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Gospel Pictures #8 Serving Others is a Picture of the Gospel

Talking about serving other people is a touchy subject

We may be led to feel guilty

Or we may be led to feel pretty satisfied in ourselves

And we may have people or even our church making us feel like we never do enough

We may not want to serve anyone else

We may feel demeaned by doing certain tasks

We may feel like we're always the more needy person in the room

Or, we may be willing to serve other people, but only on our terms

“I will serve this way, but I won't serve that way!”

Which is like telling Jesus what our service will be and not be

“I'll serve the people I love; but not anyone else”

Or maybe we serve, but our motives are really self-serving

Customer service businesses do this; otherwise they're out of business

Like pastors who we lead in a way that insures they keep their job

Or perhaps we serve, out of a deep sense of gratitude for how we've already been served

We all like being served by someone else

We may be embarrassed by what they do for us, but we like anyway

Because we normally like gaining instead of giving

But for any of us to be willing to serve another person, we first need the motivation to do so

First, let's talk about our possible motivations, if any, to serve other people...

We want it done right, so we “serve others” by pushing other people out the way and do it ourselves

We want to be recognized and affirmed and rewarded for our service

We want to be served ourselves in return, so our service becomes a sort of currency

We want God to think highly of us

And, it takes a lot of effort to keep those true motivations hidden, especially from the people we are serving

“Nothing upsets us more than to be told that ‘our purposes differ from those of the Almighty.’ ” -Abraham Lincoln

Jesus, Himself, can be our motivation

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

We see several things here:

Salvation results in “training” to live different, and hope for better

Our salvation required Jesus to give, Himself, in our place

His death for our lives

His resurrection for our hope

People who have been saved are “purified” from sin

Sin is born in the heart, where our motivations are born

People who have been saved are “zealous for good works”

The desire to do good works, like serving others, comes from
a new heart, therefore new motivations

We can be motivated to serve others when we realize Jesus said that when we serve others we are actually serving Him. So, when serving someone else we are serving Jesus by serving others in the Name of Jesus

Matthew 25:40 *And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*

But the problem remains; are we willing to serve Jesus in the places, the ways and to the people Jesus calls us to serve? We all fight against the tendency to say, “I’ll serve Jesus, but on my terms, and on my timeline.”

John 12:23-26 *And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

Don’t miss what Jesus said there! “If anyone serves me, he must follow me.”

Follow Him where?

To death...of self...so we can live in and for Him

Where we subjugate our motivations to His will for us

We can be motivated to serve others by looking at the words and actions of Jesus. He deliberately set the example of service for us to follow

John 13:12-17 *When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

So three things, three motivations Jesus gives us to serve others:

**Jesus serving us by sacrificing Himself to death, so we could have life
Jesus telling us that in serving others we are actually serving Him
And, the example Jesus set that He told us to imitate**

Service is a picture of the gospel

Jesus gives us new life, and we are transformed

As Christians, as followers of Jesus, one of our primary identities is that of being a servant

Our church's **Servant Identity Statement:**

We are servants of God who serve others as a way of life. Fully God-fully human, Jesus took on the posture of a servant. He gave his life, even unto death, so that others could experience salvation, peace and restoration. Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves..." All those who follow Jesus are called to serve in the same humility. For us this means joyful submission to God, to leadership and to each other, as we serve whomever God brings into our lives. We do, whatever needs doing; whenever it's needed, and where ever it leads us.

But...the desire to serve other people is ultimately not a motivation problem
It is a leadership problem, like "Who's in charge?"

Jesus tells us that to be "great" one needs to focus on being a servant instead of being a ruler. Why? Because we have to acknowledge Who the real Ruler really is

Isn't it easy to claim Jesus as Savior and Lord on Sunday mornings, and yet revert to living like we're sovereign over our own lives the other days of the week?

Matthew 20:25-28 *But Jesus called to them and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your*

slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

But being willing to serve someone else in the Name of Jesus requires that we think beyond ourselves to the needs of others

Philippians 2:4-8 *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this in mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

But, being willing to serve someone could be because we give in order to get

1 Peter 2:16 *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

A friend of mine, Jan Hettinga said this:

We can trace painful and shameful behavior to a desire for unrestricted personal freedom

Sometimes, and if we're honest we can find ourselves serving others for very selfish reasons, what the Bible calls "evil."

Our city, Juneau, seems to run on volunteerism. We have trails because of Trail Mix. We have youth sports because of volunteer coaches and administrators. We have companies and organizations who adopt a road way to pick up trash.

People exercise their freedom, but will try to find inner peace through music, nature, sexuality, drugs, supporting a good cause, community service or anything else promising peace.

But peace with God, and peace with who we are does not come from just doing nice things. Doing nice things for other people does not make us better people.

Justification is the only foundation for personal transformation. Personal transformation never results in justification.

If our "good works" were effective to cause God to justify and accept us, the death of Christ would not have been necessary.

Mark Twain - the Prince and the Pauper (Edward VI)

He masqueraded as a poor person, so he could see how they lived

He experienced life as a poor person, because he was interested in their lives. He wanted to know their pain

He became a poor person, but he never stopped being the crown prince

God expresses more interest in us than we do in Him

People are driven by three questions they ask themselves perhaps every day:

1. Will I be loved?
2. Will people tolerate me once they really get to know me?
3. Will I have what I need to live?

Paul Tripp responds to these three questions by saying this:

The gospel is a story of a God of love who places his love on people who do not deserve his love. This God sends the Son of his love to make a sacrifice of love so that his children can be welcomed into his arms of love and become a community of love that takes his love to those in desperate need of that love.

The gospel is the story of One who was willing to die for crimes he did not commit so that the people who committed those crimes would be fully and completely forgiven of every wrong they had done or would ever do.

The gospel is a story of God who opens his vast storehouse of provision to impoverished rebels who deserve nothing but get everything from him.

John 8:28-29 *So Jesus said to them, When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.*

“Repent” is to say, You can run your life as you see fit, or you can change your mind and let me lead.

The Bible calls sin “going our own way, and breaking from God’s leadership.” This is why the Kingdom of God is built from the individual heart outward.

Our service to those outside of our church should look like an extension of our service within the church. In other words, we learn it here, with each other.

And our service within the church is an extension of who each of us regard as King and Lord. We will each serve who we think is the ruler of our lives.