

☞ The Joy of Serving

Noah's Ark was built by volunteers. The Titanic was built by professionals.

A Red Cross Volunteer and a lawyer died and went up to the heavenly gates. Saint Peter tells the volunteer to wait a little while, and lets the lawyer in first. As the gates close on the volunteer, he sees the lawyer greeted with fanfare! Music erupts, cheers are had. A choir of angels descend from above, and sing of joyous hallelujah for the lawyer. Finally, the great Lord Himself makes himself present, and gives a personal greeting and warm welcome to the lawyer. Things begin to die down, and the lawyer wanders off to enjoy his eternity in heaven. As the last angel floats away, Saint Peter finally grants entrance to the volunteer. There is no music, no choir. The last of the crowd are leaving now. Confused, the volunteer looks to Peter for an explanation. Peter replied, oh we get a lot of volunteers in Heaven, but this is the first time a lawyer has made it.

There's a cartoon showing a crazed man being led away from a church in a straightjacket. On the steps of the church building the preacher comments to another man, "I'm going to miss Louis - he volunteered for everything."

No. It's been my experience that the "more involved" a person is in ministry, the more satisfied and fulfilled that person is - not the other way around.

Last week we talked about Isaiah chapter 54 and its relevance to our church. God is calling us to Gather the Harvest, Grow our Hearts, and Garrison our Hopes. He has more in store for us. There are significant promises in that chapter and we should hold on to those and keep on seeking the Lord for his fulfilment. God is speaking of growth, peace, victory and vindication. Those are great promises we are believing in. However, it is significant that the chapter ends with these words... "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord" --Verse 17. One of the qualifications for receiving those promises is that we must be servants of the Lord. Not just believers; not just church-goers; but servants...

God didn't call you into the vineyard to eat grapes but to get busy and weed.

Sometimes we think being a Christian is only about faith, but in reality, the Lord is also very concerned about the things we do.

Revelation 2:2

I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.

Revelation 2:19

I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Revelation 3:1

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Revelation 3:8

I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.

Revelation 3:15

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

☞ **John 13:14-17**

14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **15** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **16** I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17** Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Ministry could never happen without the faithful service of so many people. From those who teach, to those in the nursery, to those who set up coffee and those who lead worship, all of the ministry you do is important.

Ephesians 4:11-12

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

It is the people of the body who make ministry happen.

Today we are going to look at three results of serving in ministry.

☞ **1. Serving fulfills God's purpose for your life.**

You were made with a specific purpose and ministry planned for you. **Ephesians 2:10** says, "For we are God's workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

The term "workmanship" is the same word we get the word poem from. In essence, **you are**

☞ **God's work of art.**

God's design for you began before you were born.

Psalms 139:13

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

God has a purpose and plan for you. Do you have a sense of God's purpose for your life?

When a person was a priest in the Old Testament – it meant they had a job to do. And not every priest had the "high profile" jobs of handling the sacrifices and burning offerings before God -

that was only for the descendants of Aaron. However, in addition to the family of Aaron, there were 3 other families of Levites who had other jobs to do (Numbers 4):

1. The Kohathites – who took care of all the furniture in the tabernacle
2. The Gershonites – who cared for the coverings and the curtains
3. And the Merarites – who cared for the poles, the ropes, the bases and the cross bars.

☞ I'm telling you this because I want you to understand that **every priest had a job to do**. Every priest ministered to God, and many of those priests had very basic jobs they did.

1 Peter 2:9

☞ But **you are** a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

One of our plumb lines says, "We believe every Christian is a minister." So, who's the minister at OBC? By serving (ministering) you fulfill God's purpose for your life.

☞ 2. Serving reflects God's glory.

As we serve others, they get a picture of our heavenly Father. **1 Peter 2:12** says, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may **see your good deeds and glorify God** on the day he visits us."

Jesus gave an example of servanthood for us to follow in John 13. He has called us to serve so we may be an example to others.

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

In the first point we talked about fulfilling God's purpose for our lives. He gives us gifts and ☞ abilities to use for his glory. **The purpose of gifts and talents is to serve**. If you have a talent, a skill, or a spiritual gift, that is not just for your benefit; it's for the benefit of others around you.

1 Peter 4:10

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Ten ways to get rid of the blues: Go out and do something for someone else-- then repeat nine times.

Many Christians suffer from loneliness because they are sitting instead of serving.

☞ **Serving is walking in the Spirit.** Galatians 5:16 says, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Here, Paul is referring back to something he just said... He was talking about freedom, but instructed them to not abuse their freedom, but rather, to use their freedom to serve others. So, Paul connects freedom and walking in the Spirit to serving others.

Sometimes he asks us to go beyond our comfort zones. God called Moses beyond his ability. God called Gideon beyond his ability. God called Peter beyond his ability. God called me beyond my ability. God wants us to set out in faith and allow him to work through us to meet a need. When you combine your willingness and God's power and serve, you reflect God's glory.

☞ **3. Serving contributes to eternity.**

God takes the ministry we do and uses it to influence the course of eternity in the lives of others.

New Tribes Missionary-- "Our greatest fear should not be failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn't really matter."

☞ **1 Corinthians 13:31**

Whatever you do, do it **all for the glory of God.**

We can be overly content with our casual Christian lives. We want to take and receive salvation, but we don't want to give back into the kingdom. We want rewards in Heaven, but we don't want to sacrifice time now. What are you going to do with what God has given you? Are you going to settle for the status quo, or are you going to multiply your gifts so that they affect all eternity?

You're not just changing a diaper... you're making it possible for a young mother to hear the word of God and be transformed into the image of Christ.

☞ **Kingdom greatness is measured by serving.** **Matthew 20:25-27** says, "Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **26** Not so with you. Instead, **whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27** and whoever wants to be first must be your slave"

We're in this together. It takes a lot of people to do everything God has called us to do. I've received positive comments from people about how our church really does the stuff. We don't just talk about it, we do it! That's a great testimony! But it takes all of us pitching in to make it happen. "Many hands make light work." We got a glimpse of this last week, when we honored all of you who help to do the various ministries our church has.

Thank you for all your ministry. You are making a difference. You are affecting eternity. If you ☞ are not involved, **check out the ministry fair.** Instead of looking at the sheet and determining what it is you want to do, I am asking you to pray over the next couple of weeks and ask God to reveal to you what He wants you to do.

It's a common saying that within the church 20% of the people do 80% of the work. It's great that some people are willing to invest so much time into the Lord's service, but the truth is the Lord has given each of us talents to use in the service of the Kingdom. What would the church be like if every servant used their talents in the same manner as you? Would there be plenty of help or would there be lots of gaps? Sometimes we are so focused on ourselves that we do not have time to serve the Lord. What would the church be like if every servant used their talents to serve the Lord?

It is quite clear that God has given each of us different things to do. God will not ask whether we did the same as the person sitting next to us, only what we did with what He entrusted to us.

It's not a shame having just one talent--the shame is not using it.

What is the special thing you can do that nobody else in the world can do in quite the same way? Is it a laugh? A smile? Is it an ability to encourage? Is it an ability to earnestly pray? Is it a loving tone people hear in your voice? Is it a skill in music or art or teaching or managing? The possibilities are almost limitless! **Use what you have for God!**