

# Live to Serve

*Adapted from an address delivered on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2022  
at the Annual West Sussex Trefoil Guild Friendship Service*

*Rev Dan Balsdon | October 2022 | read online at [www.revdanbalsdon.com](http://www.revdanbalsdon.com)*

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The great violinist, Nicolo Paganini, left his marvellous violin to Genoa, the city of his birth, with one condition - that the instrument never be played.

It was an unfortunate condition, for it is a peculiarity of wood that as long as it is used and handled, it shows little wear. As soon as it is discarded, it begins to decay. The exquisite, mellow-toned violin has since become worm-eaten in its beautiful case, valueless except as a relic. The instrument that had served Paganini so marvellously is now a useless piece of rubbish.

The deterioration of this unused instrument serves to remind us that a life withdrawn from all service to others loses its meaning.

Serving is a way of being that means we live not for ourselves, not withdrawn from the world or our community, but living a life of service for the benefit of others. Offering what we have – our gifts, skills, and resources - for the good of our community, to bring hope to the world, and to shine light into dark places.

In the Bible, we find a conversation between Jesus and his disciples. The disciples have been wanting to know more about how to live the sort of life Jesus is calling them to live. And within that conversation Jesus talks about serving others.

He says:

*when you saw someone hungry and gave them food,  
When you meet someone thirsty and give them a drink,  
When you see someone outcast and excluded and you welcome them,  
When you find someone naked and clothe them,  
When someone is sick and you care for them,  
When someone is trapped or imprisoned and you are there for them...  
When you do these things, You do them for me.*

What is Jesus saying?

He's saying that the life he is calling people to live is a life in which we live with and for others. A life that serves others. A life that walks the talk and puts word into action.

And through living that way, whether we know it or not, through living a life of service for the benefit of others, we serve Jesus. Because we are serving to share and inhabit the character of Jesus who loves, welcomes, and cares for all.

Most recently in the nation's minds a life of service has been celebrated in remembering the life and service of the Late Queen Elizabeth II. Her life and work as Queen has been described among many things, as one of selfless service.

In her 2012 Christmas message, the year of her diamond Jubilee, she reflected on God sending Jesus not to be served but to serve.

*"He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer this Christmas Day that his example and teaching will continue to bring people together to give the best of themselves in the service of others."*

*The late Queen Elizabeth II, Christmas Message 2012*

Some of you may not think of yourselves as Christian people. Others of you will. And perhaps others of you aren't really sure where you are on the spectrum right now.

Wherever we each ourselves on that spectrum, I believe that our service; our care for others; our inclusion of the marginalised and outcast; our advocacy for the silenced; our openness to one another through our relationships; community and friendships: serves Jesus – because we are inhabiting the qualities that Jesus taught.

So may we all be affirmed in the service we have offered, encouraged in the service we do offer, and inspired in the service we can offer.

As we offer what we have, our gifts and skills, passions and resources, to nurture relationships, community and friendship. To live lives of service for the benefit of one another.