

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Texts: Isaiah 50: 4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11

Title: "Who's Your Master?"

There was a pastor who once used a dog as a visual aid to start his message. He brought up a beautiful Golden Irish Setter that belonged to the youth leader. The pastor brought the dog on to the stage and he rolled a ball across the platform and said, "Fetch, Josh, fetch." But the dog just sat there and wouldn't fetch the ball. The minister then had several others come up and try to get the dog to fetch but he wouldn't. Then the preacher said, "Let's try some peer pressure, and so he had all the people stand up and join in unison, "Fetch Josh, Fetch Josh!" But the dog wouldn't be moved. Finally he called the youth pastor up who owned the dog. He said, "Josh go get the ball." And the dog bolted from his stance and brought it to his owner. The preacher said, "Now, let me ask you...who are you fetching for?" Who are you fetching for? Who's your master?

One of the great passages of Scripture is found in Philippians 2. Speaking of Christ, Paul writes, "And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became *obedient* to the point of death--even death on a cross."

**The key word in this passage is the word "obedient."** Jesus was obedient to God, the Father. He was obedient in life and in death, even death upon a cross. Obedience is not a trait that's easy to learn. It's certainly not an easy trait for children to learn.

A three-year-old named Beverly, who was playing with her toys. Her mother, who

was folding laundry across the room, noticed Beverly's shirt was dirty and needed to be changed. After calling two times with no response, her mother gave her the full three-name call: "Beverly Elizabeth Johnson, did you hear me?" Beverly answered, "Yes, Mama. My ears did, but my legs didn't." All of you who are parents understand her answer. Obedience is not easy.

Obedience is a trait that isn't easily learned for anyone in our culture. The word itself seems weird in a sense. Some radical changes have taken place in our culture concerning the role of obedience in the home.

A study was done some years ago that showed that at one time the top three qualities that parents wanted their children to learn were, "loyalty to the church, strict obedience, and good manners." Fifty years later, a similar study was done with almost opposite results with the top three qualities were "independence, tolerance, and social-mindedness."

The top value at one time, perhaps when some of you were growing up was conformity. Fifty years later, when the survey was done again, it was autonomy. Now you understand that times change, culture changes. It always has.

But I will say this. We may be out-of-step with Jesus in that if our society today still holds up personal freedom, which I believe it does, we should understand that our Christian faith still has at its core, the idea of obedience, obedience to God, obedience to the values that God would have us hold and the people he would have us become with the lives we've been given. Jesus listened to God. He had a purpose

for his life, a mission to fulfill and ultimately he fulfilled it.

**Obedience grows out of having a vital mission.** That's another thing we need to see. When you are driven by a mission, a great purpose, obedience comes naturally. You may not see yourself as an obedient person but if you've ever attempted anything great in the world, and seen it through to success, you've learned the art of obedience.

If one's goal is to be a great Mom or Dad. You soon learn that you can't put yourself first and achieve that goal. You have to defer your own desires.

It may be starting a new business. To be successful, you've got to be obedient to your customer's expectations. You might discover a personal discipline that you never knew you had. That's true in attaining anything that's important in life.

In the same way Christ was obedient because *he had a great mission*. That mission was to reconcile the world to God. That mission was to make it possible for us to have a relationship with God that can be transformative. He prayed, "Not my will, but thy will be done." He became "obedient to death--even death on a cross!" (v 8). Because of his great love for us and because of his great love for God, Christ was obedient.

**So the question of the day is: Are we obedient to God?** Some of us have learned to be obedient and to do the things that are necessary to be successful whether it's being a parent or working a job but what about being obedient to God?

As we go through the season of "March Madness" it seems to me that the team that

executes the coaches game plan is often most successful. Did you know that God has a game plan for the world? It's that one day the kingdom of God will reign in every heart and that one day everyone on earth will know God's love and peace. For that to happen it means that every person who says he or she follows Jesus needs to buy into his plan and will live life accordingly. It means living a life of love for all people. It means being a bit outgoing about one's love for God. It mean sacrificial love, caring for this world for whom Christ gave his life. It means doing all you can to make this church the kind of place that is inviting to strangers.

Do we buy into God's game plan? When you have a great mission or purpose in life, you learn to obey the voice that tells you what needs to be done. "Who are you fetching for?" "Who is your Master? Amen.