

Building a Life of Service

I did a Bible check as I began my research on the topic of service and came up with some interesting statistics that point to a singular interesting fact.

I first entered the word service; It is referenced 51 times in the New Living Translation, 74 times in the New International Version, 116 times in the King James and 123 times in the New American Standard Bible. The word serve brought 180 references in the NLT, 193 in the King James, 196 in the NASB, and 207 in the NIV.

The word servant brought us 349 references in the NLT, 405 in the NASB, 462 in the King James and 485 in the NIV.

Apparently service is of some importance in the Scriptures.

So let us work back to the interesting fact I spoke of. The word servant 40% of the time refers to one who serves another as in a slave. Someone who is a servant to someone else. 60% of the time it referred to being a servant to God.

The word serve related 75% to wanting to serve the Lord.

And the Word SERVICE referred 99% of the time to service to God. Whether it be direct service to God or , as in many of the references, in service to God through worship.

Now I may not be the sharpest tool in the shed but something jumped out at me and I hope you are getting the same impression. If we are to effectively serve humanity, if we are looking to serve each other in ways that promote harmony and peaceful coexistence, if we are to serve the creation around us, if we are to fully engage in the social issues of our times for the benefit of mankind, the created order and the promotion of a united universe we have to start at a singular pivotal place.

Our main focus of service, of building lives of service have to do with one thing and one thing alone.

Being in service to worshipping God. Once again we are confronted with the basic fact, it's not about us. It IS all about God!

If we are not intentional, inspirational and extravagant in our worship, our attending to the worship of God we are never going to pull all the loose threads of our daily existence together.

Duh!!

Now I don't spend too much time in a book most of us are familiar with to some degree as United Methodist. In fact I've spent more time in it since I've been here at St. Jon's than I had in quite a while. A little thing called the Methodist Hymnal. As we engage in traditional worship we should be aware that the many different Anthems, call to worship, hymns for this and that have a specific term given to them.

And I don't think this is present as some coincidence. This is all called service music.

We have to begin way back in the Hebrew Scriptures to get the basic concept of service to God. The Passover sacrifice to God that resulted in the release of the Israelites from their captivity really gives us a good example of service to God. God tells His people to keep this word, forever. When they entered their land God had promised them they were commanded to keep

doing the remembrance of God mighty acts to save God's own people.

And somewhere along the line when your children say why are we doing this, we are to tell them that this is the Passover sacrifice to God who passed over the homes of the Israelites in Egypt when God hit Egypt with death but passed over us.

And what was the Israelites reaction. They worshipped God.

All throughout Exodus, Numbers, in fact all through the Hebrew Scriptures when we see a reference to service it has to do with serving God through acts of worship and attending to all the items, accessories and actions that have to do with temple worship.

We are simply called to worship God with all that we are and all that we have.

The Psalmists never tired of expressing their posture of being in service to God. "Make Your face shine upon Your servant, save me in Your lovingkindness." Let Your smile warm me, O God. I am Your servant, and save me simply because You love me.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that the service of righteousness brings peace, quietness and confidence, forever. I don't get it sometimes. Why do we continue to hurt disrupt and scar our very souls as we step all over each other in our selfish self centered pursuits when serving God and being righteous in our actions towards each other would bring quiet peaceful lives where we were able to trust each other forever!

Serving God assures us of lives of deliverance.

Remember the story of three guys who were about to be thrown into a burning furnace because they would not bow down to the false god's?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego looked the king straight in the eye and said, "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and God will deliver us from your hand." Go ahead throw us in the fire, our God can rescue us from anything you can cook up.

Jesus makes this all too simple for us. Don't you just love Jesus? Jesus is radical. Jesus confuses us sometimes. But more often or not Jesus tells us like it is. Jesus is a straight shooter. Je-

sus likes to throw down. Jesus is not messing around.

Jesus says You gotta serve somebody. You can't serve wealth, fame, power and possessions and God at the same time. It's one or the other.

You can serve all that the world has to offer or you can serve me. Make up your mind. It's not going to be easy but I will never stop helping you. Never.

You can't worship two god's at once. Loving one god you will end up hating the other. Adoration for one feeds contempt for the other."

Jesus says it to the Roman influence of His day and Jesus says it to the overwhelming secular influence of our day. You can't serve both.

And when you do choose who and what you will serve you have to be ready. Jesus says those who are prepared to serve when the master returns will be blessed.

In the 12th chapter of John think Jesus says it the very best way, "If anyone serves Me, he must also follow Me ready to serve at a moments notice, and where I am the servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, God will honor them." Wow!!

Paul has quite a bit to say about lives of service.

Paul says don't burn out, keep your self physically and spiritually healthy. Be alert as servants, be cheerfully expectant of what the Master might expect of you.

Don't quit in the hard times. Pray harder. Lean on God even more. Help those who are needy, especially your brothers and sisters in Christ. Be inventive in your hospitality.

And for God's sake quit whining about how hard your life is to get you big butt out of that big chair to serve the Lord.

You know I like to look in the mirror and see the Holy Bob. Bob, Man of God. And there's that spiritual pride. If I look real close the mirror gets a little dimmer and I see Bob, lazy, self-centered and yes fearful of relying on God. I'm free, I can take care of it my self thank you. But Paul sets me straight.

Paul tells us how he was whipped, beaten, ship wrecked, stoned, hungry thirsty, cold, sleepless and concealed to escape his enemies.

Now I admit Paul is sometime a very irritating person and we don't like irritating people. But do

ya think sometimes that is just what it takes to really live a life of service.

Listen.

You were called to a life of freedom. Do not turn that life of freedom into it's the all about me church. Don't turn it into it's the all about me life of service.

You were called to freedom so you could serve one another. And when we serve each other we serve Christ.

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom.

Use your freedom to serve one another in love, that's how your freedom grows.

I can relate to Paul when he says, "I am so grateful to Christ Jesus for giving me strength and making me adequate to do this work. Jesus went out on a limb for me. Jesus trusted me with this ministry. And the credentials I brought to Jesus were these. I was a vindictive, arrogant, blasphemer.

But Jesus treated me mercifully because I didn't know what I was doing or who I was doing it against.

And here is the good part. Here is how Jesus responded to that life.

Jesus showered me with mercy, poured out grace upon grace.

You want to know how to build a life of service?

John of Patmos had a vision and I want to share that vision with you.

I would like us all to take a moment and vision this with me.

There is a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, and it flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river is the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

That river is God's Holy Spirit filling you with life and you are the leaves of the trees. A life of service is a life of healing the nations.

It's time to get busy.

It's time to echo the words of Joshua who says,

“Me and my family, We will serve the Lord.”

Amen.