

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

REVIEW: We are nearing our end of the series. It has been a long road looking at many serious issues along the way. We have looked at the elevated view of church membership. It is not just an American construct, it is biblical. The way we do membership in America may be an American construct, but the fact that Bible puts on display this high view of membership and commitment to a local body of brothers and sisters in Christ is not in question.

We have looked at the glory of God as our motivating factor in life - especially in our schedules. I know that wound up being an “ouch” sermon. I stepped on some toes, demolished some excuses we use about our schedules, and then set forth the principle of first fruits of our time.

For the last several weeks we have been going over one of the ways you can offer your first fruits to God - community. We have seen that we all need community, and that community leads to building stronger disciples for Christ. We challenged you to get involved in a Life Group which will be starting up this October.

TRAN: Today, we mention the second and last way we offer our first fruits to the Lord - service. So this week I want to look at what is the true motive of service? Why do we serve? To start, allow me to read from a book entitled, *Creature of the Word*.

INTRO: *Creature of the Word* p. 64-65

TRAN: This is the truth that we must be grounded in, the gospel. Why we serve begins and ends with Jesus. It begins with Him because He is our motivation. It ends with Him because He is the One that empowers us to serve.

I. False motivations to serve

A. Too often when we hear sermons on serving in the church, and very well-intentioned people resort to guilt trips to try to motivate

1. How many of you remember Sally Struthers, and the commercials she had on the air back in the 80's
2. How many of you remember feeling moved and motivated to help in some way because you saw pictures of starving children in far away places?
3. For some people that may still motivate them, but for many, those images have become commonplace
 - a) They do not motivate as well as they once did
 - b) Why? Because they are not the foundation for motivation.
4. Please do not miss hear me

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

- a) I am not saying that you should not help starving children or be moved by those images
 - b) In fact it is better if you do feel something - it means you are not desensitized
 - c) But for us as believers, our sense of compassion, our motivation to help is rooted in something far greater
- B. One of the false motivations for serving is feeling as if you have to earn what you have received
1. If you have ever watched the movie, *Saving Private Ryan* you will know what I am talking about
 2. The whole movie was about one small group of soldiers that go seeking one soldier in the middle of WW2 just after D-day.
 - a) This one soldier had the rest of his brothers killed in action
 - b) So someone with more stripes on his sleeve decides to send this group of soldiers to try to rescue this one
 - (1) By the way, if this sounds familiar in more than one way it should
 - (2) The shepherd seeking the one lost sheep - great illustration of the lengths to which God will go to retrieve one lost sinner
 - (3) UNTIL...
 3. In the final climactic battle, Captain Miller, played by Tom Hanks, sits against a wall after being shot, he is dying, and he tells the soldier, Pvt. Ryan, played by Matt Damon, "Earn this."
 - a) Not only was a great illustration just ruined
 - b) But probably Pvt. Ryan's life
 - (1) At the end of the movie we see Pvt. Ryan as an old man kneeling before the grave of Capt. Miller
 - (2) He turns to his wife and family and asks, "Tell me I am a good man. That I have lived a good life."
 4. He lived his life trying to earn the service of others
 - a) We can use this as an illustration of how too many people respond to the love and service that Jesus gave us
 - (1) Jesus said it well, that He did not come to be served but to serve and give His life
 - (2) Yet too often we think that somehow we have to earn what Christ did for us
 - (a) That is nothing but a works based theology warmed up and re-served in another fashion
 - b) If you are a believer, and you live with this kind of burden, you will not serve God properly
 - (1) You will wind up serving Him out of obligation

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

(2) You will wind up trying to earn what He freely gave

c) We do not serve out of obligation

(1) We serve out of hearts that are captured by God's love and service

(2) We serve out of grateful hearts for God's free service to us

C. Some people are motivated by compassion

1. And compassion is a great thing!

a) The Bible says "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them" Matt. 9:36

(1) So we can hardly say that compassion is not involved in service, or that it is not a good thing

b) But compassion alone as the motivator for service cannot last long

(1) We saw that as we talked about the images of the starving children

(2) Because of our sinful natures, we can get side-tracked or desensitized to the heinous nature of what we are looking at

2. Compassion linked to the gospel will sustain

a) Compassion linked to the gospel allows us to not only see people in need, but see people that Jesus loves deeply

(1) And that really is the passion of Jesus at work within us

b) We have talked about this in the past, when we remember how gracious and compassionate Jesus has been to us, that fuels our fire to be to others what He has been to us

(1) Do you remember that from the series on the Gospel Revolution?

(2) Its part of the prayer, "As You have been to me, so I will be to others."

c) When we keep the gospel as our foundation, we keep compassion in perspective, and that compassion grows out of our relationship with Christ, not just the crisis of the moment

D. Some people are motivated by guilt

1. Ever have someone point out to you all that you have in comparison to what the world lacks?

a) And again, do not get me wrong

b) We should take note of that, and should be moved to help our fellow man in a variety of ways

c) But this sometimes becomes the unintentional consequence of going on mission trips

(1) We feel guilty for what God has blessed us with

(2) God never said that we should feel guilty for what we have been blessed with, only that we should view those things as blessings from God that we can bless others with

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

2. You often will see pastors and preachers use guilt in an unintentional (or sometimes intentional way)
 - a) If you serve for even one hour, you will feel good!
 - b) If you are feeling empty, why not serve in the children's ministry and help them out?
 - c) You live for you all the time - isn't it time to live for others?
3. Did you realize that guilt driven serving is still all about one thing: YOU!
 - a) You are looking for a way to feel better about yourself
 - b) It has nothing to do with serving Jesus
 - c) It is the very opposite of Jesus driven or gospel driven service

E. Some people serve out of simple force

1. For instance: in an effort to teach students that they need to serve and give back to the community, HS students, especially NHS students MUST do community service
2. Think about the whole concept of "Customer Service"
 - a) Many if not all of us have experienced frustration with the person on the other end of the line, or across the counter from us over something we purchased or didn't purchase or what have you
 - (1) I personally almost ripped the face off a ticketing agent in California because they wanted to put us up for 2 extra days before returning home
 - b) Now, that ticketing agent, or customer service representative is doing everything they can do, and they attempt to maintain a pleasant attitude throughout, no matter how many names or choice words you choose to use
 - (1) But after they clock out, do you think they will stay there and seek to meet your needs, or be excited that they can pass your problem to someone else?
 - (2) Do you think they are lying in bed at night worried about your problem and if it was addressed in a satisfying fashion?
 - (a) Of course NOT!
 - (b) Why? Because they are paid to care about your problem. They are forced to serve you. (NOTE: this is not to disparage all the great customer service reps out there)
 3. The idea of forced service is blown out of the water by the gospel
 4. Forced service is temporary and will never last, whereas gospel driven service reminds us that Jesus is after our hearts, not our forced submission

F. Some people even serve out of pride

1. They want to prove how unselfish they are, in comparison to the other guy that just sits around and does nothing

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

2. Prideful servers usually serve in very public roles
3. And they often like to testify to how unselfish they have been by serving in whatever capacity they have

G. The problem with these motivations (trying to earn favor, compassion, guilt, force and pride) is that God does not like them as the motivating factors

1. What God cares about is capturing our hearts
2. We often say that in relation to money (God cares about your heart not your wallet), and that is true, but it extends into everything we do
 - a) When Israel was offering sacrifices to God but their hearts were not in it, look how God responded (Isaiah 1:10-13)
 - (1) God is saying, "Do you think I need your offerings?"
 - (2) "I need nothing from you!"
 - b) The NT is replete with ramping up requirements - requirements meant to display that God wanted their hearts and not just actions
 - (1) Matt. 5:27 - Don't commit adultery, right? No, do not look with lust in your heart.
 - (2) Matt. 5:21 - Do not kill, right? No, do not hate (coming from the heart).
3. Just bearing down and trying with all our might to serve, but our hearts are not in it does not please God

II. Our perfect example of service

A. Setting the service stage - Matthew 20:25-28

1. Jesus talks about how the Gentiles lord their authority over others
 - a) You need to do this for me because I am great!
 - b) You need to serve because I am special!
2. That is not how it is to be for God's people
3. To be great, you serve
 - a) Now you can get the false motive thing going even in that statement
 - b) I want to be great! I'll serve!
4. Jesus obliterates that by saying that He did not come to be served but to serve
 - a) Why does that obliterate anything?
 - b) Because of who He is!
 - (1) He is God's Son
 - (2) He needs nothing from no one
 - (3) He is great regardless if He serves or not
 - c) His point is: because I am great, this is the example I set for you, this is how I serve you and you will see it soon enough, I will lay down my life for you

B. Jesus practical example to the disciples - John 13

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

1. One side note:
 - a) Be careful to understand that service is not the end goal of Christianity
 - b) Jesus is the end goal of Christianity
 - c) Service is a by-product of a heart that has been truly changed
2. In John 13, we have all heard sermons on this passage, most recently by our own Caleb Ferrell
 - a) Allow me to put this into context of what is taking place
 - b) You are having the President over for dinner, and just before you are to serve the meal, the President gets up, takes off his jacket, pulls out some rubber gloves and goes to the bathroom
 - (1) Rather than closing the door for privacy, he looks under the sink for cleaning materials
 - (2) He takes them out and begins to scrub your toilet
 - c) You would be floored that the President would clean what is perhaps considered the germ center of the house
 - d) Jesus is far beyond any President in how great He is, and he stoops down to wash the disciples feet
3. After washing their feet He comes back and asks if they get it
 - a) Peter thought that Jesus might lose some of His Holy stature by doing this at first
 - b) Jesus explains: If I as your Teacher and Lord have done this for you, so you should do for others
 - (1) In other words: If I who can calm the seas, feed 5000 people, raise men back to life, heal diseases of all kinds, and make the blind man see
 - (2) If I, being God can serve you in the lowest possible way, you can do the same
 - (3) All of this of course is a foreshadowing of things yet to come - of Jesus serving in the ultimate way - laying down His life

III. So where do we serve - not how, but where

A. One of the first places you can serve is in your home

1. If you are married, the first person you start with is your spouse
 - a) Paul laid it all out for us - husbands, love your wives
 - (1) If you come home looking to be served as if you are the king of the castle - you obviously did not get the point of John 13
 - (2) Jesus served, and obviously He was greater than you will ever hope to be
 - b) Wives, honor your husbands
 - (1) When us men do the first part - loving and serving our wives
 - (2) Honoring becomes so much easier

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

- c) If both parties in a marriage are seeking to serve the other partner, guess what, needs get met
- 2. The second place in the home is serving your children
 - a) Teaching them right from wrong
 - b) Loving them
 - c) Playing with them
 - d) Being there for them
- 3. The third place in the home to serve is your parents
 - a) Yes kids, you should be serving mom and dad
 - b) With proper attitude
 - c) With full respect
 - d) And with obedience
- B. The second place you can serve is in the neighborhood
 - 1. It can be as simple as pulling out or in your neighbors trash cans when they are out of town
 - 2. Helping them with projects around the house
 - a) Lawn and garden
 - b) Clean
 - c) Construction
 - d) Or the man favorite - destruction
 - 3. The book of Acts has this passing verse that we might overlook if not careful
 - a) God has placed you in specific places to accomplish His will
 - b) Do you take advantage of that
- C. The third place you can serve is your workplace
 - 1. The Bible tells us that God placed you where you live
 - 2. But we can also extend that to the fact that God placed you where you work
 - 3. Too often we have tended to view life as vocational or spiritual - but work can hardly be spiritual
 - a) Not so - especially if you have ever read *Practicing The Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence
 - b) Work is very much a spiritual pursuit - I wish I could fit the sermon series in soon on work
 - 4. Did you realize that God invented work?
 - a) Work was around before the fall of man
 - b) Adam and Eve were given the task of tending the garden - and that was worshipful to God
 - c) After the fall work became more difficult, they had weeds to contend with, we wound up with difficult bosses, software programs that make

I Have a Dream - Gospel-Motivated Service

us want to rip out our hair, and co-workers that could test the patience of Job

5. Don't ever think that work is not spiritual

a) God expects our best as we work

(1) It is actually an expression of worship to Him

b) You have the opportunity to serve in several different ways

(1) To your boss

(2) If you are a boss or supervisor, to your employees

(3) And to your co-workers

D. The final place you can serve: the church

1. And this is the area in which I leave you

2. In this series we have talked about giving God your first fruits

a) Meaning giving God the first and best of your time

b) Not sticking God in wherever we can find room for Him

3. We have already said that church on Sunday morning needs to go in the schedule

4. We have already said that Life Groups need to go in there

5. The final thing that needs to go in the schedule is serving - and in our context we are talking about serving the church

a) If you add up all the things I have brought up, we are talking significant time commitment

b) But the fact is, if Jesus really is the center of your life and relationships, then all of these things that demand time will be second nature

6. As for serving the church, we will go into full detail next week on what that should look like.

E. Let me mention one last thing

1. We talk about membership as a covenant

2. A covenant is different from a contract in that a contract is a legal agreement that if you do this for me, I will do this for you

3. A covenant is, "I will do this for you."

a) So in the context of church, in the area of the one anothers, we do those things for our church family - no strings attached

b) We do not set conditions for doing the one anothers

c) We do not expect people to serve our needs when we walk into church

d) We serve

e) When it says greet one another, we do not wait for others to greet us, we greet others

4. This is important to understand about all of the issues we have talked about - especially this area of service we end on