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SERMON TITLE: The Church's Purpose Revisited
SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:30-37
DATE: February 20, 2022
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

This service constitutes the FPCD Annual Meeting. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

There's an attitude in Jesus that seems unusual to us humans. He's the Son of God. He's fed thousands of people with just a handful of loaves and fish—twice! He healed the sick and disabled, restored blind eyes, cast out strong demons, walked on the sea, been transfigured into an out-of-this-world figure.

He was extraordinary—he really could have become a ruler extraordinaire.

And yet twice he speaks of great suffering!

"I'm going to be betrayed, rejected by the chief priests, killed by my enemies, and rise from the dead after three days."

He will tell them a third time within the next few days.

Each time the disciples either rebuked him, or talked about how great they were or wanted to be—or asked that they be given positions of power in his coming kingdom.

People want to be rich, recognizable, and famous (including Jesus' disciples!).

I wanted to find funny quips about wanting to become rich and famous so I went to Mr. Google. All I could find, though, were serious, goal-setting tips!

Change your mindset to being rich, one website said. Only then can you become rich.

Then upon further study I found quotes by rich and famous people. Here's one by Jim Carrey:

"I wish everyone could experience being rich and famous so they could see it wasn't the answer to anything."

There's a little insight from someone who knows.

Why is Jesus so humble? Why is Jesus willing to suffer? It is countercultural. **Jesus was okay with being what looks like the least to accomplish what was God's most.**

As we've talked about the work of the church, the underlying question is *how well are you doing at First Presbyterian*

Duncanville? Are you successfully fulfilling your mission? Are we doing what the church is supposed to be?

How are we assessing our work? How about if we assess it according to Jesus' words to his disciples.

Instead of focusing on being great, welcome a child—because you don't miss anyone that God loves. Think about children being actively included in the worship service, not just in a Children's Moment, but in lighting the Advent Candles and praying during worship; in playing the cajon with the worship leaders; in reciting Bible verses to the congregation. That is welcoming a child. And, it is welcoming Jesus and when you welcome Jesus, you welcome God.

Why is servanthood the expected attitude of believers?

Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else" (v. 35).

Jesus is not saying fame and wealth are bad. **Jesus is defining true richness.** Jesus' belief that being insignificant, being a servant out of devotion to God, being least in rank helps you to see other people. It helps you invite others in.

What happens is you focus outward. When you focus outward, other people become important. You don't worry about what they think of you. You don't get your accolades from being popular. **You enable all other people.** You are not just focused on the desirable or known person, but in Jesus' culture, no one is missed. Everyone has value.

It is a much more fulfilling way.

Here's a group of teenagers who did significant "inviting someone in."

VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ie1-vmpamg>

Saint Augustine says, "Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility."

Should not the church know these things? If we followed Jesus' words, we would begin to see others, experience the power and joy of God, and invite others in too. They will respond to your "seeing them." Then you would have an open door to inviting them here. **That is how to assess our work as a church.**

How "inviting" are you? AMEN