

**Christ Presbyterian Church  
Edina, Minnesota  
January 21 & 22, 2017  
Rich Phenow  
Your Hands | Mark 10:13-16**

This is the third Sunday in a series we began after the first of the year called “Seven in 2017” and we’re looking at seven key areas, seven pillars, seven new behaviors or characteristics that, as a result of Christ being in us, will transform us. We’re talking about a makeover or a tweaking. We’re talking about ways to develop our character in Christ—the way that Jesus changes us is from the inside out in order that we would become more like Him. That’s the goal of a follower of Christ—to become more like Jesus—but we can’t do that on our own, we need the power of God working within us to do that. John Crosby used an illustration of a vase, a beautiful vase, perfect on the outside, and he talked about the fact that a vase looks like us. We’re constantly stuffing that vase full of new resolutions, new goals, and new aspirations, and we’re constantly buffing up the vase until something tragic happens in our life and the vase falls, and cracks, and shatters. John said we are all like that broken vase when it’s been put back together; we are cracked pots. And light will shine through the cracks in a cracked pot, just as the light of Christ, the light of God, is able to shine through us. See there it is. We receive God’s grace and love, we receive His forgiveness, and God’s presence comes into us and allows the light to shine through our cracks. Now, the hope is that we can all live with the certainty that we are loved. First and foremost we are loved, we are loved by God and Christ and all we need to do is receive that grace and that love. And then the power source of God shines through us and illumines those around us, because the glory of Christ radiates through our cracks.

Last week John talked about the power of words, and that words can build and inspire and motivate, but he also said that words can destroy; they can wound souls. Words can be harmful, and the place of the wounding in most of our lives comes from our heart. Now, I want to show you a quick cartoon. I love reading the paper and I like *Pearls Before Swine* especially. There are a lot of characters in there and there’s a lot of meaning, but here’s one. Goat is talking to Rat and he says, “I’m starting to realize that in life it’s not about making yourself happy, it’s about making others happy and that is the true road to joy and contentment. Hey, hey, what are they doing?” Rat said, “I had him committed.” He had him committed because he discovered that life is not about making himself happy, it’s not about building his own castle and his own security, it’s about the joy and the contentment of others.

I meet a lot with young couples who are getting married—I love the privilege of that—and I ask young couples to write a mission statement; I ask them to tell me what are the values that they’ll live out. I met with a couple this week, really a sweet couple. This couple is resource rich, they’re super intelligent, they have great jobs, they have a house, they have just about everything, and they wrote a mission statement that was truly profound: our marriage is built on respect and love and we’ll strive to continue to

grow in our relationship as individuals and as a family. We will ride the waves of our relationship. And then they spelled out these wonderful values: we'll be financially responsible, we'll be stable and successful, we'll have open and honest communication, and they had these beautiful values laid out, but I was struck like I am with some young married couples—there was no mention of faith, no mention of God, no mention of sharing the values, the resources, the richness. In a very caring and grace-filled way, I encouraged them not to be hoarders, but to find a way to share the gifts that God has given them to share.

This week's sermon and message is about serving. It's about taking a look at our hands that are connected to our presence so that we can use them to share God's great love story with those around us. I love this quote that John used last week from Martin Luther King, Jr., but he missed a couple portions of that quote and I want us to see it again because I think it summarizes and speaks into my sermon profoundly. Here's the quote:

“Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics to serve, you only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love.”

Don't need a college degree. Don't need to know how to spell thermodynamics or even pronounce it. You don't need any of that stuff. All you really need is a heart full of grace and a soul that is generated and motivated by love. That's profound.

So, what I'm talking about today is a predisposition. It's an orientation that gets beyond our own means, our own demands, and the things that consume our mind and our time and our life. It's getting beyond our own aches and pains, whether they're emotional or physical, so that we can sense and feel the needs of others around us. See, serving is getting beyond our self. It's getting beyond our own desires and aspirations and that's difficult to do because we live in a culture that doesn't necessarily encourage that. Our culture tells us to build greater security, bigger castles, greater wealth and resources so that you can hoard it and protect it, but what I'm talking about is this sense of otherness that goes out and responds to the needs of those in our office, and our home, and our neighborhood, to those in our senior living community and the relationships that we embark on in our lives. Other focus. Not self-consumed and preoccupied. See, I think serving is using the gifts God has given us. It's using those gifts that are there that sometimes get covered over by all of that stuff, and it's using those gifts to give value to others. It's when the Holy Spirit enables us to live in the moment with people, to be fully in their presence. It's showing up, as you've heard me say many times, and shutting up. Not about having words of wisdom, not about fixing people, it's about being with them and coming alongside of them, finding ways to address their needs, that's what servanthood is all about. Other focus. We bring with us not only the Holy Spirit, but a spirit of humility, which gives us the freedom to stop trying to be what we're not. It gives us the freedom to not pretend to be who we're not. It gives us the freedom to accept our

crackness and our brokenness. It gives us the freedom to let the light of God, of Christ, shine through our broken nature. Martin Luther said it's realizing and letting God be God and not trying to be God ourselves. This is all about our heart. This is all about looking for ways to impute love and value into others.

Now let me date myself and tell you—and I told Heather Hood this—that when it comes to heaven, I'm going to be singing solos and she's not. Luke, give me an amen for that! She said, "And who are you going to sound like?" I said, "I'm either going to sound like Bob Dylan or Neil Diamond." And she said, "Those guys can't sing, and Bob Dylan, all he does is just speak rhythmically and poetically." I reminded her this morning the guy got a Nobel Prize, but there was a period of time in Bob Dylan's life—we don't know much about where he's at in his faith now—but there was a period of time where he was destitute and broken, burnt out, tired of touring. He was performing in California at a huge stadium and at the end of the performance he saw something fly through the air, a little silver thing. It landed on the stage and he looked down and it was a little cross. He picked the cross up and thought *Wow!* He put it in his pocket. That night he went back to his hotel room just despairing, just discouraged, and he pulled out that cross and he looked at it, and something happened that he tries to explain. He felt that Jesus came to visit him, and it profoundly shaped his world for some years. He said, "The glory of the Lord knocked me down and then He picked me right back up." In 1979 I loved a couple of his albums, they were completely Christian lyrics, and one was called *Slow Train Coming*. On that album he sang a song called *You Gotta Serve Somebody*. Now, I'm going to let you listen to a little phrase of one of my favorite songs and then I'll translate for you.

[Plays a part of *You Gotta Serve Somebody*].

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  
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord  
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

[And then he has the audacity to take a shot at preachers]

You may be a preacher with your spiritual pride  
You may be a city councilman taking bribes on the side  
You may be workin' in a barbershop, you may know how to cut hair  
You may be somebody's mistress, may be somebody's heir

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes you are  
You're gonna have to serve somebody

Bob is saying that we either serve ourselves or we serve the Lord. He's saying we've got to lift our eyes off ourselves with the help of God so that we can see the needs of those around us. We can make a difference as we serve somebody. We can make a difference in people's lives by how we talk to them and how we address them and how we show interest in them. I want to flush out a model and an example of what service looks like, because we know that Jesus was the greatest example for us. He said the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. So I want us to look at a couple of examples of how Jesus served. The first text that I want to read is Mark 10:13-16.

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to Jesus for Him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, He was indignant, He was angry. He said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not serve the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." <sup>16</sup> And He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them and He blessed them. [Mark 10:13-16]

Jesus used His hands and His presence. He grabbed the children and He rebuked His secret service, the disciples who are trying to control the situation, who are trying to protect Jesus and block the children. Jesus rebukes them in anger and He instructs them to be like kids in their trust and dependency on Him. He draws the children in His arms and He holds them. He puts His hand on their head and prays over them and blesses them.

Whenever a new person comes on staff here, we bring that person to a luncheon with all the staff, have them introduce themselves and tell us where they came from and a little bit about their faith journey. Then we circle around that person and we lay our hands on them, and we pray for them. And whenever anybody leaves our staff we do the very same thing. Frank Uvodich left about three weeks ago. We gathered around Frank, a bunch of us, and we laid hands on Frank. We blessed him, we touched him.

December 23 of this year, about four weeks ago, four families got together to go caroling. We've been doing this for probably twenty years now. Jody sets it up with seniors in our church, and these families that are growing and growing come to visit these seniors. This year, there were four little Burmese boys, little guys that came with us. Our middle son Jesse brought them along and we went caroling. I want to show you just what a couple of little boys can do to transform a 91-year-old woman's heart.

[Rich shows a homemade video. Link unavailable]

A few minutes later one of the little boys, Chicalo, went up and put his hand on Lucy's hand and knelt at her feet. Tears were streaming down her face, and many of us in the room were just touched by the tenderness of that moment. That's an image for me of this Christmas. It's because Luke and Tessa and Carly and Josh and Kirsti and Jesse have been engulfed into these two families...13 children, 4 parents...speak very little English. Refugees on the border of Thai and Burma. These 4 little boys came and

touched Lucy and impacted her life. See, Jesus used His hands to touch and when we touch people and hold them, they're served and they experience the light and the power of God.

In Mark 8, Jesus used His hands again. He leads a blind man.

<sup>22</sup> They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup> He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When He had spit on the man's eyes (tough call there) and put His hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" <sup>24</sup> He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." <sup>25</sup> Once more Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup> Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village." [Mark 8:22-26]

Jesus used His hands again to restore sight. There's a different version in John's Gospel where Jesus mixes His spit with mud, but in this text obviously Mark thought He spit in the guy's eye, but the reality is, with His hands and with His fingers He heals. And we have the capacity to do that as well.

A guy in our church, Dave Beadie, he's got Parkinson's. He fell a few weeks ago; about ten days ago he broke his hip. He's been in the hospital and he's been visited by people from our church, lay people. Brad and Margo visited him, and Gino, and I showed up . . . Dave is married to Karen, and he sang in our choir for quite a few years. He and Karen are very involved here. In the newest *CPC Life* there's a story about Dave. So all these Lay Care ministers from our church came to visit Dave and I show up at the end of that about four days later, and all Dave and Karen can talk about are these Lay Care ministers and how much healing, and hope, and love that they brought. I'm feeling kind of like the B squad, the second team here, but it was so amazing hearing them talk about being held and prayed for and being touched and encouraged. We have the power to heal, folks. We have the power to serve people in such a way that they can be healed, and now Dave and Karen have all sorts of questions about this ministry and want to get involved in it. It's because the light of Jesus is shining through our broken cracks. We can use our hands to hold and heal. We can bring tangible help. Jesus appeared to the disciples for the third time after His resurrection when they had been fishing all night and didn't catch any fish. He encouraged them to throw the net over the other side, and John says they caught 153 fish. Then He uses His hands to start a fire and make breakfast for His disciples. Peter jumps out of the boat, swims to shore, and the disciples come back with the fish and the boat. Here's John's text:

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I

love You.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” <sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love Me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love You.” Jesus said, “Take care of My sheep.” <sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked Him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.” [John 21:15-17]

Peter had denied Jesus three times. Jesus is allowing Peter to be restored. He’s allowing the light to shine through his brokenness, and he asks Peter, “Do you love me?” Jesus is doing a gut check with him. He’s saying *don’t just talk about it, Peter, show Me, follow My example, serve others*. He’s commissioning Him. You see, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He taught the disciples how to serve and how to feed sheep.

I want to just show you the results of the survey that we conducted here and then I’ll bring this thing home. We asked you a couple of weeks ago what are the preferred ways for you to serve and you said a number of different things, but 123 of you said to write notes of encouragement. That’s becoming a dying art because we have cell phones and computers, and writing notes is like becoming a dinosaur, but you know what? Bev Meyer writes a note to every family of someone who dies in this church. And Bev Meyer has written a birthday card and an anniversary card to Jody and me for 30 years and if we don’t get one, then I know something’s going on with Bev. Jane makes cards and she sends them all the time. Jane sent me a card this week and said, “I’ll pray that God will give you the strength, energy, and wisdom that you need.” Words are powerful. What a great way to serve, to write a note. Here are some of the other results of the survey. Of 896 that were surveyed, 141 of you said you want to pray for others. Well, we have a prayer shawl ministry where women knit prayer shawls, and we give those prayer shawls to people and tell them *this is like God encompassing you with this prayer shawl*, and then they pray over their prayer shawls. We have an intercessory prayer group. We have a hearthside prayer group. You want to serve? Get involved in praying in this church. And how about actual serving? How about 360 of us saying we want to volunteer our time? Well if you want to volunteer your time, I want to encourage you to get alongside some people in this church that have master’s degrees in serving. See, Theresa Diffley, she has a master’s degree. She teaches every Sunday morning. Ross Robinson and Bill Davis and Ellen Hasting, and Debbie Ducar, and Dean Adolph, and Dave “Ole” Olson, these people have degrees in serving. Beth Montgomery, the Doudiets, the Krebs, these people SERVE constantly all the time. Deacons, and ushers, and greeters, and Sunday School teachers, mentors for our high school and middle school students, people in the choir, these are people that are serving. Jesus is asking us this morning, “Do you love Me? Then feed My sheep.” Get involved.

Let me close with this. It’s all about grace. It’s all about grace from start to finish and it’s

the powerful love of knowing Christ that shines through us. Mother Theresa said that serving the dying and forgotten brought her amazing joy, and she said the reason why she served was it was the one place that she felt connected to Jesus. It's not about winning or earning God's love. It's simply about responding to what you have been given. Anybody can serve, all you need is a heart full of grace, a soul generated by hands that hold and heal and help others by showing up. You gotta serve somebody. You gotta serve somebody.

*The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.*