

13. A Community of Servants (3Q 2019—The Least of These)

Biblical material: 2 Cor. 2:14–16, Exod. 32:1–14, 1 Pet. 2:12, Phil. 2:15, Eph. 2:19, Heb. 10:23–25.

Quotes

- Service which is rendered without joy helps neither the servant nor the served. But all other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy. *Mahatma Gandhi*
- He who is not a good servant will not be a good master. *Plato*
- I believe in servant leadership, and the servant always asks, “Where am I needed most?” *Mike Pence*
- Since the Church is to be servant to the poor, it is our fault if that wealth is not channeled to help the poor in our world. *Cesar Chavez*
- A servant of God has but one Master. It ill becomes the servant to seek to be rich, and great, and honored in that world where his Lord was poor, and mean, and despised. *George Muller*
- Divine love does not weigh down, nor carry his servant captive and enslaved to the lowest depths, but raises him, supports him and magnifies him above all liberty whatsoever. *Giordano Bruno*

Questions

Instead of “a community of servants, maybe “a community of friends”? Why did Jesus say “I no longer call you servants, but friends”? How can we truly serve the needs of those around us? How can we serve without having the negative aspects of “servant mentality”? How does “service” play out in the great controversy?

Bible summary

As “captives in Christ” we are to spread a sweet fragrance of the knowledge of Christ (2 Cor. 2:14–16). Exod. 32:1–14 records the tragic story of the golden calf. This demonstrates the price of unthinking worship, and shows that though we are to serve, we are not to be blind unthinking servants—of God or anyone else. “Be sure to act appropriately when you’re with non-Christians, so even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see the good things you do and glorify God when he comes.” 1 Pet. 2:12 FBV. We are called to live pure and innocent lives (Phil. 2:15). We are part of God’s family (Eph. 2:19). We are to encourage one another to love and to do good deeds (Heb. 10:23–25).

Comment

The title is a red flag for some of us! Especially in view of Jesus’ statement that he calls us friends, not servants: “I don’t call you servants any longer, for servants are not taken into their master’s confidence. I call you friends, for everything my Father told me I’ve explained to you.” John 15:15 FBV.

But behind the title is an important truth: we are called to serve those around us. In terms of the humanitarian theme of this quarter’s lessons, what do we conclude? How can our church be viewed as a “community of servants” to the world? Yes we have our hospitals

and clinics. Yes we have our educational institutions. Yes we have ADRA and Community Services. But on the local church level, in our individual lives, what are we doing?

Question: Why did Jesus heal people? Because he cared so deeply about them. Even when he knew that he would raise Lazarus, Jesus still wept along with everyone else there. Every miracle is to help us, and the side aspect of “vindicating God” is just that—not the primary motive. Of course, people would not have come to Jesus in the numbers that they did without the miracles. But when Jesus saw they were following just for miracles, and when they wanted to make him king as a result, he stopped. And the people left him. His compassion continued, but to heal everyone clouded the mission, in an odd sense. God does want to save and heal everyone—but he wants more than just healing from a particular problem or disease. He wants to salvation-heal us, and do so eternally.

And we as his friends must have the same perspective. Our role is to respond just as Jesus did—with compassion. We truly care for those around us—which is the exact opposite of the selfishness of sin. In whatever way we can, we try to help, we share the grief, we sympathize. Like Jesus who came and lived among us, we are living here in this world as a spectacle to the universe, to angels and to human beings, of what God is really like. That’s our role, one that we cannot and dare not fake.

So in all we do, we are to be thinking of the wider role we play in representing God to the universe. Not because we need to invoke this to motivate us, but because we recognize that as God transforms us into people who operate from “other-centered” thinking, then we will automatically want to help others, and in the process speak well of our loving Lord.

Ellen White Comments

We must stand as God’s servants, independent of the world, yet constantly shining as lights in the world, ever, both in faith and practice, representing Christ. The life of the Christian will testify that he is governed by laws other than those which the world obeys; laws of a higher order. Oneness with Christ enables men to wield an influence far above that of the renowned of this world. While following the example of Christ, they have, through His grace, power to benefit the church and the community. Their influence is felt just in proportion to the distinctness of the line of demarcation which separates them in spirit and principle from the world. Representing in character the attributes of Christ, they may carry forward to a glorious completion the work which He left them. {PUR, July 21, 1904 par. 3}

Can anything be withheld by those who know the blessedness of giving? Shall it be said of professed believers in Jesus Christ that he is ashamed to call them brethren? Selfishness, covetousness, pride, and vanity misrepresent Christ to the world. {MM, November 1, 1894 par. 8}

Will you not from this very day try to represent Christ to the world? You will have a refuge. You will be sunny Christians. We have been gloomy long enough. Had we not better come out of the cave and stand with God? Then we will have Christ with us so that we can talk of redemption as did the disciples when they had been with Jesus and learned of Him. Carry the light of Jesus. Carry it to your neighbors. {CTr 62.6}