One day, when one of my sons was a little boy, he said to me, "Dad, you never let me do what I want to do." I said to him, "What do you want to do?" His response: "I want to do what I want to do!" How familiar those words are to us self-centered sinners.

The Way of Service

How different is the way of Jesus Christ: the way of service. In John 6:38, He says, "I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me." In effect He was saying, "I want to do what My Father wants Me to do!" That's service in Jesus Christ: doing the will of God, doing what God wants us to do. Christ calls us to follow Him in the way of service. Please read Mark 10:42–45. How does Jesus define greatness in God's sight? _________________________

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The Motivation for Service

The above passage from Mark 10 shows us that the motivation for service comes from Christ's service to us. He does not tell us to serve so that He will serve us. Rather, He says that we are to serve because He has served us and has given His life on the cross for us, for the forgiveness of our sins. He always makes the first move. He always takes the first step. "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34) "We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

Transformed in Christ

Service does not come naturally to us self-centered sinners. In order for servants to be formed, sinners first need to be transformed. Transformation precedes formation. We need to be in Christ in order to be a servant of Christ. Jesus commands, "Baptize . . . and teach." First comes spiritual rebirth, then maturation and development. Please read 2 Corinthians 5:16–17. How does being "a new creation in Christ" cause you to see yourself and others in a new way? Be as specific and practical as possible. _________________________

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Here’s how Jesus puts it in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before people that they will see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Nothing brings greater joy to the heart of a believer than bringing glory and honor to God. That’s what Jesus teaches us to pray in the Our Father: "Hallowed be Thy name," which means, "May Your name be honored and exalted among us and through us."

Living Sacrifices

Please read Romans 12:1–8. Notice the opening words: "In view of God’s mercy . . . " It’s not in view of God’s justice or wrath, not in fear or guilt, but in gratitude for the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. That’s why we offer ourselves in service to God and to others, using our gifts for the good of our neighbor and the glory of God. As you honestly and realistically assess your gifts (v. 3), where do you see yourself serving now or in the future? How have you been the beneficiary of someone else’s gifts in the past or the present? _________________________

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For The LIFE of the World
A Servant’s Epitaph

“When David had served God’s purpose in his generation, he fell asleep” (Acts 13:36). That says all that needs to be said about a life well lived in the service of God. God grant that these words may be true of us in our generation, that we will serve God’s purpose—in the strength, talents and gifts supplied by God with all to the glory of Him—and then fall asleep in Christ. When we awake, we shall be in His presence and in His likeness, beholding Him as He is, serving Him day and night in His temple. Please read 1 John 3:2. In our earthly life, we are each a work in progress. When will our process of transformation and formation be completed for all eternity?

Please read Revelation 7:13–17. Look at all the wonderful things God will do for His people in heaven. What will we be doing for God?

We pray: Father, give us the power of Your Holy Spirit to do what You want us to do in the strength You supply, using the talents and gifts You provide to make a Christlike difference in the lives of others all to Your glory and honor, now and forever. Amen!

Rev. Richard Koehneke retired on July 31, 2009, after 38 years in pastoral ministry, serving for the last 16 years as senior pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne. Since 2001, he has been a member of the Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He is a member of the Next Steps Advisory Group of the LCMS Indiana District.