

**Next STEPS (Service)**  
Week 3 September 30<sup>th</sup> 2018

As Christians we are called to be followers of Jesus Christ. Church people call it Discipleship and discipleship is a journey.

Every journey is made up of steps. And that's what this series called **Next STEPS** is all about: the simple steps of discipleship. They're not easy but they are entirely simple.

These steps are not obligations. When we look at them as obligations, we weaken their effectiveness.

And they are not just more things to do: none of us needs more things to do, do we? The steps we are talking about are aimed at simplifying, not complicating our lives.

STEPS is an acronym

**"S"** - service in a ministry or in missions.

**"T"** - tithing and giving. God is generous and we can use our money to become more like him.

**"E"** - is for engage which is about small faith sharing groups. Faith is personal, but not private. It needs to be lived out in a community of people.

**"P"** - prayer and the sacraments. These are are essential to our relationship with God.

**"S"** - sharing our faith. Our faith actually grows as we share this message with others.

We have kiosks set up in both hallways leading to the side entrance doors. You can use them to check out the Next Steps Message Series and plan your Next Step in your journey of faith.

You can do this before mass or on your way home after. You can also do this on our website at [gslakeshore.com](http://gslakeshore.com).

Each week we're looking at a different step. And the step we're looking at this weekend is a great one, In fact, Jesus promises that this step is the path to greatness.

We all want to be great, in one way or another. If given the choice between being great and being mediocre we would rather be great, wouldn't we?

But, sometimes we may give up on greatness because we think that we will never be able to achieve it. It may seem to come at too great a cost.

We may feel like we're failing because:

- We're not making the money and getting the promotions we were expecting.
- We find our lives lacking in some way, and maybe not even knowing what it is that's lacking.
- Maybe our children are challenging us in ways we never thought, and we just don't feel like we're great parents.

Well, let me say that greatness is really a choice. It's a step we can choose to take. To understand that choice we are going to look at the passage from last Sunday's gospel from Mark. He tells us,

<sup>33</sup> *Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house Jesus asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?"*

Mark 9.33

Jesus and his disciples were just returning from a missionary journey. On their way home, the disciples were arguing with one another, kind of like the way our kids argue in the back seat of the car.

The passage continues:

<sup>34</sup> *But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.*

You see they were expecting that one day Jesus was going to be this great earthly king. And, as his faithful followers, they could all expected to enjoy positions of power and influence.

But, human nature always seems to want more and so each of them wanted to be, not only powerful, but the greatest. The early disciples didn't necessarily follow Jesus out of purely unselfish motives. They would, in time, grow in their discipleship and their faith in Him. For now, they were looking at the earthly glory that they believed he would bring them.

In the beginning, they didn't understand that Jesus had to suffer and die; and there would be persecutions and problems ahead for them.

Now, wanting to be the greatest, in comparison to others can be very important to some people. Just look at our places of work or any human interaction, for that matter.

It happens all the time.

- Who is indispensable?
- Who gets the highest ranking?
- Who gets the recognition?

In our flawed, broken nature we can fall into this ego trap and become wrapped up in our own self-importance.

We want to be great, and that's OK. God wants us to be great too. Christianity itself is definitely about greatness. Discipleship is also about greatness, by all means aim at greatness.

But Jesus takes our human definition of greatness, and turns it upside down when he says later on in Mark's gospel...

***“Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”***

Instead of it being about power over people, it's about power for people, in order to serve people. True greatness comes in **SERVING** others. Greatness means taking our abilities, skills and opportunities and any other advantages that we have....and using them for the benefit and well being of others.

How many people in our world today strive for that kind of greatness? I see it in many people in our parish despite the fact that it's so counter-cultural. But service to others is so important today, just as it was to Jesus in his time.

Service can be broken down into two categories: Ministry and Mission. When we talk about service in **ministry**, we mean service to our parish. We see this in many ways here at Good Shepherd Parish:

- Our greeters before and after mass serve the parish by creating a sense of welcome. Many people have been touched by this ministry.
- Our young adults looking after our next generation of leaders so their parents can concentrate on worship.
- Eucharistic ministers visiting the sick and the elderly in our parish who are no longer able to come to church.

And there are so many other wonderful ministries too numerous to name here. Consider giving as much time as you can, in service to the parish community.

So ministry is about service in the parish.

The second category of Service is **Missions**. What we mean by this is service to others beyond our parish walls.

It could be in the communities of Lakeshore, Tecumseh or Belle River. It could be outreach to communities in Northern Ontario or the isolated villages in NWT. It could also be in other countries like Haiti and Malawi in Africa, two places that our parish continues to support. Ministry and Missions are paths to greatness and God wants us to be great.

We can also look to our own Mother Church for our inspiration and example of greatness in our world today. Our Church is so much more than what we hear in the news these days and She continues in service all over the world, each and every day.

Let's look at our Catholic Church and Her service:

- The church feeds, clothes, and provides shelter for hundreds of thousands of people worldwide each and every day through many, many outreach programs.
- The church educates countless students worldwide in its many schools and universities all over the world.
- The many hospitals all over the world, founded and run by the Catholic Church treat countless people each and every day, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or religious affiliation.

My point here is that we only have to look to the history of our own Church for the model of true servanthood.

From the beginning of this series we've said that the goal isn't to get everyone to take all 5 steps at once. But maybe this week you are feeling called to some action. If so, visit one of our kiosks before you leave today and see how you can take the next step in discipleship.

It is essential that we Step forward and hold out our hands in service to others. This is what heals and brings peace in our world, both here in Lakeshore and the world beyond. This is how we walk with God and how we point the way to Him by our actions; this is how we grow our faith and our relationship with Jesus.

Discipleship is simply following the Lord, step by step, on the path of greatness, and step by step in the direction of discipleship. A little more today than yesterday and a little more tomorrow than today.

In the process of service to others, we will discover a great life in the service of God and His people.