

10/20/08

Reaching Across – Serving One Another

Finding one's place in the community of Christ can be a rewarding experience. Working alongside fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to help others in their life and walk is perhaps the best way to build a tight community. This week we look at serving in the context of community. May you find a greater understanding of your value in the Body of Christ as you work and live through these devotions. –*Pastor Mike*

Day 1: Reaching Across – to Everyone

What are some truths you learned from last Sunday's message? How can it make a difference this week?

Day 2: Serving with your spiritual gifts

Read Romans 12:3-8.

God has gifted each of His children with specific gifts that enable the body of Christ to work together as one. In the passage today, Paul relates those gifts with a certain attitude: not to think of oneself more highly than they ought.

To Consider:

Why would there be a need for a command to guard against this attitude? How does knowing that your gifts are given "according to the *grace* given us" (v. 6) affect your attitude (i.e. what is "grace" and how does that enable us to have "sober judgment" (v. 3))?

The kind of attitude addressed in this passage comes when comparisons of gifts are made and different values are placed on different gifts. Paul makes it clear that we are not to make comparisons with one another but rather focus on using our gifts as best as we possibly can. If we are concentrating on using our gifts for their intended purposes (i.e. building up others), then there is no time to be self-serving, and there is no room for comparison.

To Consider:

It is difficult to focus on the use of one's gifts if you don't know what your gifts are. Take a few minutes right now and jot down some areas you feel you minister to others well in. Then consider how you might use those abilities in a ministry to others on a regular basis.

Day 3: Serving with the right attitude

Read John 13:3-17.

This well-known passage sets the example we are to follow in our service to one another. "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." (v. 14) This was a duty normally carried out by lowly servants, and certainly not something a "lord and teacher" ought to be doing for his guests.

To Consider:

What kind of attitude is needed to serve in this manner? What are some underlying characteristics of this kind of service (e.g. sacrificial)?

Consider also that Judas was in that group of men. What does that say about Jesus' servant attitude knowing that He knew Judas would betray Him? Are there Judas' in your life? How can you have this same attitude toward others you will see this week? What would it look like more specifically in your work, in your home, in your church?

Day 4: Serving with generous obedience

Read 2Corinthians 9:10-15.

Generosity. It results in thankful hearts. From today's passage, it is God who enables us to be generous in the first place. Verse 11 says that God will make us rich in every way. For what purpose (v. 11)?

This passage just oozes with thanksgiving and generosity, doesn't it? There is thanks for the indescribable, surpassing grace of God (v. 14-15). There is thanks for their generosity (v. 11, 12, 13). There is praise for their service (v. 13). In all, thanks and praise are mentioned four times in this passage. Generosity is mentioned three times.

But there is one very subtle statement in the passage that is almost taken for granted – "Because of the service... the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ." (v. 13) All of their generous giving is said to be service out of obedience. Have you ever considered that service and obedience are forms of generosity?

Sometimes we think obedience is more about doing what we don't really want to do. When I was told as a child to obey my parents, it was usually because at the time I wasn't! But obediently serving others is really an act of generosity that has its origins in the generosity of God. If I'm reading this correctly, God's deep riches are meant to be generously given to others. The next time an opportunity comes up for you to serve others, don't think of obedience as merely doing what is right, but think of it as being "generous" with what God has blessed you with.

To Consider:

How has God generously blessed you? What are ways you can generously serve others out of the blessings God has given you? (Try to think beyond financial. 😊) Consider as you enter a new day how God is giving you opportunity to serve out of a generous heart.

Day 5: Investing in the Kingdom

Read Luke 12:22-34.

Today's passage is usually seen in light of worry about the basic necessities of life. Jesus tells his disciples not to worry about food and clothing because God knows our every needs, and He will certainly provide. We often stop at the oft heard phrase: "But seek first his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well." (v. 31)

In keeping with that statement, Jesus tells us what "seeking His kingdom" looks like in vv. 33: "Sell your possessions and give to the poor." Think what that must have sounded like to someone worrying about sustenance. When a person is worried about food and clothes, what are they thinking about? They're thinking about themselves. They're worried about their life. And then to hear Jesus tell them to stop worrying about their life and give what they have away. Well, that sounds completely opposite of what they would want to do. And then consider to whom Jesus tells them to give their possessions. He tells them to give their possessions to the poor. I don't know about you, but if I was worried about my life, especially where I was going to get food and clothing, I might think I'm the one who is poor!

That's what Jesus wants to point out. Since we have been given the kingdom of God (and consider that for a moment – a kingdom), we are rich beyond measure. No longer are the cares of this world front and center, but rather the cares of the kingdom. And when we give our “possessions” to the truly poor – the spiritually poor – we are showing that our thoughts are on kingdom cares not self-centered cares.

To Consider

Have you come to a place in your spiritual life that “selling your possessions and giving to the poor” is more important than managing your own future? Have you found yourself worrying about the necessities of life? How can seeking the kingdom and giving to those in need be a means of letting go of the worry? Have you ever experienced such a time in your life when you gave what little you had only to find the worry disappear?

Pray that God would give you a kingdom heart and perspective to help overcome any daunting needs in your life.

Day 6: Review

Look over your notes from the past week. What one or two things did God impress upon you this week?

Home Group Questions

Week of October 20, 2008

Opening: How have you seen God work this week?

1. God has gifted each of His children with specific gifts that enable the body of Christ to work together as one. It is difficult to focus on the use of one's gifts if you don't know what your gifts are! Discuss with one another what you believe could be each person's spiritual gift. (This could seem awkward to put each person on "the hot seat", but trust me, this exercise is an affirming and encouraging way to speak into one another's lives and worth the discomfort.) What are specific ways each person can use his or her gifts to serve the church Family?
2. Based on John 13:3-7, what should be our attitude in serving others? What are some underlying characteristics of this kind of service?
3. Consider that Judas was in that group of men. What does that say about Jesus' servant attitude knowing that He knew Judas would betray Him? Who are the Judas' in your life (if any)? How can this attitude be carried out in your work, home, and church?
4. Obedient service is an act of generosity according 2Cor. 9:10-15. Our generosity has its origins in the generosity of God. His deep riches in our life are meant to be given to others. How have you (like Paul) been on the receiving end of someone's generous blessing in your life? Take time to thank God during your prayer time for those blessings.
5. Compare the differences between an earthly life filled with worry of food and clothing and a kingdom rich with inexhaustible goods. The truth is, we live in both worlds. But which is the one we should live in based on Jesus' words? How ought this to impact our worries in this world?
6. Have you ever found yourself worrying about the necessities of life? If so, when? Have you experienced how seeking the kingdom and giving to those in need helped you let go of the worry? If so, when?
7. Are you currently struggling with fear? Discuss ways to "seek the kingdom" first.

As you go into your prayer time, consider the following questions:

- How have you struggled this week?
- How can the others in the group help you?