned with this denomination at this time and place.

Our master is Jesus. We listen to His voice individually and trust the results of His leading as we collectively vote and make decisions. At His table we are all equal – we are all His Servants.

Our master is hosting the meal – providing His body and blood – for our benefit. He calls us to do the same without reservation for both great and

small. Here we all partake of the same elements together. No hierarchy, no power trips, none more worthy than another.

Communion reminds us who we are and then empowers us to be who we are. Our roles do not give us status or value – just responsibility. So let us each – as servants of Jesus – join together in humility and gratitude as we approach His table to receive His gifts that we might serve well today, for His glory and Kingdom.