



Grow Deeper — to — Grow Out

The purpose of this booklet and the corresponding 9-week sermon series is to ***grow deeper in the discipleship habits of 1:1:1—worship, grow, serve.*** Our prayer is that every Holy Cross member will move from knowing about these habits to embracing and living them each day.

Introduction

Jesus commanded His Church to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). This is our mission at Holy Cross—to **grow gospel-centered disciples of Jesus Christ for life**. *But how do we make disciples?* Jesus gives us a simple answer: by “teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.” *But how do we do this? And when?*

Discipleship does not take place in just one single moment. It takes place in a series of single moments, day by day, month by month, year by year. *In other words, discipleship is rooted in **habits**.*

If you have been at Holy Cross for even a short amount of time, you have likely heard words like “**worship, grow, serve,**” or **1:1:1**, which is a simple encouragement to choose one time each week to worship, one time to grow in community with other Christians, and one opportunity to serve.

The purpose of this booklet and the corresponding Nine-week sermon series is to grow deeper in the discipleship habits of 1:1:1—worship, grow, serve. Our prayer is that every Holy Cross member will move from knowing *about* these habits to *embracing* and *living* them each day.

Our staff team often refers to this sermon series as “**GD4L 2.0**.” This title refers back to our first mission statement sermon series in early 2024. Many of you will likely remember the GD4L—“Growing Disciples for Life”—booklets that we used for this series. During the GD4L series, we talked about the importance of **worshipping, growing, and serving** together. However, we did not go deeper into what these habits mean, why they’re important, and why members of Holy Cross commit to them. This “**GD4L 2.0**” series allows us to go deeper, all in the hope that such habits will be a normal part of our congregation’s culture.

Before we begin, it’s useful to know the duration of this series and how to participate. **This series is 9 weeks long.** It starts **Sept. 13** and ends on **Nov. 22**¹. From September through November, we will spend three Sundays on each discipleship habit: **worshipping** together, **growing** in community, and **serving** together.

To help us explore the full depth of these discipleship habits, we have structured this booklet and the sermons according to Luther’s three-fold pattern of **command, gift, and promise**. Each of these discipleship habits arises from God’s command, gives us God’s grace and promises, and meets a critical need in our lives and others’.

¹ If you do the math, you’ll notice that this period is longer than nine weeks. This is because we will take a break in late October and early November to observe Reformation Day and All Saints’ Day.

To get the most out of this series, we encourage you to:

- Attend worship every Sunday, and use this booklet to take notes. Be sure to listen to any sermons you miss via our YouTube Channel @HolyCrossKearney!
- Read the Scriptures and short devotions for each week's theme.
- Join a Life Group where you can discuss the sermon themes and grow in community.

May the Lord bless you and our congregation as we take this discipleship journey together!

Chapter 1

1:1:1

Worship: God's Command

Every year, as the busyness of the school year draws to an end, I tell myself, “*This* summer, I’m going to slow down.” And then... summer happens. Evenings and weekends fill up. I think June and July will be a chance to get off the treadmill, but once August comes and school begins, I realize I never slowed down.

Sound familiar? We often live busy, hectic lives. Whether we impose this busyness on ourselves, or it's imposed on us by modern life, is up for debate. I suppose the answer is “yes—all of the above.”

However, we’re not helpless victims to the demands of our schedules. We do have choices. When faced with a schedule conflict, we must “bump” something. As important as the baseball game might be, Grandpa and Grandma’s fiftieth wedding anniversary party is more important. We cancel the less important thing to make space for the more important one.

Sometimes, the busyness of life begins to crowd out our standing Sunday appointment with God, His gifts, and His people. Sporting events. Weekend excursions. Yardwork and errands. When faced with a Sunday schedule conflict, what will we “bump?”

Thankfully, God has given us a commandment that gives us a clear answer. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11). When our Creator, Lord, Redeemer, and King tells us to keep our appointment with Him, we “bump” anything that conflicts. God’s commandment doesn’t change. He calls us to meet with Him and with one another regularly. *This isn’t optional; it’s essential.* Consider the words of Hebrews 10:24-25: “*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **not neglecting to meet together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*”

Obviously, life happens. We go out of town, we get sick. Our vocations call us to serve others on Sunday. I am thankful that police, first responders, and medical professionals are all available on Sunday mornings! But when God’s commandment has grabbed our hearts, we will do anything we can to worship. We’ll adjust our schedules to worship on Sunday evening at 5. If we’re on vacation, we’ll find a congregation to worship with. And if we can’t gather with others, we’ll take some time to watch the service online or spend time in Scripture, prayer, and praise.

When it comes to God’s command to worship, we need a change of heart. God never gives us His commandments to burden us. When God commands us to worship, He is seeking our good. He knows that we need worship. And He also wants to be with us in a very particular, intimate way—through the Word, the Sacraments, and the

presence of other Christians. The fact that the Creator of the universe wants to spend time with us is reason enough to bump anything that gets in the way!

Reflect:

1. What excuses do we often make to break the Third Commandment? Are these valid?

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2. Think of a time when you struggled to worship each week. What got in the way? If weekly worship has become a habit for you, what led to the formation of this habit?

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3. How does God's desire to meet with us change the way we think about worship? How can you start to work on this habit?

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Prayer: *Almighty God, You are worthy of our worship, praise, and adoration. We repent of our busyness. We embrace Your call to worship. May Your affection for us keep us close to Christ and His gifts. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It consists of approximately 20 horizontal rows. Each row is defined by two parallel dotted lines, creating a series of uniform gaps for writing. The paper is otherwise completely blank, with no margins, text, or other markings.

1:1:1

Chapter 2

Worship: God's Gift

Infant twins, a two-year-old toddler, a growing church to shepherd, and no family within 1,300 miles. That was our life in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

We were often exhausted. My hair was going, going, gone. Sleepless nights were normal. We felt stretched thin, like we couldn't catch our breath.

That's when Ron and Ginny stepped in. One Sunday evening, they invited us over for dinner.

"Should we bring anything?" we asked.

"No," they replied, "Just come."

We showed up empty-handed, sat at their table, drank their wine, and ate their food. That one night turned into many. Soon, we were sharing meals with them almost every week.

It wasn't just the food. It was the rhythm of rest and joy they gave us. For a few hours each week, the weight of life lifted. Our stress leveled out. We felt human again. Their simple hospitality was life-giving.

You know what it's like to feel worn down. The stress of daily life, the weight of suffering, and the constant battle with sin drain your strength. Your family wounds you, and you wound them back. You fall short of the love God calls you to give. Work exhausts you—sometimes it even makes you wonder if any of it matters. And hovering in the background is the reality of death.

In the middle of all that weariness, Jesus speaks gently but clearly: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28).

Hebrews 10:22 invites us further: *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

Jesus says, “Just come.”

In worship, you don't need to bring anything impressive. You come as you are—tired, burdened, and honest. And the Lord of lords stoops down to serve you. He washes your feet. He sets the table. He pours the best wine and feeds you with the finest food—His own body and blood. He speaks words of forgiveness and kindness until your weary heart fills with gladness and joy.

God designed worship to be a gift to you, not another burden. He doesn't want you to constantly live on the ropes—stressed, guilt-ridden, and heavy-hearted. Instead, He offers you a life-giving rhythm of rest and renewal.

Take heart! Jesus has overcome the world. In worship, He shares the victory of His cross and empty tomb with you again and again. He declares His triumph over your sin, your fears, and your failures. He strengthens you, establishes you, and fills you with confidence in Him.

It's no surprise that Ron and Ginny became dear friends. Their faithful service caused us to love them deeply.

The same is true with God. In Luke 7, a sinful woman poured out extravagant love on Jesus—washing His feet with her tears and anointing them with perfume—because she knew how much she had been forgiven. Jesus said, “He who is forgiven little, loves little.” She loved much because she had been forgiven much. As Jesus continually forgives and serves you in worship, the same thing happens in your heart. Gratitude rises. Joy returns. Love for Him overflows.

So hear His gracious invitation: **Just come.**

Be served by your Savior. Let Him renew you. And leave worship with a heart full of gratitude, joy, and love for the One who gave everything for you.

Reflect:

1. Can you recall a season in your life when you felt worn down or overwhelmed, and God gave you the rest and strength that you needed? What were the circumstances?

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2. How may our neglect of God's blessings in worship affect our love and trust in Him?

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3. When you worship God at church, do you usually think of it as you serving Him or Him serving you?

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Prayer: *Lord God, You give us rest that we don't deserve. You welcome us to Your house full of Your gifts. Thank you for Your rest and peace. Allow us to see that gift of worship in our lives no matter our stage in life, that we come with joy and relief. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

Sermon Notes for Sept. 20, 2026

This image shows a full page of a document template designed for handwriting practice. It consists of approximately 28 evenly spaced horizontal dotted lines across the entire width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

*To prepare for this session, read,
Hebrews 4:14-16, John 15:1-11*

1:1:1

Chapter 3

Worship: Our Need

As human beings, we all need to worship something. In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther explains in the first commandment that a “god” is simply that which we trust and believe with our whole heart. Worship is then a combination of what we fear, love, and trust. Unfortunately, because of our broken, sinful nature, our worship gets distorted and focused in the wrong direction.

We see this massive world with its chaos and destructive power. We can get overwhelmed or obsessed with the things that can harm our well-being or livelihood, sometimes fearing things that do not kill us, but may make our lives uneasy (Matthew 10:28).

We love things that give us instant gratification or appeal to our pride and sense of satisfaction. We turn to those things that make us feel good and won't hurt our feelings (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

We trust in the things that will give us a sense of power and control over the world's chaos. We pour our hard work and dedication into it, sacrificing to that thing we trust, to gain that power (Matthew 6:24).

This is why weekly worship, attending church to hear God's Word and receive His Sacraments, is so crucial for the Christian life. We need worship to reorder our affections. As the week goes on, the cares, troubles, and weight of this world pressure us to worship other things. As we put our trust and love in ourselves or others above God, our world becomes even more chaotic and destructive. Anxiety and loneliness rise. Uncertainty and tension build.

When we focus on what we must accomplish and the specific thoughts and feelings we need to have, we lose sight of God's gracious gifts for us in the worship service. Worshipping this world does not give us the rest, peace, and comfort that God gives to us through His Church. Jesus makes it clear in John 15 that true joy can be found only as we are connected to Him. As Jesus connects us to Himself through Holy Scripture, Baptism, and Communion, our needs are fully met.

Our fears of this world are overcome by the One who has created all things. As Hebrews 4 says, we can come to the throne of the Omnipotent Creator of the Universe because of His grace. He meets our need for the chaos to be controlled.

Our need for love is met and infinitely exceeded by the One who sympathizes with us and loves us first (Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 4:19). God comes to us in worship, forgiving our sins and making us new. His love does not come and go with our fleeting thoughts and feelings. In a world of inconsistency, His love is constant.

Our trust increases toward the One who proves Himself the most trustworthy. He has fulfilled and continues to fulfill His promises to make us His dear children, to bear our burdens, and to be our Savior.

We need weekly worship because we desperately need the gifts God gives us in worship. Worship takes us away from the worldly worship that breaks down and destroys, and toward the worship that creates and builds our faith in the only One who will truly save.

Reflect:

1. Name things that the world fears, loves, and trusts.

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2. How does worshipping these things distort or diminish our worship of the Triune God?

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3. How does worship on Sundays meet our needs in a way that the rest of the world cannot?

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Prayer: *Caring Lord, we desperately wander, worshipping people and things that will let us down and leave us empty. Lead us to proper worship of You, where we come into Your presence and are filled to the full with Your grace and promises. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

[illegible]

1:1:1

Chapter 4

Growing in Community: God's Command

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). There are times when we take these words as a challenge rather than a recognition of our limitations and needs. My commitment to doing things on my own is a clear sign of my determination, grit, and capabilities. This mindset can bring about hard work and perseverance through difficult times. One might see themselves as *the* independent businesswoman, *the* Castaway survivor, or even *the* renegade.

However, this independent attitude can come at the expense of attachment to community. When a person sees circumstances and surroundings only in relation to themselves, they block out those around them. The mindset of "I have to look out for number one because no one else will" can damage relationships and communities.

In the same way, technology and social media can widen the divide between people. This might be someone with a particular opinion on politics or current events who only listens to those who share it, while demonizing those who hold the opposite. Distrust and hatred may arise toward someone who lives on your street or even attends Holy Cross.

Yet, the breakdown of community can be even more subtle than this. As we stare at intoxicating news feeds, listen to captivating podcasts, or scroll through addictive social media, we spend less time with those physically near us. We trade heartfelt conversations for Instagram, visits with old friends for Netflix, and fun playgrounds for Facebook.

As we are tempted to think just of ourselves, the joy and benefit of community are lost. The love and care of our neighbors become insignificant compared to our own desires and thoughts. This is a temptation for all of us.

Martin Luther described this condition of sin as *incurvatus in se*, which means “the curved in self.” To put it another way, because of sin, all of us are navel-gazing. You can take a minute to actually do it right now. Look at that beautiful belly button of yours. You could stare at it for hours. And that is what we do as we work, play, and even go to church. We think only of ourselves and how things will affect us. With little regard for others or for God, our desire for community fades.

That is why God commands us to humble ourselves. Look up from the belly button and see your neighbor. Humility changes our mindset from isolation and lone-heroism to recognition and love for the neighbor, and ultimately to the realization of Jesus Christ's love and humility for us.

The command to be humble allows us to see, with true honesty, who our neighbors are and who we are as forgiven sinners. Christ calls us into community so that we know we do not have to rely on ourselves for salvation. Our world is not tucked away in our tiny belly button. God, our Father, calls us to look up into a world of love, forgiveness, and purpose.

As we walk in fellowship with other believers, we learn that our selfish ambition gains no glory or joy. God puts us into community to shape us and cut away the temptations that would destroy us. This allows us to see the true nature of our neighbors. They are like us, in need of a savior, yet also compelled to look only to themselves. As we look to the interests of others, we are a part of God's workmanship. He sees their needs, knows their hurt, and sends us to be a part of their restoration. We no longer have to be in isolation, because God cares for our needs through His community. No, man should not be alone, because He has a wonderful, gracious plan for us in community.

Reflect:

1. How have you seen selfish behaviors disrupt communities and relationships?

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2. Read Philippians 2:1-11. Why should Jesus' humility affect our own humility?

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3. How can you humbly look to the interests of others at Holy Cross?

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Prayer: *Gracious Father, so often we see only ourselves and our needs and desires. Forgive us for our inflated pride and lack of empathy for others. Help us understand why you put us in this community. Give us strength and humility to care for others and be cared for by others. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Sermon Notes for Oct. 4, 2026

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*To prepare for this session, read,
Galatians 6:1-5, Matthew 18:10-14*

1:1:1

Chapter 5

Growing in Community: God's Gift

Who doesn't love a good gift? A gift from someone we love evokes gratitude, happiness, and that warm, fuzzy feeling of being truly known. God's gifts are even greater than any earthly gift we may receive, and He gave us a special gift when He gave us the body of Christ. He gave us a family, a group of people who believe and confess the same things, and He gave us a safe place to make mistakes and to find forgiveness.

If you have ever spent time around a child, you are well aware of just how many times they make mistakes. Learning how to be a person is hard, and learning how to be a person clothed in Christ is even tougher. We expect children to make mistakes or push boundaries because that's all a part of how we are designed to learn and grow. Children grow when we give them a safe place to make mistakes, find forgiveness, and learn from what they experience.

God never intended us to walk this world alone and navigate the complexities that come with being Christians in a broken world on our own. He desires us to be in community, to bear one another's burdens, and to be in a safe place where we grow from our mistakes.

So often we look at the world around us and notice all the brokenness, the hurt, the wrong, and we lose sight of God's design. We easily succumb to feelings of judgment or condemnation when we see a brother or sister fall into temptation. Our first instinct may be to try to teach them a lesson or give them a speech so they know just how badly they messed up. And while God calls us to bear one another's burdens and to help one another in our transgressions, He also asks us to do it with a spirit of gentleness.

Jesus is our ultimate guiding light in showing us how to embrace the gift of community and best serve and love one another in gentleness. As we see in Galatians, Paul references the Christian's duty to fulfill the law of Christ. And what is the law of Christ? It is the law of love. God showed His love to us in the sacrifice of His one and only Son on the cross. That love is so great that He invites us into it through the waters of Holy Baptism, by which God writes His name over us. We belong to Him. We are covered in His goodness, His mercy, His grace, and His protection.

The community God provides for us is His gift to keep us steadfast in His Word. That same love and forgiveness that we receive, we show to each other when we stray away from the flock. We lift each other up in prayer and help one another when we stumble. We embrace the gift of each other in a broken world and "look to Jesus as the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Reflect:

1. What is your default response when you see a brother or sister in Christ stumble? Do you pray for them? Judge them? Reach out to help them? Read Galatians 6:1-5. How can you grow to better bear your fellow Christian's burdens?

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2. When have you seen God provide community for you when you were struggling?

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3. How can our baptism into Christ remind us of our call to be a part of the body of Christ and to grow as a community?

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Prayer: Heavenly Father, You guide and keep us in faith toward You in a faithful community. Thank you for the gift of other people to guide us and shape us. Help us hold on to this gift and honor the community You have placed us in. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sermon Notes for Oct. 11, 2026

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines, typical of primary school writing paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

*To prepare for this session, read,
James 5:13-20, Matthew 18:15-20*

1:1:1

Chapter 6

Growing in Community: Our Need

At church, when someone asks, “How are you?” how often do you answer, “Good,” when really, you’re not alright?

Young adults often learn how to present the version of themselves they think others want them to see. Today, people sometimes call this “masking” or “social camouflaging.” The term is commonly used in conversations around neurodivergence, where people may hide parts of themselves to fit in or avoid rejection. But more broadly, masking is when people suppress their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors to fit in and avoid judgment.

Masking is exhausting. It creates isolation, anxiety, and burnout. How often do we hide our real struggles from our brothers and sisters in Christ? How often do we pretend we are spiritually fine when we are actually worn down, resentful, lonely, or ashamed?

But the Trinity has given us something healthier than hiding: *the body of Christ*.

In John's Gospel, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the *Parakletos* — a Greek word for “the Helper, Comforter, Advocate, and the One who comes alongside His people in their time of need.” Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to His disciples so they would not be alone in the messy work of living together in a fallen world. The Spirit gathers Christians into a family and works through that family to strengthen one another.

That is exactly what we see in Matthew 18 and James 5. In Matthew 18, Jesus teaches Christians how to seek reconciliation when sin damages relationships. Instead of suppressing conflict, Christians are called to accountability and forgiveness. James is honest about the realities of everyday life: suffering, sickness, and wandering from the truth. He also points out the Spirit's healthy interpersonal tools in Christ's community: confession, forgiveness, prayer, anointing, gratitude, and the soul care of pursuing lost sheep. In both readings, *God meets the needs of His people through His people*.

The Christian life is not about pretending to be strong. It is a continual rhythm of repentance and restoration. We sin, confess, and are absolved in Christ through His Church. This is part of living out our baptismal identity daily — dying to sin and being raised again in Christ. It's not just an individual process, but an interpersonal one.

Luther described vocations as the “masks of God,” meaning that God works through ordinary people in ordinary callings. God comforts through friends. He provides wisdom through parents and teachers. Husbands and wives practice confession and absolution with one another. God gives us our daily bread through farmers and businesses. The Holy Spirit works through the body of Christ to care for His people.

Satan thrives in isolation, secrecy, shame, and despair. He wants Jesus’ disciples hidden behind masks—not the healthy, God-given masks of vocation, but the unhealthy masks of hiding and pretending. Christ’s way is better: confession and absolution, truth-telling, compassion, mercy, prayer, reconciliation, healing, gratitude, and love. This is freedom.

Christian community is not a gathering of perfect people pretending they have it all together. It is Christ gathering weary and broken sinners together so they may receive His mercy, bear one another’s burdens, and be strengthened by His grace.

Reflect:

1. What are some ways Christians unintentionally encourage masking? What are some practical ways a church or life group can become a safer place for people to remove their masks?

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2. When have you experienced God caring for you through a brother or sister in Christ?

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3. The Spirit gives God's family interpersonal tools such as prayer, encouragement, truth-telling, gratitude, reconciliation, and healing to care for others. Which of these do you think God has used most in your life? Which one would you like to grow in as you serve those around you?

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Prayer: *Loving Father, You created us to be in community with others. Guide and protect us when the community breaks down, and we become isolated. Put faithful Christians into our lives who give wisdom, encouragement, and accountability. Allow us to see how You use our community to bless us and keep us. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

[illegible]

1:1:1

Chapter 7

Serving: God's Command

Click. Nothing. Click. Nothing. CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK
CLICK! Nothing.

The TV refused to turn on. All I wanted to do was sit down, relax, and watch some highlights from the game I missed. What's the issue with this silly remote? I smacked it, clicked it a few more times, and finally opened the back to check the batteries.

There's your problem! The batteries were installed backward. The energy wasn't flowing because the power wasn't lined up to reach the circuits. All it needed was for the polarity to be switched. Once that happened—BOOM! The TV zapped to life, and all was working again.

Humans have their internal power flow reversed. Originally, God designed us to serve creation as we joyfully enjoyed unending life with Him. But as fallen creatures, we learn from a very early age that we need to look out for our own interests. We need to get the best snacks before our sister does; she can have the leftovers. We need to be sure we get the best toys at preschool first; others can get in line. We need to be sure we have enough money in our account to feel secure; we will worry about others once we are completely set for life. In other words, we insist on being served before we serve.

When we are young, we do this out of instinct—an innate selfishness we are all born with. When we are older, we might reflect philosophically on why we act this way. At the root of these attitudes is a deep sense of scarcity. We've experienced hunger, loss, and limited resources. We understand that "money doesn't grow on trees," and we have been exhausted to the point of realizing that energy is a finite resource.

But what if that instinct could be reversed in us? What if God could take our batteries and reverse them so that power flowed, not in a selfish way, but selflessly? What if instead of a hurried sense that we **MUST** serve ourselves to preserve ourselves, we have a **DEEP SENSE** of being completely cared for, served, and loved? If instead of being filled with a gnawing sense of scarcity, we were always surrounded by abundance, security, and well-being, we may end up desiring to serve instead of demanding to be served.

This is exactly what the Gospel does to us. It changes the flow of energy in us.

Jesus comes and serves us with his very life. He left complete abundance, security, and eternal life for our sake. He became a vulnerable, killable servant. He spent His entire fortune on you! More than that, He gave you the very breath in His lungs, the very blood in His veins. He has secured your well-being for all eternity through His death and resurrection!

- In Jesus, you are the richest person in the room. Always. You are a co-heir of all creation!
- In Jesus, you are the healthiest person in the room. Always. You have the resurrection!
- In Jesus, you have all the time in the world. You have eternal life.

Out of this abundance, you are commanded to serve. In this security, you are commanded to risk for others. In this wealth, you are commanded to give your wealth away.

This command is completely contrary to our sinful nature. The sinner within us will always be obsessed with self-preservation; to that inner skeptic, the command to serve feels like a death sentence. And for the “Old Adam,” it is.

But in Christ, we joyfully keep this command. The new creation that God has begun in you loves to serve. The *real* you—created anew in Christ—wholeheartedly believes the promises of God and earnestly desires to imitate Jesus, the ultimate Servant.

Reflect:

1. Read Mark 10:41-44. Does God's opinion of greatness change your opinion of what is great? What are some examples in your life that God would consider great?

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2. Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. What does Peter mention that can help motivate our service? How can these things specifically motivate your service?

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3. Reflect on this statement: "God will reward your faithful service even if no one on earth does." How does this change the way we receive Jesus' command to serve?

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Prayer: *Dear Jesus, Thank You for Your service and sacrifice for us. Through Your death and resurrection, we have gifts and blessings we cannot fully comprehend. Help us, Lord, to be confident in these gifts, so that we can serve our neighbors. Help us to turn to You, that Your grace and mercy may flow through us. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Sermon Notes for Nov. 8, 2026

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*To prepare for this session, read,
1 Corinthians 12:4-11, John 13:1-17*

1:1:1

Chapter 8

Serving: God's Gift

God's command to serve makes sense. We are selfish creatures, looking out for our own interests and desires. Of course, God has to tell us to go out and help our neighbors. Yet, God, in His infinite wisdom and grace, gives blessings to us as we follow Him. God calls us to participate in His great work of grace and redemption. We are Christ's followers, not just His fans. And as His followers, we walk the same path He has already walked. If the Son of God washed His disciples' feet, served others, and even died on the cross in our place, we are blessed to do as He did.

Like a child who gets to work alongside his father in the garage, we can see it as a joy to join the Father in His work for others. He teaches us how to use what we have for others. Whatever our service is, we can take heart that God has given it to us for a reason, and He is right there through it all, as a patient, wise Father training His child in wisdom and love.

But where and how do I serve? Do I simply sit on the street corner and wash feet all day? Here again is the beauty and grace of God's call to serve. God has uniquely created us and placed us for service. God has given you possessions, talents, abilities, experiences, and relationships that are particular to you.

Whether it is the big truck to help friends move, the patience to babysit your brother's kids for a night, the space to host your neighborhood BBQ, the generosity to provide for a struggling family, the bravery to join the military, or the intelligence to build new homes, our gifts are unique to our situations and relationships.

Yet, they are not for us alone. God's gifts to us are always meant to be gifts for others. God is calling your gifts and desires into His service. As St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, those "varieties of gifts" are "for the common good." We do not hoard them like Scrooge McDuck for our simple amusement. God expects and encourages us to use what we have to serve our neighbor.

We must take a hard look at ourselves to understand what our gifts truly are. The first gift, of course, is the Holy Spirit, who gives us faith in Christ and builds us up in love and endurance to face the challenges of service. He grants us wisdom and patience for those acts.

With His guidance, we're able to see our possessions, abilities, desires, and relationships as gifts in His service. These are not simply our well-wishes or things we hope we are good at, but the actual things in our lives right now. As the Holy Spirit continues to work in us and as we serve more and more, we come to realize and appreciate that all we have can be in service to others. From the smallest smile to the biggest sacrifice, God places us in a position to serve our family, church, and community uniquely.

Reflect:

1. What challenges do we face when serving others?
What are some ways that we may hoard our gifts for ourselves?

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2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. How does this passage define gifts from God?

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3. Where can Holy Cross benefit from your God-given gifts?

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Prayer: *Dear Lord, help us see that our service to others is a gift You give. Allow us to be shaped and blessed by the things we do for others, as we are shaped and blessed by what they do for us. Help us to freely share the talents and gifts You have given to us. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Sermon Notes for Nov. 15, 2026

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal dotted lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The background is white, and there are no margins or other markings present.

To prepare for this session, read,
Romans 12:3-8, John 12:20-26



Chapter 9

Serving: Our Need

We often speak of service as meeting the needs of others. In our God-given vocations, we function as “masks of God,” channels through which God cares for those around us. However, we also need to serve for our *own sake*.

Imagine that you just brought home a cute little Border Collie puppy. You set up a kennel, buy some toys, and get a dog bowl. As it grows, its boundless energy becomes obvious—it wants to play constantly and becomes obnoxious without exercise. But you’re super busy, so you leave it locked in the kennel with little exercise and play. The dog’s anxiety rises, destructive behavior begins, and it even stops eating regularly. The problem is not the dog; it was created to herd sheep all day! Without a challenging task, it cannot thrive.

Human beings are similarly wired. Before the Fall, God gave Adam and Eve the good command to subdue the earth and exercise dominion (Genesis 1:28). Work is not a curse, but an inherent feature of being made in God’s image. We are designed to serve and cultivate creation as His representatives. To refuse that purpose is like permanently kenneling a Border Collie: we become diminished versions of ourselves. We literally must find ways to serve to be fully human.

One modern form of this refusal is the endless dopamine cycle of screens. Time and energy drain away, and people—young and old—grow sick in body and mind because they are cut off from their God-designed calling. When someone recovers and pours energy into meaningful service, we instinctively rejoice; they are becoming more fully alive.

Solomon saw this clearly: “I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man” (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13).

Reflect:

1. Have you ever gone through a season of non-service where your life felt purposeless? What did that experience feel like?

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2. In what ways might a life dominated by screens or self-serving leisure leave us diminished, and what kinds of service restore that sense of purpose?

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Adam and Eve bore the image of God to the world but failed horribly. Jesus, the New Adam, is *the very image of God*, and He fulfilled God's will spectacularly! He fulfilled it through the self-giving service of the cross.

In Christ, God has restored to you His image *and* the good task of serving creation. Ephesians 2:10 says, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*" You are created in Christ for service! If we don't serve, we get sick.

As Paul writes, God has predestined us to "be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29). So, becoming like Christ, the ultimate servant, is your future destiny. As we serve, we are embracing the reality that we are a new creation in Christ. We are exercising that new nature God has given us, and embracing the true form of humanity that we will be fully conformed to in the resurrection. So break out of the kennel and get some exercise—you need it!

Reflect:

3. Luther says the Christian should "give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me." How does freely serving others both express and deepen our conformity to Christ?

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4. What practical difference does it make to see service as participation in Christ's servant-form rather than merely a duty or a way to feel useful?

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Prayer: *Heavenly Father, help us to see where we can serve You and our neighbor. Help us to be as Christ to our neighbor, with humility, hard work, and love. Thank You for Your grace when we fail and Your love to strengthen our love. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

[illegible]

Prayer Requests

[illegible]

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