

"MEN WANTED FOR HAZARDOUS JOURNEY. SMALL WAGES, BITTER COLD, LONG MONTHS OF COMPLETE DARKNESS, CONSTANT DANGER, SAFE RETURN DOUBTFUL. HONOR AND RECOGNITION IN CASE OF SUCCESS."

That is the ad that Earnest Shackleton placed in a London newspaper in the early 1900's. Shackleton was headed to the South Pole and needed a crew that was willing to sacrifice everything, maybe even their own lives, to journey to the bottom of the globe.

Enough men replied to the ad that Shackleton had a crew for his 1914 adventure to the bottom of the globe. That crew may be like the men currently working at the damaged nuclear reactors in Japan. They recognize the sacrifice necessary to complete their task and put their lives on the line to serve others.

That leads me to a question I'd like you to discuss with others around you this morning:

What is the one thing that would be the hardest for you to sacrifice or give up in order to serve others? [Discussion among people in worship, report back answers]

This morning we want to talk about sacrifice as it relates to our serving others. And we want to look at one conversation between Jesus and his disciples which makes the point very clearly.

Jesus knew where his life was headed and what would be asked of him to complete the mission. In the verses just prior to our scripture reading this morning Jesus pulls the disciples aside and tells them that they are headed for Jerusalem. He also tells them that death awaits him at the end of the road. It is immediately after that incident that Mark relates the following encounter.

Mark 10:35-45

Everybody has a personal agenda. We know what we want and we know what we need to do to achieve it.

James and John, 'the sons of thunder' Jesus called them, were no different. These fishermen turned disciples were seeking power and opportunity. You can imagine that having seen the notoriety that Jesus received, the accolades of so many people, that James and John were thinking about how they could get in on the deal.

What we see in this request to sit at Jesus side was a selfish, proud and callous determination to get what they could for themselves. They figured if they staked

their claim before any other disciples they could sit in the seats of power at Jesus side.

Here is an important lesson for us from James and John; we can know Jesus, walk with him and still be self-serving and unready and unwilling to sacrifice our agenda for the mission of Jesus. All the right knowledge about Jesus and all the right outward actions cannot cover up the often self-serving attitude that lies deep in our hearts. And the worst part is we don't seem to realize that we are placing ourselves above Jesus.

What James and John did was to push their personal agenda above the mission of Jesus. I don't think they even heard what Jesus had just said to the disciples. Look at the context. Jesus said in Mark 10:32ff that he was going to Jerusalem to die. James and John must have already been dreaming of corner offices in Jesus' headquarters because by their request you can see that they missed the meaning of Jesus comments about heading to Jerusalem. When we get so caught up in chasing the "prize" everything else becomes secondary to our desires.

If we are going to do more than just serve others, then we must be willing to sacrifice our own personal agenda and adopt a lifestyle of servanthood. But to get to that place of servanthood means being willing to sacrifice, and in Jesus example being willing to sacrifice means being willing to go to the cross and die.

Listen to what author Richard Foster says:

"There is a difference between choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant. When I choose to serve, I retain control about whom I serve and when I serve. But when I choose to be a servant, I have given up all rights and all control." To put it another way, service is about adding another activity to our schedules. But servanthood is living out Jesus mission wherever and with whomever God places me at any given time. We don't get to set the agenda; we simply obey the leading of God's spirit.

Just so it doesn't look like we are picking on James and John; it should be noted that the other disciples were not any better at this idea of sacrifice. They were indignant and jealous of James and John. They were probably upset that they hadn't thought of the idea first!

So Jesus steps into the fray and tries to teach them all a lesson about sacrifice and servanthood.

Reread verse 42-45

What the disciples would learn in a short time was true servanthood. When Jesus died on the cross he demonstrated true servanthood. He gave up all his "rights and control" on our behalf.

Jesus set the example for us to follow. Earlier in Mark 8:34-36 Jesus said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"

What good is it if we hold on to the things of this world and end up missing the opportunity to be a servant? What is it about the things of this world that have such a grip on us? You truly can't take it with you.

To follow Jesus means being willing to sacrifice everything. Jesus sacrificed for us, now we must follow his example.

I started my sermon this morning with the ad that Earnest Shackleton ran seeking men to join his crew to the South Pole. Let me close with an illustration about that journey and another one that had taken place a year earlier.

A year before Shackleton led the daring expedition to reach Antarctica, a lesser-known Canadian-led expedition headed in the other direction to explore the North Pole. Both ships, the *Karluk* in the north and the *Endurance* in the south, found themselves trapped by solid ice packs. Each crew was faced with a fight for survival. But the outcomes of the two expeditions couldn't have been more different.

In the north, the crew members from the *Karluk*, led by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, degenerated into a band of selfish, mean-spirited, cut-throat individualists, ending in the death of 11 crew members. In the south, Shackleton's crew faced the same problems—cold, food shortages, stress, and anxiety—but his crew responded with teamwork, self-sacrifice, and astonishing good cheer.

In the end, each leader stayed true to his core leadership values. Stefansson valued success above caring for people. He consistently communicated his ultimate objective: getting to the North Pole. In Stefansson's words this meant "that even the lives of the [crew] are secondary to the accomplishment of the work!" To the very end, Stefansson denied that his drive for success led to a tragedy—for himself and his crew.

In sharp contrast, Shackleton's leadership focused on the value and dignity of his teammates. At one of the lowest points of his trip, Shackleton wrote, "The task was now to secure the safety of the party." The well-being of his team drove him to put others first. Shackleton even gave away his mittens and boots and volunteered for the longest night watches. By valuing each person, Shackleton forged a team that was willing to share their rations with each other, even on the brink of starvation. Through his example of sacrificial leadership, Shackleton was able to accomplish his ultimate objective: saving the lives of his crew members. *Dennis N. T. Perkins, [Leading at the Edge](#) (AMACOM, 2000), pp. xiii-xiv*

Jesus issued an ad 2,000 years ago when he said to men like James and John, "Come, Follow me." In the process of answering that ad, James and John eventually came to understand that Jesus is looking for servants, not people coming with their own agendas and their own schedules. But men and women willing to live out servanthood; willing to deny themselves and their agenda and take up Jesus example of the cross.

Jesus is looking for men and women today who are willing to accept the hazardous journey that comes with being a disciple. Anyone want to join the adventure?