

Freed To Serve

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

During these evening worship services we have been exploring means of grace. “A means of grace is a tool or instrument that God uses to strengthen and nurture us so that we grow in conformity to Christ” (Dr. R.C. Sproul, 5 Things Every Christian Needs to Grow, pg. 84). We have covered the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, Prayer, Worship, and tonight we turn to service as a means of grace. God uses all of these spiritual disciplines/means of grace to change us on the inside so we display more of Jesus on the outside. We don’t always think about service as a means of grace, but we grow as we serve (ibid. pg. 84).

The New Testament makes it crystal clear that as Christians we are servants of Christ called of God to serve Christ, all of us, not just a specific few. God has specifically given you spiritual gifts which are given to put into service for Christ to build up and encourage the church. God has, called you, selected you, adopted you, and gifted you to be in service of Christ, day in and day out. This applies to all of us personally. We can ask ourselves the question, “Am I serving Christ in the devoted way He wants me to?” In Jesus own words about himself.

Matthew 20:28 (NLT2) “²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

You and I have been born again to serve the resurrected Lord Jesus day in and day out with the gifts that he has given to us within the context of our own personalities. There is never a day that Jesus does not wish for you to serve him in a unique way that only you are capable of doing. You are an original and God has original work for you to do that glorifies God. If you do not do it, it won’t get done. None of us are bench sitters. We are all in the ball game of serving Christ; all of us. Every position is equally important in God’s eyes even if you are the water boy or girl. It is our purpose in living. “The more we are able to serve in the kingdom of God, the more Christ-like we become.

An act of serving Christ that I will never forget involved the president of the college I attended. The president's name is Dr. David L. McKenna. Important people often include their middle initial in their title and Dr. McKenna has been an extremely important person in higher education for the last 50 plus years. At one time he was the youngest college president in the nation at Spring Harbor college. He was second in line to become Secretary of Education under Ronald Regan. Bill Bennet was the finalist instead. This is my point. I saw Dr. McKenna get out of his car and begin walking toward his office. On the ground in front of him was a piece of paper. He stopped, picked it up, looked at it and threw it away. Then he turned around to see if anyone saw him and he was rather embarrassed that I had seen him do this simple act of service unto Christ. He looked at me and laughed and went on his way. That automatic response of service has stayed with me for 44 years. None of us are too important to serve Christ in ways, not to show off but out of love for Christ and His kingdom. None of us are above any act of service.

Not that long ago at the farm my brother asked me to sweep out a particular part of a huge barn. It had to be done. I could have said, "No Mike, you do it." I'm a senior pastor of an important church and I am above doing such menial labor. I actually enjoyed doing it. One thing full time ministry does for you is it makes menial labor an absolute joy. A total change from dealing with the most serious aspects of life. Some days I would much rather be moving a broom.

There are a group of people in the service industry of healthcare workers that I say are God's finest people. Those who do hospice work. They are with people at the most sensitive and difficult part of their lives. They help people die without pain and with dignity. They take over some of the most difficult responsibilities. It takes an exceptionally gifted person to have the wherewithal to know what to do and what to say and when to be quiet and listen, doing their

work as unto the Lord is absolutely amazing. I cannot say enough good about them. They are instruments of God's grace called to serve in a rather unique and caring way.

“Service is not an optional aspect of the Christian life.” “All believers are called to be servants of God.” It may not be a professional or paid service, but each of us is to serve Christ in some way for we are servants of Christ, sent to serve (ibid pg. 85).

One of the greatest acts of God's redemption in the Old Testament was God freeing His people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and moving them into the promise land. God called his people out of slavery, out of service to the Pharaoh. “The Israelites were called out of service to Pharaoh and into service to God” (ibid. pg. 87).

Jesus Christ, our deliverer, has freed us from the bondage to Satan, sin, and self. We have experienced a change of masters from serving ourselves, sin, and Satan to serving the one and only God. “Choose this day whom you will serve.” “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” writes Joshua.

Dr. Sproul writes “Paul's favorite description of himself was *doulos*, which means “slave” - one purchased for service. He said the same applies to all believers, for all have been “bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:20). We belong to the one who has paid for us in order to redeem us and now we are called to serve Him” (Ibid. pg. 88).

Pastor, what am I to do? What does it mean for me to serve the Lord, to put myself in service of the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is quite simple. Do your work as a service unto the Lord God. How is your attitude at work, at school? Do you walk around with your head down feeling, “woe is me?” Or do you do your work with energy, having a grateful heart that you have a job, doing your work as unto the Lord, with a contagious attitude of enjoyment. Do you display the fruit of the Spirit at work, at school, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? I look back in horror at my examples of showing none

of these qualities and still think I am serving Christ. How wrong I can be, just like Peter. And Jesus had to say to Peter, “Get behind me Satan.”

Please acknowledge to yourself that you are gifted by God to serve God. Out of the 27 spiritual gifts, God has gifted you to put those gifts to use in service of the Lord where God has specifically placed you. Your life bears a witness.

There are some people in my life that when I see them, I light up because they always have a way of serving Christ that is contagious. They display the fruit of the Spirit. They care more about others than just taking care of themselves. They have the pleasing aroma of Christ. They have been healed of past wounds and know how to help others who have been wounded.

What are some personal applications Pastor, something that we can take home with us? I am glad you asked. Here are some practical ways we can all serve the Lord Jesus Christ and not make a big deal out of it.

1. We can serve the Lord by loving Him with our entire heart, soul, mind, and strength
2. We can serve the Lord by obeying the Lord Jesus. The Bible says obedience is better than sacrifice.
3. We can serve the Lord by doing our jobs to the best of our ability as unto the Lord God.
4. We can serve the Lord by incorporating the faith in our conversation with fellow students and coworkers.
5. We can serve God by discovering one’s spiritual gifts and putting them into practice.
6. We can ask ourselves this question. “What is it about my past pains and experiences that keep me from serving the Lord more effectively in the present?”
7. We accept the fact that we have been born again to serve God for service is a sacred call for every Christian.
8. Accept what the Bible calls, the priesthood of all believers. God has placed people around you and yes, you are their priest sent by God to be a minister of God’s grace.

9. Get over yourself. Accept the fact that God can use you and will use you.

10. No act of service done unto the Lord Jesus is too small for the Lord to see. He sees them all.

Amen and Amen.