

In wrapping up our sermon series on worship, I hope that we have a greater appreciation for its importance in the Christian life, as well as the great potential for joy it holds for the believer. When the Word became flesh, He took on the form of a servant, not as some sort of costume, but because it reflects the nature of God and, as His images, we must be found as servants as well. This week, let's wrap up our sermon series with these thoughts on servanthood:

Day 1

Practice Outward Focus

One of the main impediments to being a servant is the inability to take our eyes off ourselves. In the Greek myth of Narcissus, the titular character falls in love with his own reflection and dies, taking no care for anything else, failing to eat and perishing alone. While this story is obviously an exaggeration of the human condition, it gives insight into the problem we often face of seeing anything but ourselves. We often do not think of the needs, challenges, or frustration of others because we are focused on our own agendas. Spend some time this week trying to be as observant as possible. Notice the world around you. Look for the details. I have noticed that children often do not have a clue about their appearance, they can have chocolate smeared over their clothes and faces and confidently walk up to the President of the United States of America. At the same time, they can notice the smallest bug on the sidewalk or the smallest pebble of unusual color that an adult would pass by without regard. In some ways, I think, these qualities go hand in hand. Less regard for self makes room for more regard for the world.

Verses: James 3:13-18, Philippians 2:1-11, 1 John 3:16-18

Prayer Topics: Humility, Generosity, Kind-Heartedness

Day 2

The Importance of Empathy

Once we start to see the world around us, it is important to strive for empathy. Empathy is a relatively new word in the English language, only being translated from German (which was translated from Greek in 1858) in 1909. Empathy has two main components, the first being the ability to understand another's emotional state. Many people see the world, but cannot seem to understand what other people are going through, being all but incapable of putting themselves in another's shoes. It is hard to love your neighbor as yourself without this ability. The second component of empathy is the ability to act appropriately regarding another's emotional state. This does not mean, however, the ability to give the other whatever they want, or to treat their emotional state as authoritative, but the ability to take this emotional state into the

calculus of what needs to be done in a given situation. It may be true that in a given situation, tough love is required. It may also be true that a little tenderness may show that you care. It takes humanity to develop the first component of empathy, but wisdom and discernment to develop the second. Spend some time this week in prayer that God will help you develop both kinds, so that you can serve the kingdom effectively.

Verses: 1 Peter 3:8-22, Ephesians 4:17-32, Romans 12:9-21

Prayer Topics: Relatability, Forgiveness, Wisdom

Day 3

The Art of Communicating

I have found that communicating effectively is a rare and powerful skill. Someone who can communicate effectively is useful in every endeavor, and will always be employable. Why is communication so difficult? Because true communication requires us to quiet our inner monologue, to see reality instead of our theories, and to strive to understand the other person as well as striving to be understood. It is very hard work, and most of the time, most of us do not put in as much work in this area as we should. Because the world is very complex, and because we tend to be lazy, we make mental models of reality that are a simplification of what actually exists. The problem is, we tend to hold on to these simplifications beyond all reason and usefulness, to fall in love with them as they often paint us in a better light than reality would by painting others in a worse light. We cannot truly hope to serve without having our misconceptions challenged, our misguided paths straightened, and our sacred cows sacrificed. This process happens largely through communication, as iron sharpens iron. Allow your eyes to be opened this week, your ears to be unstopped, and the truth to shine into your life. To serve others well, you must know God, others, and yourself. That's a lot. Let's get started.

Verses: James 1:19-21, Colossians 4:2-6, Proverbs 18:2

Prayer Topics: Conversation, Connection, Relationship

Day 4

Seeing the Whole

Serving well in the kingdom means seeing the kingdom. Most of the time, we are very familiar with one part of the kingdom, and as we pray, we can be confused by God's lack of positive answers to our prayers. Why does He delay? Why does He say no? God sees the whole kingdom, in all parts of the globe, the physical and the spiritual, past, present, and future. He takes it all into account, and because we cannot hope to, His ways seem mysterious to us. We will never be all knowing, but we must become wise to serve.

This means developing the discernment that is possible for mankind so that our service will not be short sighted and counter-productive. We must learn to put our efforts into fertile fields, and to plant, water, and prune when appropriate. Much of the time this wisdom will take the form of seeing things not in isolation, but as the intricate web of covenants that actually make up reality. To serve well, we must understand things spiritually, seeing the invisible connections that bind things together, making our efforts count by making sure they enhance good connections and inhibit bad ones. Our politicians engage in a type of spending called “pork”. Pork spending is useless spending that helps the politicians district at the expense of the whole. Let’s be wiser than our political class, let’s see the whole.

Verses: Psalm 119:18, 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, Romans 14:13-19

Prayer Topics: Big-Picture, Scope, Perspective

Day 5

Working Joyfully

In summary, what should we say about service? Everything we do should serve the kingdom. To some, this might sound like never ending slavery. But in looking at this statement, it is important to remember how God called Israel to serve Him. God called Israel to Sinai and gave them the commands, the laws, and the ordinances. He gave them the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle, and all the rules for worship. Then he called them into festival, as every holy day was an invitation for celebration except for the day of atonement. God called the people to celebrate Him, and that is what service is. We serve happily, because any true service is a celebration of the King of Kings. Let us work together joyfully.

Verses: 1 Peter 2:1-12, Matthew 10:5-15, Luke 12:22-34

Prayer Topics: Purification, Joy, Celebration