

July 15, 2007

Belief in Action

Jesus was a teacher who taught not only through ideas, stories, and concepts but also through active example. He calls us, not simply to think about God, but to actively serve God and neighbor.

Luke 10:25-37 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Readings
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Reflections

SUMMERTIME

Reflections

Church activities can be easily divided into neat little piles. Worship is when you sit and listen. Serving is when you do something nice outside the church. Pretty simple...or is it? It may surprise you to know that the words 'worship' and 'service' are closely related in scripture. In fact, several of this week's readings are good examples of this word connection; depending on the translation you read, you may see either term used.

In one sense, worship is the act of submitting to the one you serve. We might do this in a group setting on a Sunday morning, or we can fall to our knees alone, in His presence. It's certainly a good and right thing to acknowledge our Creator and consciously submit to Him.

So how is this related to service? For me, it's pretty simple. When I avoid godly service -

whether through busyness, laziness, or conscious disobedience - I fall into self-service. And I start submitting to my own will, instead of His Will. When we're busy trying to do it on our own, it's hard to acknowledge God's sovereignty in our lives. It's hard to submit to some one we're not actually serving.

...service is a very real answer to the question "Why am I here?"

As Christians, we are called to be leaders ("the salt of the world") in a broken world. In addition to strengthening our relationship with God, our service is a living reminder of Jesus' life and a kind of holy 'peer pressure' to fellow Christians. When we serve in God's name, we are taking an active part in the spiritual growth of those around us. Service is an opportunity to take our light 'from beneath the bush' and into a

world that desperately needs to know God's love.

Finally, service is a very real answer to the question "Why am I here?" Our gifts, our talents, our passions, our vocations, all that God has made us, is for His glory. Whenever we serve others in His name - whether using our hands to repair a home, our feet to visit the home-bound, our ears to listen in a time of need, or our words to affirm - we are playing an active role in the body of Christ. We're where we are supposed to be.

Our own desires and the world around us continually push us towards self-service. A good friend of mine would often bristle at the popular notion that Christianity was a 'crutch for the weak'. "Jesus calls us", he would say "to give up our desires, our wants and follow only Him! That's no crutch!" Jesus calls us to serve Him, and only Him. Who do you serve?

— Mike West

Readings

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.

Sunday July 15

Luke 10:25-37 In verse 28, Jesus says "Do this and you will live." Serving with purpose makes life more meaningful. Where are you experiencing this opportunity to truly "live?"

Monday July 16

Psalms 100:1-5 How do you feel when you serve? How should we feel when we are serving in God's name?

Tuesday July 17

Romans 12 Why should we serve? As you work your way through the chapter, are there types of service that you haven't thought of before?

Wednesday July 18

John 12:20-26 To what extent does Jesus expect us to follow him?

Thursday July 19

Joshua 24:14-16 Our personal property? TV? Business? Who, What, or Whom do you serve?

Friday July 20

2 Thessalonians 3; Matthew 5:13-16 Why is it important for Christ followers to set a good example? What does Paul mean by, "doing no work, but acting like busybodies" in verse 2 Thes. 3:11?

Saturday July 21

Galatians 6:7-10; Hebrews 6:10-12 What are the rewards of service to God? What is the result of service to self?

Let's Serve & Invite!

Check out this spot for simple ideas you can use at work and at play, on your own and with your family, to encourage others in the name of Jesus.

Be a Good Neighbor

Help a neighbor—pull their trash cans or recycling bins back up to their house for them, or bring their newspapers to their doorstep. If you don't really know them, take this opportunity to say hello—have a conversation.

Next time you're out shopping, reach out to one of the people around you—have a conversation with them. It doesn't have to be a long one; ask how they are. You'd be surprised how much genuinely caring about how a person is feeling can brighten their day.

Got a suggestion?
Email ServeandInvite@StJohnMD.org