



Fill My Cup Lord....

A weekly devotional provided through the
Women's Ministry of
First Congregational Church of Hopkinton, MA

I'm a rabid hockey fan. That might sound funny coming from a suburban mother, but it's true. I love the sport. I love the pace of the game. I love the finesse inherent in beautiful goals. I love watching the Boston Bruin's goalie stand on his head to make unbelievable saves. I just love it.

Sometimes things get a little rough on the ice. It's a tough sport, there's no doubt about that. But there's something inherent in the culture of hockey that I really admire. A team is a team - they win as a team and they lose as a team. The greatest stars on the team give the team credit for their success. It's hard to find an ego at the end of a game.

When a forward is congratulated for a masterful goal, he immediately points out the pass from his teammate that opened up the opportunity. That passer points to the defensive move that set the whole play in motion. It seems that no matter how amazing an individual was that night, he will not place himself above the team. It's a consistent enough message to be noticeable. Players serve their teams as best they can and then point out all the ways their teammates were greater than they. It seems that humility is a hallmark of the sport. After watching sixty minutes of big men pummeling each other, I listen to the postgame interviews and think, "What a nice bunch of guys."

Maybe it's because the game is so rough that the players understand how much they need each other. On any given night someone can go down with a season ending injury. Anyone can make a game winning play or a game losing mistake. As the season goes on, the exhaustion and the injuries mount. The stakes get higher and the games get harder. Every player needs to be a servant. Every player needs to be a star. Those guys need each other.

When Jesus called his twelve disciples, he put together a team. For three years, those disciples travelled together, learned together, and watched miracles unfold together. They should have been bonding together. But we see in Mark 9:30-35 that something else was going on.

"They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.' But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest."

How can a team bond together when the teammates are competing with each other, each looking for his own glory? How are they going to survive, much less thrive, when the going gets tough? Just prior to the disciples arguing over their respective greatness, Jesus tried to tell them that he was going to die. Their lives were about to get really hard and they were going to need each other. But there they were, none thinking about service, all looking for glory.

I like how Jesus responded: *"Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.'*" He sat down, got their attention, and told them how things really needed to be.

The disciples eventually got it, but life had to get tough for them first. It was when the stakes were high and the going was tough that they discovered how much they needed each other. Every disciple became a servant. Every disciple became a star – all in submission to their great Lord, to bring Him the greatest glory. The church grew. The gospel spread. And we are here today because of the powerful force of that united team, humbly bonded in Christ.

Is it hard for you to serve others in humility? Do you find your competitive streak taking over? Does competition hinder your ability to bond with others? Is your service for Christ as effective as it could be if you were putting your ministry teammates ahead of yourself? Will you ask God to help you serve with humility today?