

Series: *LIVING BEYOND MYSELF—October 29, 2006*

**MAKING YOUR MARK!
John 13:1-17**

I. INTRO

- A. Lori and I and our family moved to Markham back in 1992. At the time, we felt like foreigners—even though Lori had been raised in Toronto. She remembered coming out to Markham as a little girl to her uncle’s farm down on a dirt road south of us, known as **Steeles Ave**. This was years and years and **years** ago.

-She remembered that her Grandma’s maiden name had been **Pike**, daughter of Abraham Pike and Elizabeth Ramer. She dug a little deeper, and found out that, like us, her ancestors had moved to Markham from Pennsylvania. In fact, they were among the original Pennsylvania Dutch settlers.

1. It’s a fascinating story, really. The Revolutionary War had just taken place in the States. This group of German farmers had declared their allegiance to the King of England. So, based on that, Peter Reesor came on horseback to look for the *trail of the black walnut*—soil where black walnut trees grew, which they found in Markham. He sold his horse here and walked back to Pennsylvania.
2. At that point, Lori’s ancestors, the Ramers and the Pikes, had a decision to make. Was loyalty to the King enough reason for them to leave everything and everyone they knew behind, pack what they could in a Connestoga wagon, and start an adventure—not knowing what it held for them?
-And was Peter Reesor telling the truth about this soil being some of the best available? They’d have to clear hundreds of acres, face unknown challenges—weather that would undoubtedly be more severe—I mean, was it worth it all? Well, they gambled—**bet the farm**—and the rest is history.

-This is a picture of some of her ancestors. Don’t they look like happy people?

- B. Pioneers are, by definition, people who leave what they **know**, what is familiar, established and known—and move into an unknown future. A future that **they believe**, sometimes based only on a hunch, will be better than their present. In our world, sometimes it is, and sometime it isn’t.
1. Jesus always calls people to be pioneers. To leave their past. Their comfort zone. To leave what feels familiar and safe and known behind. And that creates a problem because, truth is, we’ve all got chicken skin on the outside of our hearts. But He **calls** us. And **maybe** isn’t an answer; only **yes!** or **no!**
 2. I believe that in these next few weeks, if you listen, you will hear God calling you. It’s the call of loyalty—only, this time, it’s not the King of England. It’s the One who rules the universe.
-It may be a little scary. And you’ll have to decide, “What do I really believe about life. About what counts and what doesn’t? About what brings happiness and fulfillment and adventure—and what doesn’t?”
 3. My prayer is that you will think deeply, have courage, and make the choices of a lifetime.

II. THREE CALLINGS

A. It might be helpful at this juncture to talk briefly about what, exactly, a **calling** is. How many of you ever, as a kid, had your Mom call you for supper? Whether you heard her or not probably depended on how good of a time you were having—and how hungry you were, and the consequences in your home of ignoring such a calling. To hear, you had to have both the opportunity and the sense of urgency.

1. Whenever someone has what they describe as a **calling**, it's usually a combination of both an opportunity and an inner sense of urgency. "***This is what I'm supposed to do.***" It's a sense of, "my purpose in life is to do ***this.***" Example. Some people see teaching school as a **job**. But others see teaching school as a **calling**. If you've had many teachers, you've probably had both. When someone has a **calling**, well, that's the stuff inspiring movies are based on—like **Mr. Holland's Opus**, or **Music of the Heart**. I hope you've had at **least** one teacher like that!

-My sense of **calling** started when I was probably about 10 years old—and then morphed over the years. And I've grown to understand it more and more—how it's intended to be a part of everyone's life, everyone's sense of purpose. I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt—it's your **calling** that gets you through the tough times. The times when there are more obstacles than you can count; when you just feel like chucking it all.

-I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt in my mind. **You** have a calling. You are not just part of the DNA jetsam and flotsam floating around in space. You have a purpose that is just as important as mine. And I want to give some direction on finding and **following—obeying—your calling**.

2. When Jesus, God in human form, walked on this planet, He gave three distinct callings to those who gathered around him. His first calling to people was to **follow him**. In fact, He started doing that right away. He asked two brothers, Simon and Andrew, to leave their fishing business and follow him. And they left their nets and boats and did just that. He asked a tax collector named Matthew to do the same thing. And he did—left his little tax stand—now known as a tax **shelter**—right there, and followed Jesus.
3. What **was** that call to follow? Well, at the core, he was asking them to try on a new kind of life. It was a little like saying, "Why don't you try forgiving instead of bitterness? Why don't you try faith instead of religion? Why don't you try peace instead of anxiety? Try listening—and doing life My way—and see if it works."
 - a. At the heart, it was hanging with, belonging to a group of people who were doing life a new way. And this Jesus had power to back up his request that they obey—try following Him.

-So, why did they take the risk? Well, there was another force at work. Jesus put it like this:

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44 NIV)."

- b. Around here we talk about the fact that we want everyone to sense that they **belong**--whatever stage they happen to be at in trying on or checking out the life Jesus taught.

-But it's more than that. According to Jesus, there is a supernatural part to this where the Spirit of God is drawing us toward belonging, following, changing. I'll bet you've felt it, too. It's like God is whispering your name. "I made you! You belong to me! **Come home!**"

- c. And there comes a point, in that calling to follow, where we **believe**. We believe God loves us and has made a way to come home through Jesus. We believe that the way Jesus taught us to live life is the **best** way to live it. We come to believe that the Bible is true in all it teaches. Just like it took Jesus disciples time to believe—it takes **us** time, too. And it doesn't all come at once—that's why we have vowed that The Olive Branch will be a safe community to belong to; where it's okay to doubt, to struggle, to take the time necessary to try what Jesus says on—find out if it works.

- B. There's another calling. Everyone is called to **Become**. We think quite differently than that—normally. Our first thought, when it comes to a **calling** is almost always, "**What am I supposed to do?**" But a calling comes from a place that is a lot richer and deeper than that. It's the call to become like Jesus as you try on His ways.

1. Jesus knew what his followers would become way before they did. In fact, sometimes he changed their names. Like Simon. One of the first things Jesus did was say to Simon, "I'm going to **change your name!** You've got a new identity. I'm gonna call you **Rock!**" Now, that wasn't who Peter really was. Not then. Simon was kind of ambivalent—back and forth, up and down. -But with the power of God the Spirit in him, Peter grew into his new name and new identity. He became one of the great heroes of the early church.

2. Jesus promised that those who would follow Him and believe in him could change **so radically**, that it would seem that they'd been born all over again. And that happened. Paul, who **hated** the people of God and destroyed them whenever and wherever He could wrote the most magnificent definition of love the world has seen. See, the deal is that you have to become who you are supposed to become **so that** you can do what you're supposed to do.

-It's a magnificent thing. The world has been officially notified by Jesus that **people can change! They really can!** Stingy people can become generous. People who were sour and bitter about life can become big-hearted and forgiving. See, God sees really good stuff in us, potential in us that we can't see. He also sees bad stuff in us that we're blind to—stuff that will haunt us and cripple our lives. And he calls us to become.

- C. There's a third calling everyone receives from God. We are called to **serve**. To do God's work on this planet and see his kingdom, His leadership become a reality in this world. To use whatever gifts, talents, brains, resources, time and energy He's given us; to **partner** with Him in something way bigger than we can imagine—way bigger than our little lives. But to do that, we have to obey His call to **serve**.

1. From what I can see, the call to serve was by **far** the most difficult—and most resisted ask Jesus made of his disciples. The conversation ping-pongs through His whole ministry. “Will you serve?” **Silence.** “Will you serve?” **Well, can I be number one?** “Will you serve.” **But what about him?** “Will you serve?” **How about if I lead!** “Will you serve?” **So, who’s going to be in charge?** “Will you serve?” **Can I be in charge? I can handle it!** “Will you serve?”
2. Part of this struggle comes from the misunderstanding of that culture that the Messiah would come, rout Israel’s enemies, and set up a throne in Jerusalem from which he would rule the nations.
 - a. They’re actually on the way to Jerusalem and James and John come up with the clever idea of having their Mom, Jesus’ Aunt Salome, ask for the #2 and #3 spots in the new kingdom. See how far apart they were? Jesus is saying, “Guys, in a few days I’m going to get rejected, flogged and crucified!” **They’re** thinking, “So! When do we get to the **greatness** part? You know. David’s throne. David’s palace. Trumpets. Victory marches. Caesar bowing to **us...!**
 - The whole group is stirred up. Jesus sits them all down. He says, “You’re missing the whole point. My kingdom will not be like a kosher version of Caesar, Herod, Nebuchadnezzar, or **any other kingdom you’ve seen!** Greatness **God’s** way, is not about seeing how many people you can get to serve you. I’m flipping the org chart. In **my** Kingdom, greatness will be about servanthood. I came to serve—not **be** served. I’m calling you—not to **be** served—but to serve.
 - b. Now, that’s pretty straightforward, don’t you think? How many of you think they got it? Well, apparently they didn’t. It’s down to the wire. Jesus knows that if His Kingdom is going to move forward, if He’s going to build great people, **servanthood** is at the top of the list.
 - It’s the last meal Jesus will ever have with his disciples. He’s told them to go prepare a room for the supper. This is the Passover Meal—more significant in that culture than Christmas Dinner is in ours. Everything needs to be right—but it’s not. It was a common courtesy on every occasion to have someone at the door to wash people’s feet—and no one was there to do it. Coming to that meal with unwashed feet would be a little like coming to Christmas dinner in your bathing suit.
 - The **equipment** is there—towel, water jar, basin—but no servant. And everyone files in, pauses, looks at the basin and water, then at their feet, and goes and sits down. There were no words, only silent thoughts. Like, “Who forgot the servant? Gee, on a day like this! Well, I’m not doin’ it!”
 - c. Jesus looks around the table, the food already served, sadness in his eyes. He’s thinking, “They **still** don’t get it. This is my last chance.” Without a word, Jesus gets up and heads for the equipment. He strips down to his tunic; wraps the towel around his waist; pours water in the basin—and starts washing feet. There is not a sound in the room—apart from a brief

objection from Peter—only the splashing of water and the cracking sound in Jesus' knees as he knelt by each guy's feet, washed them, and dried them.

-And then Jesus stands there holding a filthy towel and a basin of muddy water—sweat dripping from his forehead, he says these words:

"Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13:12-17 NIV)."

- d. They never forgot that image. God on his knees, in his underwear, doing something they were too proud to do: wash feet. They never forgot the image the next day—those same hands that had washed their feet, nailed open, on a cross. After that meal, one of the greatest compliments you could give one of Jesus' followers was not, "Wow! You blew us away with your miracles!" or, "Man—you sure know how to get things done!" or, "I have never seen anyone lay out an org chart and manage an organization like you." Nope, the greatest compliment was, "Wow! What a **servant's** heart. You remind me of Jesus."

3. These words Jesus spoke and the blessing He **promised** were not just intended for that circle of twelve. These words are for **anyone/everyone** who associates themselves with Jesus. It's a very simple message. God has called us to serve others and do simple acts of kindness. All of us. **True** greatness comes by serving, not being served. Jesus, Son of God, led the way and set the example. As His followers, people who have taken His Name, we follow His example. -How many of you think you might like to have a life that is **blessed** by God? If you do, it doesn't come by knowing this teaching; it comes, as Jesus said, by **doing** it. By actually **servicing**. Ever since then, Jesus has asked every follower, "Will you serve?" Some have. Some haven't.

III. THE GAMBLE

- A. If you want to find your true, God-given calling, you have to answer the call of Jesus. The call to **follow**; to try on His way of life.

The call to believe that He is, in fact, God—and what He says is true. And then the call to become the person you were meant to be by **servicing**.

1. Now, let me ask a very candid question. What do you think **most people** believe is way to a **blessed** life; i.e., a really great, happy, satisfying, meaningful life?

-My sense is that **most people** believe this kind of life comes from living **The Canadian Dream**—which is a lot like the **American Dream**—except Canadian. This dream is usually some kind of stew made up of the following ingredients; success, popularity, achievement, good health—all with a fair amount of money thrown in. **Servicing** and doing basic acts of kindness doesn't even show up on most people's radar screen when it comes to happiness and meaning. Servicing is

something you **might** do it if you have some leftover time after doing everything else. Think that's pretty fair? That's what I see and read about.

-According to the dream—the better you are at accumulating more success, more money, more fun, more friends, more stuff, better health—the more **blessed** you should feel. So-o-o—does it? Is that what **you** hear from the people who are coming **back** from the mountain everyone's trying to climb? Are they saying, "Man, it's **worth the climb!** It's **so cool!** You wouldn't believe how satisfied all this has made me!"

2. There's one well-known guy who did reach the pinnacle; I mean, according to the record book, he got higher than anyone else. The guy was Solomon. He was extremely wise and intelligent. And when he was off on a tangent in his life, he apparently tried to find happiness in all the ways everyone does. And he kept a record of it all in the book of Ecclesiastes.
 - a. To start with—he started with a great relationship with God. He was a fantastic leader and had success that was revered world-wide. It was in **that** mode that he decided on this tangent of plumbing the depths of pleasure. And he tried it all.
 - He was an incredible student—and built amazing gardens and orchards and parks—dazzling in their natural beauty.
 - Then he acquired the tons of male and female slaves to take the work out of everything. He snapped his fingers—and he got whatever he wanted.
 - He redefined education and commerce for his day—and made himself and his whole nation wealthy.
 - Wanna talk home entertainment systems? Solomon bought the entertainment! The singers, the instruments, the dancers and the actors!
 - And then he acquired beautiful women to share his bed. 700 wives; 300 concubines. I hardly know what to say about that—so I won't say anything. Listen to his assessment of the blessing he felt from all this: ***Then I took a good look at everything I'd done, looked at all the sweat and hard work. But when I looked, I saw nothing but smoke. Smoke, and spitting into the wind. There was nothing to any of it. Nothing (Eccl. 2:11 Msg.)!***
 - b. I'll tell you what I think the subconscious thought is for many people; "But for **me** it will be different! I get a little hit from getting a little; I'll get a **lot** of hit from getting a **lot!**"
3. The bottom line question is: When you're at the end of life, what will lead you to say, "The way I led my life was the **right** way. My life was meaningful and satisfying. I'm proud of what I did—and I became the person I was supposed to become. I can leave this life and the people I touched in peace." Jesus said this **blessing** comes from serving others out of love. The world system says that it comes from primarily serving yourself. Which is it? Who are you going to believe?

-Hybels, in his book, ***The Volunteer Revolution*** calls this **The Great Gamble**. How many of you know what gambling is—not from **personal** experience of course, but from stuff you've read and people you've talked to? Anyone ever

won? Some people do. One couple in Las Vegas found out that the husband was going to lose his job, so they went out to dinner and stopped at a casino on the way home. They played a slot machine for a few minutes and won million bucks! That's not all—they went back to the same slot machine a few weeks later and won 26 million. **Where's that slot machine!!**

- a. But if you look into the real odds on gambling, know what the chances are of you winning like that?
Let's put it this way—you are 121 times more likely to get killed by lightning! The whole thing that draws people to gambling is the long shot that you can experience the ultimate payday without ever having to punch a timecard or go to cubicle land.
-Something else that's really quite fascinating. They've done studies on lottery winners and guess what they've found? That the bathtub full of cash they find themselves in creates some problems they never anticipated—like marriage breakdowns, jealousy, family feuds, and addictions. Surprisingly, statistics show that people are slightly **less** happy after winning than they were before—but they don't want to give the money back!
- b. Bu-u-ut, maybe things **will** be different for you. So, you're going to have to gamble—one way or the other. You've got one life; one shot. What's it gonna be. Who will you believe? Jesus—or Donald Trump—or whoever else's smiling face is on TV or in the paper as the world's latest shining success in the race for cash and popularity?

B. Again, the servanthood mindset is one that says, "I am not here to consume; to get others to serve me. I am here to **serve**. To **give back**. Friends, this is **upstream, uphill** stuff. But I can **absolutely guarantee** you that, at the end of your life, it's where you will want to be. Know why? Because that's what you and I were **made** to do—and **if** we don't—we miss our calling.

1. As I was thinking about this whole issue of serving—it suddenly hit me **why** Jesus was so emphatic about it. Everything in life points towards it—even though it may be the thing we resist the most. In fact, **everything on this planet is weighted toward serving!** Know why? Because it was created by someone who has the biggest servant-heart of all. God. And **we** were created in His image.

-And when He showed up on this planet, He said these words that ring down through the corridors of time, **Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for man... You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet... Now that you know these things, you will be BLESSED if you DO them (Mark 10:45; John 13:13-14,17 NIV).**"

- a. If that's not true, if greatness **doesn't** come from serving, and if the life of blessing and happiness and fulfillment and meaning **doesn't** come from serving, then Jesus lied.
- b. Friends, the reason Jesus hit this thing again and again and again and again is that **this** is the work that most desperately needs done in us—to create a servant heart. If that doesn't happen, faith turns into religion—

where the study of God's Word, prayer, the church—everything gets twisted into products we consume; and spiritual life gets centered around us.

-Read the Bible, friends, and you'll see that the significance of spiritual life is **not** based on how much Bible we learn, how many times we've prayed, how many great worship times we've experienced, or how many miracles we've seen happen when we named it and claimed it. Christianity is not a product to be consumed; it's a life of service to the Most High God.

- c. That makes sense of why Jesus was **so insistent** on that His followers learn servanthood. To the point where he—God Himself--would get down on his hands and knees in his underwear to wash their filthy feet. Whether or not His mission would ever be accomplished on this planet depended on it.

-I believe all Heaven holds it's breath and waits when we get redeemed, born again. The question they ask is, "Will they **dare** to be great? Will they **dare** to believe Jesus? Will they serve, or will they settle for being served?"

3. The natural question people ask is, "So—where? How? When? What do I do?" I'm going to spend the next few weeks answering these questions—but let me make the answer as simple as possible.

-Who needs their "feet washed" in any given room—figuratively speaking? Not scrubbed with a wire brush and bleach, "**I'll get these suckers clean!**" No, gently, tenderly cared for. Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? This guy gets beaten almost to death, robbed, and left naked and bleeding right in the middle of the road. Two religious people saw him and kept on truckin'-- walked right around him. The person Jesus celebrated was the guy who saw him, stopped, and served him—got him some help. Having a servant heart—with servant eyes changes the way you see people coming through doors, loaded with groceries. It changes the way you drive—and how you see people trying to get in a line-up.

-And, truth is, it's usually not easy or convenient. As I was working on this message, I had at least a couple of opportunities to serve someone. The thought occurred to me, "Are you just going to **talk** about this, or are you actually going to **do** it?" So, I chose to just talk about it. Actually, I did serve. Serving is inconvenient. Sometimes it's expensive. It's almost never easy—and it's occasionally quite messy. Sometimes it goes totally unnoticed and unappreciated.

-But, then, who ever said serving Jesus would be easy, painless, convenient and cost-free. Like you can do it from your Lazee-Boy? It's not!! And it wasn't for Jesus, either. But because He became the servant of all, eternal life became possible for everyone.

-See, when we serve, **everybody wins!** You win. You get the blessing and meaning you long for. God wins—his purposes in this world get accomplished. When the church of Jesus Christ acts like He did—it wins, and people are redeemed, the hungry get fed, the naked get clothed, the homeless find shelter, and the diseased get medicine.

Imagine how the 6.5 billion people in the **world** would win if the 2.8 billion people who call themselves followers of Jesus were awakened to serve as Jesus served!! Everyone would win—and it would transform the face of this planet!

IV. CLOSING

- A. A couple of weeks ago, Elias Vamvakas sent me the story you saw at the beginning about a Dad named Dick Hoyt who simply set out, not for renown, but to serve his handicapped son, Rick. Rick said, “When we run, I don’t feel handicapped anymore!” And so Dick hasn’t stopped. I found this story so moving!
-There’s a footnote to this story. Two years ago Dick had a mild heart attack during a race. Doctors found that one of his arteries was 95% clogged. “If you hadn’t been in such great shape,” One doctor told him, “you probably would’ve died 15 years ago.” So, in a way, Dick and Rick saved each other’s life. I’m quite convinced that when we are willing to serve, we prevent heart attacks of the spiritual kind—because we were made to serve.
- B. Three years ago when we were starting The Olive Branch, one of our most used mottos was, “***This is NOT about us.***” It was never intended to be a catchy, cool little phrase that we could put on cards and stationery. It was what we wanted—and vowed to be in our heart of hearts.

-And I believe God is calling us to live as a community of servants, not consumers. I think we will find the life we long for if we will dare to walk crossgrain, counter-culturally, with the world we live in—and just serve. Serve the Most High God, and serve the people of his world on His behalf.

-I believe God is calling us, The Olive Branch, to greatness. To follow Jesus into life’s trenches—to care for the poor, defend the defenseless, love the marginalized—and bring the Good News where there is no Good News—regardless of what it costs us. To live for something bigger and greater and more significant than our next success or purchase.

-God is calling us to a way of living which makes Jesus both visible and real and authentic for people who desperately need him. Faith that’s shown in simple, sometimes small acts of selflessness, kindness and love. If you feel attracted to that—if this resonates with you—if you feel that call too, even if you know within yourself you’re a million miles from living like that—then you belong here!

In closing, I want you to see this video about Rick—whose life was changed. Imagine an eternity for yourself that follows your willingness to serve in a world bent on consuming! Imagine people changed for all eternity—by your life.

Homework! The BIG Ask

1. Re-order your schedule so that you can make it to every service in this series.
2. Be a part of a small group study during this time. We will be having special small groups after the service, starting next week, for those who haven’t had the chance to be in one yet.
3. Third challenge, do a simple act of kindness before you leave the property today. Why? Because I want you to feel the blessing that comes with it. Let someone go first. Hold a door open, greet someone you don’t know, let someone pull out ahead of you.
4. Before you go to bed tonight, do something kind for a friend, or a member of your family or those you live with.