

## **You Have Got to Serve Somebody!**

Scripture: Daniel 2:19 – 23

July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Faith is always lived out under specific social and environmental conditions. Faith does not thrive in a vacuum. Faith can not be dispensed like salt from a shaker. Faith's value lies in its internal strength and its capacity to help people adapt to external circumstances while adopting a firm resolution to press on toward the prize.

I want you to think of a time in your life when you were on the outside of an important event rather than on the inside. Perhaps you badly want to make a contribution to a team but could not because of some limitation. Or maybe you had an experience in life that found you on the outside looking inside. You felt almost powerless to influence the event from the outside.

An example – a young boy tore his ACL during football season. The rehabilitation process was long and challenging and it required many weeks of going to physical therapy after school three times a week. When basketball season started, the young boy could not practice or play yet, he needed more healing time. He still suited up for each game and played a supportive role for his teammates that season. Toward the end of the season, he said to his Dad – ‘Dad, I feel isolated sometimes riding the bench all alone!’ Rather than letting his son lament his condition by pouting himself into despondency and negatively affecting the morale of his teammates, the father told his son to be hopeful, to be eager and ready to help the team when called to play. It took time for his physical injury and emotional wounds to heal but finally near the end of the season, the young boy's number was called by the coach. The young boy stepped up and helped his team win an important game.

The young boy's feelings of 'exile' for being sidelined due to injury did not ultimately dampen his spirit. He did everything he could to help the team and when his number was called, the crowd cheered him and so did his teammates. He no longer felt captive by his isolation.

The Old Testament story of Daniel is very similar to this story. Daniel felt sidelined from participating with his people when he was deported to Babylon. However, Daniel soon found his true place when called upon to help Team Judah. The external demands of captivity did not deter Daniel's work in helping his countrymen find their gifts and graces in a foreign land.

Daniel held God's favor by his heroic obedience and steadfast faith in God. He remained true to his God.

As the exiled Daniel ascended the ranks of leadership in Babylon, it became clear that human power is no match for God's power. Daniel's extraordinary ability to decipher the king's dreams, to foretell the future, and his determination to hold on to his faith at all costs, even while in service to his captors, made Daniel an exceptional example of the power and sovereignty of faith.

In these past 2 1/2 years, it has become clear to me that our power is not by human means but by God's power. Human power is no match for God's power. We have had an extraordinary ability to hold on to our faith in Jesus at all cost. Even while in service to Christ in a world full of hate, anger, and prejudice - we are an exceptional example of the power and sovereignty of faith. We may be divided on some issues but we need to stand united in faith and service to Jesus Christ.

Exile essentially means being on the outside. Exile means being estranged from self, God, and community; Exile is living externally to those events and circumstances that controlled one's destiny. Exile is dislocation from those familiar places that we have called home.

Are we living in exile? Are we on the outside looking in? Are we estranged from self, God, and community? Are we living externally to those events and circumstances that control our destiny? Are we dislocated from familiar places that we have called home? Are we living in exile on the Delmarva peninsula from our faith in Jesus Christ?

Oh, beach life is great, but are we living in exile from Christ?

While Daniel's new home was the Babylonian Empire, he was in but not of the empire. Daniel was transplanted to this new land. Daniel was maintaining his personal faith and integrity. He used his spiritual and intellectual gifts to speak God's truth to those in power.

Many of us may feel like we are in exile. You may feel that you are on the outside – estranged from self, God, and community. You may feel like you are living externally to the events and circumstances of your life that control your destiny. You may feel dislocated from familiar places that you have called home. While you feel this way, you must maintain your personal faith and integrity. You must use your spiritual and intellectual gifts to speak God's truth to those in power. More than ever, our church needs these gifts and our country needs these gifts!

Singer, song writer, and social commentator Bob Dylan said all this in a song '*Gotta Serve Somebody*'. I never thought I would be using Bob Dylan in a Sunday worship - here is the chorus of this song – '*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.*'

Wherever we are, we must find ways of using our gifts to improve our lives and the lives of those around us. I choose to serve the Lord – How about you? Whatever circumstances in which we find ourselves, we can make a positive difference. I choose to serve the Lord – How about you? We can draw from an internal faith. I choose to serve the Lord – How about you?

We can draw from a strength that will allow us to ride out the storms of our individual circumstances. I choose to serve the Lord – How about you? We can draw on a source of help that will let those around us know the power and truth of a living faith. I choose to serve the Lord – How about you?

Daniel chooses the Lord - I choose the Lord - How about you?

Let us pray:

O Lord, we gotta serve somebody; may we choose to serve you! May we seek to be a positive difference in this world. May we find the strength to survive the troubles that come our way. May we draw on your source of help so that all the people around us will see the power in a faith in you. May we live a true life of living faith in you. We choose to serve the Lord and his most Holy son, Jesus Christ. AMEN.