

The shortest sermon I know is only ten words. It was preached to a small, country congregation based on the story of the Good Samaritan.

The preacher read the account of an outsider who demonstrates true neighbor love by stopping on the road to care for a bleeding and badly injured man. This Samaritan's compassion stands in stark contrast to religious types who passed by without offering aid. After reading the text, the preacher mounted the pulpit and said, "We all know what this means. Just go do it." Then he sat down, sermon over.

Brief and direct.

The simplicity of "just go do it" reminds us that sometimes **all the words we use** to describe and explain Jesus may **get in the way** of his core message.

We know what Jesus means.

- Love God by serving your neighbor.
  - It is that clear.
  - It is that simple.
  - It is that hard.

This was a hard lesson for James and John. The brothers sidle up to Jesus to put in a word for themselves as "Disciples of the Year."

Jesus tells them they don't know what they are talking about. We are like the disciples, bumbler, perennially two steps behind our Lord. We are slow to understand Jesus' motives, words, or mission.

James and John may have heard Jesus, but they really had not listened. Do we?

God is a God of abundance who is loving and giving of grace and mercy; but we want to hold on to our worldly possessions.

In a society that values achievement, rewards ambition, and elevates strivers, we can become confused like James and John about the real rewards of discipleship.

Following Jesus does not get us something big and important.

Why must there must be a prize, a promotion, or some sort of power to compensate for our faith?



The status James and John seek is the prestige of being elevated to Jesus' right (and left) hand for eternity. That is not the kind of promotion Jesus gives. He tells them they have received all they need from him for their ministry.

He then points them in the opposite direction, away from himself and toward the needs of the world—to those who are hungry, poor, oppressed, victimized, abused, or abandoned by the side of the road.

In Jesus' kingdom, greatness is achieved by stopping to attend to the wounds of those around you and by addressing the hunger and hurts of our world. And when faith moves into action alongside those who are hungry or hurting, then we should realize that is when we are by Jesus' side.

To be with him in his glory, we open ourselves to his path of service, justice, compassion, and we love beyond measure.

“Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant.” Jesus contrasts his way of service to the way of the powerful of his day—and ours. Jesus" presents an alternative to rulers who “lord it over” the weaker.

His kind of power is

- made perfect in weakness,
- informed by deep relationship,
- ready to sacrifice—and, as a result, is unstoppable.

People of faith have a voice. We need to speak in our circles of life. We have been blessed with enough resources from our God of abundance. He asks us to share ... “why not: just go do it?”

Ending hunger requires charity and justice—binding the wounds of those who are hurt means we must address those with the power to lord it over others.

Sometimes those who govern need a firm reminder of this responsibility. Sometimes those who have the means need a firm reminder.

If we do not remind them, (and ourselves) who will?

When we help the Samaritan, we find ourselves a bit closer to Jesus and his glory.

Bread for the World, Food for the Poor, Lutheran World Relief, are all ways we can walk with Jesus. **Help us, O Lord, to be a Good Samaritan. Now, Go and do it.**

