

Message #1071
Rev. Jack C. Longley

"LEARNING TO SERVE LIKE JESUS"

{I Corinthians 12:12-31}

Trinity Presbyterian Church

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INTRODUCTION

Elvis Presley seems as popular today as he was 27 years ago when he died--amazing! Yet, in spite of his enormous success he died of obesity and drug dependency at the age of 42--an unfulfilled and unhappy man.

In a recent interview, his wife, Priscilla said...

"Elvis never came to terms with who he was meant to be or what his purpose in life was. He thought he was here for a reason--maybe to preach, maybe to serve, maybe to save, maybe to care for people. That agonizing desire was always with him and he knew he wasn't fulfilling it. So, he'd go on stage and he wouldn't have to think about it!"

...Elvis had the world in his fingertips

...Yet, Elvis didn't have a clue as to what his real purpose on life was

I don't want you to make the same mistake!

Would you please read the Ephesians passage with me?

"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do!"

...circle the word "workmanship"

...God made you to make a contribution--not just to consume

...to make a difference

...And, what matters is not how long you live...but, how you live!

...not the duration of your life...but the donation of your life!

The Bible says we were created to serve!

...to give back

God gives never us a responsibility without equipping us for that task.

Job says: "Your hands shaped me and made me!"

God uses five things to shape you...

Spiritual Gifts

Heart

Abilities

Personality

Experiences

...that spells SHAPE

These five things make you who you are!

God has uniquely shaped you different from anybody else in the world for a purpose!

THAT PURPOSE IS TO SERVE HIM.

Read with me the the verse from I Peter 4:10...

"Each of us should use whatever gift he's received to serve others!"

Our purpose in life is to be what God made us to be! He gave us gifts, talents, abilities, background, and experiences...ALL of which are for the benefit of other people...to be used by serving others!

So, write this down...MY FOURTH PURPOSE IN LIFE IS TO SERVE GOD BY SERVING OTHERS!

...the Bible has a word for this...MINISTRY.

...EVERY believer is called to MINISTRY!

The word "ministry" simply means using my shape to help somebody else in the name of Christ! Whenever you use those gifts, talents, abilities....to help somebody else--YOU'RE A MINISTER!

The words "service" and "ministry" are the same in the Bible.

I want you right now to turn to the person sitting on either side of you and say: "YOU'RE A MINISTER!"

...EVERY Christian is a minister!

...we're not all pastors

...but, we're all ministers!

And the good news, once again, is that God gave us a model--Jesus Christ, who came to earth in the form of a man.

...you were created to be like Christ

...what did Christ do while on earth?

Read it with me--John 20:28--

"Jesus said, 'Your attitude must be like My own, for I did not come to be served, but to serve.'"

Now, listen carefully: Your SHAPE {spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, experiences} determines your ministry!

...but--note carefully--YOUR ATTITUDE determines your maturity!

Are you seeking self-esteem, self-worth, and significance? The Bible says, you get these from your service. Jesus said you have to give your life away in order to find it. The greatest thrill one can have in life is to be used by God!

...what does it take to learn to serve like Jesus?

...let me offer you three things that are necessary

First {write this down}...

I. SERVING LIKE JESUS MEANS BEING AVAILABLE

One day Jesus was walking to Jericho, and...

"Two blind men shouted, 'Lord, have mercy on us!' Jesus STOPPED and called them.

'What do you want Me to do for you?'"

...circle the word "stopped"

If you want to be used by God you must be willing to be interrupted!

I want to point out to you that most of Jesus' miracles were interruptions. All the people He healed: the blind man, the lame man, the sick people, the paralyzed man, the dead child...all were interruptions!

His first miracle? He was interrupted at a wedding.

His second miracle? He was interrupted on the way to Galilee.

"Jesus stopped...!"

...Jesus allowed Himself to be interrupted

...interruptions are opportunities!

{I must tell you that just as I typed that in my notes Karen buzzed me to tell me that Bobbi Sheets wanted to see me. When Bobbi walked into my study she said, "I hope I'm not interrupting you..." and I asked her to come and take a look at my computer screen to see what I had just typed. We both had a good laugh and she said to me, "You're being tested...!"}

The Bible says...

"Never tell your neighbors to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now!"

...servant-hearted people don't procrastinate!

...they're spontaneous!

...they stop!

I loved the quote attributed to John Wesley in "The Purpose Driven Life"

"Do all the good you can by all the means you can by all the ways you can in all the places you can and at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as you

ever can!"

...that, my friends, is greatness!

...to be used by God we MUST be available!

There are three barriers that keep us from being available...

1. SELF-CENTEREDNESS

The Bible says: "Forget yourself long enough to lend a helping hand!"

The number one enemy of compassion is busyness.

...we just get too busy!

...when we get too busy we put up our "Do Not Disturb" signs

"Jesus stopped" and took down the "do not disturb" sign!

Real servants don't mind being interrupted because their agenda is God's agenda.

We ought to wake up each morning and say, "OK, God, whom do you want to bring into my life today? Ok...bring 'em on!"

II. PERFECTIONISM

Are you waiting for everything to be perfect?

...when everything's settled down?

...when it's all right?

...then, you'll be ready to serve?

Read with me the passage from Ecclesiastes 11:4: "If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done!"

What you do doesn't have to be perfect for God to bless it!

Think about it: If God only used perfect people, what would get done in this world?

NOTHING!

...we're all a bunch of misfits

...we all have weaknesses

...we all have faults

...we all have failures

...we all have handicaps!

But, guess what? God uses us all! Because GOD DOESN'T USE PERFECT PEOPLE BECAUSE THERE AREN'T ANY!

...He uses normal people like us

...so don't wait...do something...start today!

III. MATERIALISM

Jesus described the third barrier when He said...

"No servant can serve two masters. You CANNOT serve both God and money!"

Ask yourself right now: What's the number one priority in my life?

{Write it on your outline}

...making a fortune?

...serving God and others?

Are you a KINGDOM BUILDER or a WEALTH BUILDER?

...it's ok to be a wealth builder

...but don't make that the number one goal in your life

Serving means being available; and, secondly...

II. SERVING LIKE JESUS MEANS BEING GRATEFUL

To serve God, as Jesus served, we are to be grateful for the opportunity.

Remember the account in John 11 when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? He said...

"Father, I thank You that You heard Me. I know that You always hear Me, but I said

this for the benefit of the people standing here!"

...Jesus was grateful that God heard Him

...He wanted others to know of His gratitude.

...that was His attitude through His ministry

Ministry and miracles happen in a spirit of gratitude.

The Apostle Paul expressed this when He said: "I thank Jesus Christ because He trusted me. He gave me this work of serving Him."

In that wonderful 100th Psalm we're urged--read it with me..."Serve the Lord with gladness!"

We serve with gratefulness because of what God has done for us.

...He's given us life through Jesus Christ

...He's given us hope of eternal life

Look at the II Timothy 1:9 passage: "It is He who saved us and chose us for His holy work, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan!"

...because of what He has done for us we serve Him gratefully!

But, there are two barriers that trip us up in our effort to serve God gratefully.

1. COMPARING AND CRITICIZING

God never intended for us to compare ourselves to others...to criticize others! The Bible tells us in Romans 14:4..."Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? The Lord will determine whether His servant has been successful!"

...we're on the same team

...we have the same goal

...we serve the same God

Compare yourself to others....criticize others...and it will steal your joy and gratitude out of your life!

...look to all God has done for us

...no longer then do I need to compare and criticize.

...God's approval is what counts

2. WRONG MOTIVATIONS

In Matthew 6:1, Jesus said: "When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from your Father in heaven!"

...the wrong motivation is doing the right things in the wrong way and for the wrong reason.

We don't serve God...and others...because it is a bargaining chip with God.

...it's not a means of manipulating God

...if I do this for God...God will do this for me!

How do you know whether it's the right or wrong motivation? One word: Gratitude!

When you lose the sense of gratefulness you know something's wrong with your motivation.

What are your motivations for serving Christ?

There's yet a third thing...

III. SERVING LIKE JESUS MEANS BEING FAITHFUL

Faithful! Just what does that mean?

...it means you don't give up!

...you keep on going...stick with the task!

...you don't quit in the middle of your assignment

At the end of His ministry, Jesus prayed...

"I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work that You gave Me to do!"

I want you to be able to say that on the day you stand before God!

Jesus, again our model, was faithful in fulfilling His service

...He didn't give up

...He didn't give in

...He was persistent

What motivates us to keep on going? Look at I Corinthians 4:2...

"The one thing required of servants is that they be faithful!"

...faithful because of our gratitude to God

...faithful because of our absolute trust in God

...in this life

...and in the life to come!

...faithful because we know that all we do in serving our Lord matters and makes a difference

Read with me the I Corinthians 15:58 passage...

"Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort!"

...in God's mind, there is no little service--it all counts

...Remember this: little is much if God is in it!

...EVERYTHING you do for God matters!

...You're important to God!

...He's counting on your service!

...every task matters!

CONCLUSION

One day we will all stand before God and He's going to say to us...

"What did you do with what I gave you? The talents...the abilities...the background...the experiences...the freedom...the education...your spiritual gifts?"

Look at the verse from Hebrews 6:10-- "He will not forget how hard you've worked for Him and how you've shown your love to Him."

...how, you ask?

...by your faithful service to Him...to others

And, never forget the award that's awaiting you...

"Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things so; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master's happiness!"

...good work

...job well done!

...won't that be great?

The most important thing you'll ever do with your life is serving God in ministry...

...it's far more important than your career

...your hobbies

...everything else you do!

Why? Because you were put here on earth to serve!

Pray this prayer with me in closing...

"Father, I realize that I was shaped to serve You by serving others.

Forgive me for the times I've put a "do not disturb" sign on my heart.

Help me to see the interruptions as opportunities to serve. Help me to make time for what matters most. You've been so good to me. I want to give something back. I want to serve You freely and gratefully and faithfully, and I want to one day hear you say to me, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.