

Just Serve-17 7-10.docx
Luke 17:7-10

Did you know that the word “servant” in one form or another is used over 1,000 times in the Bible?

That means it’s a very big deal to God and should be to us as well.

When the Apostle Paul introduced himself in his letters, he would start with his name and then describe his nature.

Here’s an example from Romans 1:1: “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...”

He tells us Paul who he is (his name) and then what he is (a servant).

This is his fundamental identity.

Are You a Servant or a Volunteer?

Let me ask you a question.

What’s the difference between a servant and a volunteer?

A volunteer picks and chooses when and even whether to serve.

A servant serves no matter what.

A volunteer serves when convenient; a servant serves out of commitment.

Someone said it well: “The servant does what he is told when he is told to do it. The volunteer does what he wants to do when he feels like doing it.”

Friends, Jesus didn’t recruit volunteers; He calls us to be servants.

Listen to these words from Carlton Coon: “Everyone in our church is a servant....Jesus never asked His followers to give a few hours of their day off. He did call them to give everything for the sake of the kingdom...most church volunteers have to be cornered, coddled and convinced that their participation won’t take up too much of their time...the church doesn’t need more volunteers who give away spare time. We need servants whose lives belong to the Lord.”

1 Peter 2:16 challenges us to “...live as servants of God.”

We could say it like this: The issue is not whether we will serve but where we will serve.

One day Jesus revealed the importance of serving without being thanked for it.

I should warn you ahead of time that this passage is probably not what you want to hear on Mother's Day

It's quite a difficult and demanding little story.

Please turn in your Bible to Luke 17:7-10

The issue is not whether we will serve but where we will serve.

I see four standards for servanthood from this story.

To Know Him and Make Him Known

1) A Servant's Work Is Not Always Sensational—Vs. 7

- a) Check out the first part of verse 7
- b) The word Jesus uses in this story for servant is *doulos*, or a "bond-slave."
- c) This basically means that the servant is attached to the owner.
- d) This particular farmer probably only had one servant who had to multi-task throughout the day.
- e) He'd do the back-breaking work of plowing and then the wearisome work of watching sheep.
- f) His muscles would scream and then he may have screamed out of boredom.
- g) And then he'd get up the next day and do it all over again.
- h) Kind of sounds like some of our jobs, doesn't it?
- i) My guess is that over time, his daily responsibilities became routine and his tasks were not thrilling.
- j) Let me state the obvious.
- k) Sometimes serving is not very sensational because we're called to be faithful in some pretty ordinary tasks.
- l) Serving involves exertion and often exacts a price.
- m) If you find yourself strutting about how much you serve, you better check your motives.
- n) Sometimes serving the Lord is difficult and we may not always have fun but it is God that gives us great joy
- o) Sometimes we recruit people to a ministry by telling them how fun and easy it is to serve.
- p) We need to stop doing this because serving is strenuous and not always sensational.

2) Serving Must Be Sustained—Vs. 7-8

- a) After working all day, the servant comes back to the Master's house.
- b) He's probably tired and hungry but he still has work to do.
- c) Here's the principle.
- d) A servant's service may change locale and the specific job description may be in flux but the truth of the matter is that our serving must be sustained.
- e) The issue is not whether we will serve but where we will serve.
- f) Actually, the job description for a servant is very simple and straightforward: "Do everything your Master commands."

- g) Let's listen to how Jesus said it in the second half of verse 7 and verse 8: "Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'?"
- h) The servant moves from outdoors to indoors, from daylight to dusk and from hard labor to home life.
- i) He goes from the fields to fixing food.
- j) Don't miss this truth.
- k) A servant serves whenever, wherever, for whomever, doing whatever it takes.
- l) One of the best places to exhibit serving is within your family situation.
- m) How would marriages be changed if husbands and wives would serve each other instead of finding fault with one another?
- n) Think of what could happen in a home if siblings would look for simple ways to serve a sister or a brother.
- o) How would things be different if children would serve their parents?
- p) Or if parents looked for tangible ways to serve their kids?
- q) In addition, can you imagine what would happen in this community if families would not only serve one another but would serve as families
- r) I suspect that some of us feel like we've already put our time in.
- s) We've done the hard labor and now we feel like it's time to sit and relax a bit.
- t) Friend, if you're alive, you're still a servant.
- u) The location and intensity of your serving may change as the seasons of your life change, but no Christ-follower has the option of sitting down to have his or her needs met, when there are still things to do.
- v) The key is to be a servant, not a slacker.
- w) I am so moved by the caliber of our committed servants at NLBFC whose serving has been sustained for a long time.
- x) Serving is not always sensational and it must be sustained.
- y) Why?
- z) Because the issue is not whether we will serve but where we will serve.

3) **Serving Is A Sacrifice—Vs. 9**

- a) After going all out and working from sunup to sundown, the servant is no doubt tired.
- b) A word of appreciation would mean so much to him, but it never comes.
- c) Look at verse 9
- d) The implied answer is a strong "no."
- e) The word "thank" means to have gratitude or to be grateful.
- f) The idea is if the master expresses gratitude it could be construed as a debt that must somehow be settled to even the score.
- g) This is absurdly arrogant as Job 22:2 points out: "Can a man be of benefit to God?"
- h) We can't impress God in such a way that He will feel obligated to give us some special honor.
- i) Some of us think that God somehow owes us for all that we've done for Him.
- j) He doesn't favor us especially because we've done something special – we're servants and therefore we must serve.
- k) The Pharisees believed that their deeds put God in their debt.
- l) This kind of thinking gets us in deep trouble because God doesn't owe us anything.

- m) In fact, according to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, God doesn't owe us, He owns us
 - n) **1 Cor. 6:19-20—" Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.**
 - o) We are not entitled to a word of thanks or appreciation.
 - p) Our focus is often on our feelings whereas this servant was focused on just doing his job.
 - q) Too many of us serve with way too many expectations.
 - r) This gets us frustrated and angry and mad and we determine to never serve again because no one thanked us, or because it didn't go like we wanted it to.
 - s) Remember that God does not need us to serve Him; it's our duty and delight and He is under no obligation to reward us.
 - t) We live in a culture where we're consumed with our "own rights" but Christ-followers must reject an attitude of entitlement that leads us to think we have a right to certain benefits or privileges.
 - u) Consider the following statements that could be signs that you feel entitled:
 - i) I blame people for my failures or difficulties.
 - ii) I'm frustrated over the gap between what I deserve and what I get.
 - iii) I'm angry with people who fail me and I'm holding grudges.
 - iv) I'm disappointed with God because He's not come through for me.
 - v) Brothers and sisters, let's get this straight: God created us for His glory.
 - w) **Listen to Romans 11:35-36—" Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.**
 - x) **I need to be reminded of 1 Corinthians 4:7—" For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?**
 - y) Let me clarify something.
 - z) I don't think it's wrong to show appreciation when someone is serving.
 - aa) In fact, we need to do more of that.
 - bb) Most people, including me, get discouraged and a word of encouragement can go a long way.
 - cc) Hebrews 3:13 says that we are to encourage each other every twenty four hours
 - dd) **Heb. 3:13—" But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**
 - ee) Serving is not always sensational, serving must be sustained, and serving is a sacrifice.
 - ff) There's one more serving standard...
- 4) Serving is satisfying—vs. 10**
- a) Jesus concludes this story with some corrective words in verse 10
 - b) In the first part of the parable we're called to identify with the master but now with the words, "So you also..." we're to see our identity as servants.
 - c) This verse helps us see what being a servant involves.
 - d) A servant's heart is intent upon, and his will is bound to, the will and wishes of another.
 - e) **Someone put it this way, "Regardless of how much we do, we cannot do more than is expected of us."**
 - f) Can we really say that we've "done everything we've been told to do?"
 - g) Instead of having a feeling of entitlement, we need to see ourselves as unworthy servants.

- h) The idea in the Greek is that we are “unworthy of any praise.”
- i) It means “no one owes me anything extra.”
- j) It’s like when we pay our taxes and we don’t receive a thank you note from the government – we’ve simply done what was expected of us.
- k) Likewise, we shouldn’t expect an extra reward for expected service.
- l) We’re to recognize our unworthiness and realize our obligation.
- m) Think of it this way – the Lord of glory has you in His service.
- n) In that sense, serving is very satisfying because it’s an honor and privilege!
- o) One of the best biblical images of this single-minded resolve to deflect devotion from self to the Savior is found in Psalm 123:2
- p) **Ps. 123:2—” Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He is gracious to us.**
- q) When the master moves his finger, the servant falls in line.
- r) When he says, “jump” the servant says, “how high?”
- s) The servant does not waffle or hedge or complain or bargain or debate.
- t) He or she simply obeys like the child Samuel who responded to the Lord’s voice in 1 Samuel 3:9 by saying
- u) **1 Sam. 3:9—” And Eli said to Samuel, “Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.’ ” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.**
- v) Our society seems to be obsessed with helping people develop their self-esteem; Jesus is much more concerned that we understand ourselves to be unworthy servants.
- w) **Someone once said, “You know you’re a servant by how you act when you’re treated like one.”**
- x) When you’re treated like a servant, do you get offended?
- y) When someone forgets to say thanks do you go in the tank?
- z) Do you think you’re worthy of recognition?
- aa) Or do you say, “I just got treated better than I should because I am an ‘unworthy’ servant.”
- bb) The issue is really one of obedience.
- cc) Am I going to serve myself or serve others?
- dd) The servant does his duty out of devotion to the master.
- ee) **It was Kierkegaard who said, “It’s hard to believe, not because it’s hard to understand, but because it’s hard to obey.”**

5) Practical Points

- a) Serving is not always sensational, serving must be sustained, serving is a sacrifice, and yet serving is satisfying.
- b) As we begin a new ministry year, we need to be involved in service, not “serve-us.”
- c) How do we do this?
- d) Let me give three practical applications.
- e) **Surrender to the Savior.**
 - i) The first place to start is by making sure that you have surrendered to the Savior by being saved.
 - ii) After you surrender, you will want to serve Him, not because you have to, but because you get to.

- iii) You'll live as a servant because you love Jesus as your Savior.
- iv) **C.S. Lewis said, "The more we get what we now call 'ourselves' out of the way and let Him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become."**
- v) Let's make sure our time, talents and treasures are at the disposal of the Master.
- f) **Choose to be a servant, not a volunteer.**
 - i) I saw a t-shirt recently that said, "Yes, the world DOES revolve around me!"
 - ii) And all God's people said, "Not!"
 - iii) Is there anything uglier than spiritual arrogance?
 - iv) **Richard Foster, in his book "Celebration of Discipline," writes: "There's a difference between choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant."**
 - v) We could say it this way: Don't serve until you've settled the servanthood issue; but once you've settled it, don't ever stop serving.
 - vi) In what ways can you serve right now?
 - vii) NLBFC is in need of servants, not just people to fill some slots.
- g) **Restore your relationships.**
 - i) In the verses that come before the passage we just studied, Jesus warns us about causing others to sin in verses 1-3: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves."
 - ii) In the very next breath Jesus tells us to make sure we're quick to forgive those who sin against us: "If he sins against you seven times in a day...forgive him."
 - iii) Is there anyone you've been withholding forgiveness from?
 - iv) When the disciples heard these challenging words they immediately asked Jesus for more faith.
 - v) He told them that just a little bit of faith the size of a mustard seed in a big God is all that they needed.
 - vi) How much faith do you need to forgive?
 - vii) As much faith as it takes to believe God has forgiven you.
 - viii) When we avoid causing someone to stumble, that doesn't make us spiritual superstars – it's merely what's expected of us.
 - ix) When we forgive someone, we shouldn't look for a reward because that's just what Christ followers do.
 - x) And when we serve we shouldn't expect that God is somehow indebted to us for our incredible sacrifice.

David Livingstone served as a missionary in Africa for 33 years. When he came home people tried to applaud him and heap accolades on him as a "superstar servant." Listen to how he viewed himself: "For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view, and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make

us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice.”

If someone were to come to visit NLBFC, would they see a few superstars or would they see a team of sincere servants who are working to connect others to Jesus and equip them to be growing and faithful followers?

We want to celebrate what God did through some of our servants this summer as they served Christ cross-culturally.