

LMA Sermon: The wider church

The First Reading: Exodus 19:2-8a

Moses tell my people: **you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**”

I think we have gotten used of the idea that the church is more than these four walls.

I think we have gotten used of the idea that the church is people.

The Christian church on earth are *those “called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit”* – if you remember your catechism.

This is holy language.

Like anything Holy, a chalice, a candle, an altar – anything put aside and used for the church is Holy.

We hear today (Exodus 19) that Gods considers us to be Holy: *“...you are my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”*

Holy things are assigned to do Holy work.

When a church building has finished its holy work the bishop decommissions it – he makes it unholy so it can be a restaurant – or a house – or a B & B.

God has a holy church and we are invited to be holy priest’s.

God has a global church and we have a global pastor - his name is not Brian as you might have heard the other night – our global pastor is Jesus Christ.

So we are a global church and who do we worship – to whom do we offer acts of living praise?

It’s not God

Jesus said 3 times: *I have come to serve and not be served and to give my life as a ransom for many.*

Let’s be clear on that God doesn’t need to be served or worshipped.

Of course you may read often in the scriptures things like: Worship the Lord with gladness.

You will find these reading have been translated poorly – not wrong but poorly.

It’s simply we English speakers are suck with that word – “worship”.

It’s old English – it means “Worth – Ship” show the Lord what you think he is worth by what you do for him.

That is 100% opposite to our theology. What we do is nothing – what he does is everything.

‘We’re saved by grace not works...

It is so clear that it should be show the Lord what you think of him by serving with him – not serving him – serving with him.

It's subtle because it is subtle.

In German it is crystal clear.

The word for worship is Gottes-dienst – it means God serves you.

It's hard to talk about poor translations – because the last thing I want to do is make you doubt your bible – or your translation.

It's just the way it is – I suggest when you read your bible just read it as it is – you will be blessed.

But if you are studying your bible use several translation and you will see how translators have struggled with certain words.

Don't be put off.

A perfect example is the introduction letters of Paul – many translations say: "I Paul a servant of the Lord".

It's so wrong.

Firstly we are not servants of the Lord – we don't serve God – we serve with God.

Secondly the Greek word in question is Doulos which means slave.

It should be: "I Paul a slave of God" – perfect, especially in Romans.

A slave is bought, a slave belongs to the owner. Jesus bought us not with silver or gold but with his own precious blood.

"I Paul a servant" crazy!

What is a servant – starts at 6.00am in the morning and knocks off at 4.30.

I Paul a "slave" bought by the blood of Christ, is what it is and what it should be – but most often it isn't.

Even our very own Finke River Mission translators say something like: "I Paul a station hand.."

They avoided the word slave because they thought it would be offensive to aboriginal people. We forgive translators because they are trying to find the right word at the right time – times change – so do translations.

Wow "worship" a word that sends the wrong message.

It suggest that we serve God as we show him his worth – the truth is we don't serve him – we serve with God – what a privilege.

From servng God to servng with God is a whole new pay grade.

From a serf to the board of management – working with the king of kings – being his ambassador – being an extension of his rule and authority.

Let me read Exodus again – hear it with new ears:  
*“Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”*

Who do priests serve? They serve people.

1 Corinthians 3 (in fact all through Paul’s letter’s);  
*“we are labourers together with God”*

Acts 17

<sup>24</sup> *“The God who made the world ... its not served by human hands, as if he needed anything.*

I hope I’m not making too much of this and making you question what you read.

*“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord”* – have you got this little verse from Joshua 24 hanging on your wall?

It is a good and godly statement: “...we will serve the Lord”

It’s OK – don’t through it away.

I’m just asking you as mature Christians to analyse it – it means when I serve others I serve the Lord.

We can live with text like these – I’m just asking you to know even in these which say so clear that we serve the Lord – it actually means serving God means serving with God.

I’m trying to get us out of here – to out there.

I’m guessing for many of us coming here is the high point of the week.

Can we ever imagine going out there into the

world could be the highest point in our life?

That first step as you go out of the door is your journey with God for the week – that’s our high point.

It’s not stepping in – it’s stepping out.

In here we regroup, we are instructed, we are fed. In here is an intimate time with Jesus. He listens, he heals, he forgives, he encourages.

He builds us up – to worship him – to serve him? No!

In here he prepares us for service out there.

In here he prepares us to offer our bodies in service to his world.

Rom 12: *Brothers and sisters, because of God’s mercies, I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. This is your appropriate priestly service.*

Go back to our Exodus text: *“...you are my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”*

Priests – priestly service – is to use you bodies in God’s kingdom.

He says use your body for whatever your body is good at – many of our bodies are getting old and decrepit – but our mouths still work well.

Use your body in the kingdom serving with Jesus.

The Message version – always check the Message version sometimes it delights me.

*So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.*

Let your daily routine be a blessing to the kingdom.

The message has another little hint: *Embrace what God does for you, this is the best thing you can do for him.*

You know that dreaded text: *wives submit to your husband.*

Of course Jesus is talking about the church his bride – nothing else.

He is saying, I am the servant of all, I have come to serve and not be served – submit you stubborn so an so – stop, be still and allow me to serve you. It's the same in that Message text:

*Embrace what God does for you, this is the best thing you can do for him.*

*It's the same as "submit" allow me to serve you.*

*"...you are my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."*

Come here to the sacred place – sit – be still – submit – allow him to serve you.

Pretty special – pretty privilege – a special time - Jesus serving us – can it get any better?

I'm saying train you hearts and minds to know your true worship – your true acts of thankful service is when you step out this door – and walk with Jesus – serve with Jesus.

The last verse of Mark's gospel.

Jesus has just ascended – disappeared before their eyes.

What to do? Very next verse – the very last verse in Mark – put it on your heart:

*Jesus was taken - The disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.*

Please know that the Lord Jesus works with you.

Please know that you work with the Lord.

This is our special place – let's take worship out there.

***Lord remind us that the best we can do is to sit down, be still, be quite, and allow, submit to you serving us.....***

***Lord remind us that you want to serve with us as we take on the privilege gift and role of being you priests serving you people. Amen.***