

Slaves Lutheran Church. I have never heard of a church called that. Slaves Lutheran Church. We could be the first. Think of the attention we would get in the media. Local church adopts new name. For a few days at least there might be a little buzz around town. How about a big sign on the building: Home of the Slaves. You don't think that would get past the Avon Lake planning commission?

Our motto could be: Slaves and proud of it. Just ask, we will serve you.

Need help, give us a call – we'll help you for free.

Last of all, slaves of all – that's us.

In the Greek that is the word that is used. Slave. Not servants as our English translations suggest. But slaves. Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and slave of all. Then we would really be the greatest church in town. Slaves Lutheran.

At homecoming we could stop selling baked goods and start offering ourselves. Need someone to stay up all night with your crying newborn, call Lynn at 934-6726. Leaves need raking? Call Mark. Have an elderly parent who needs watching over – call the church office – we have a whole membership roster of those ready to serve. Slaves one an all.

My guess is that it would not take some of them long to start abusing us. Calls in the middle of the night to close a window for someone who did not want to get out of bed to do it. A request to wash the dinner dishes from a couple who wants to spend the time sipping an extra glass of wine. Mowing the lawn of a twenty – something that wants to watch sports instead.

Why would we do any of this? So we could be like Jesus.

“The Son of man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed he will rise again.” Jesus became last of all and slave of all in his dying on the cross for you. He took the

place of greatest dishonor, greatest suffering and pain so that he might bring you to God. Jesus was willing to do whatever it took to bring you to God. Even to go down to Jerusalem to suffer and die there.

It is not like suffering and dying are so wonderful, nor is it a picnic being a slave. But God knows that those God holds most dear will do it. That is why Jesus taught his disciples about his own dying and being raised. He wanted them to share in his way, his life, his truth in this world.

And you. He wants you to share in his way, his life, his truth in this world. Last of all, slave of all like him, Jesus.

To make the point Jesus took a child into his arms. At that time 60% of the children born alive would not reach age 16. Children were the most vulnerable members of the society.

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

In welcoming this vulnerable one God would be welcomed. Honored. Not in the building of marvelous temples, not in leading armies to victory in battle, not in amassing great wealth, but in welcoming a child God is welcomed.

It is time to wrap up this sermon. We will not be changing the name of the church, and we will be selling baked goods and not our free labor at Homecoming. But I know that Jesus wants each of us and all of us to take his words to heart. He wants his kind of greatness not just for the leaders, for Charlie Crout or Eric Mohny or Pastor Eileen or me but for you. That you would be like Jesus is God's hope for you, and dream for you and plan for you, last of all, slave of all, greatest in God's kingdom.

Amen.