

## **Serving** **by Pastor Robert Sherrod**

Good afternoon. Serving is a subject that is very meaningful to me. As I look at our society, as a whole, I see fewer and fewer people willing to take on the role of servant. Society in general views servanthood somewhat negatively. In short, serving is something we talk about, but many times are unwilling to do ourselves. For the Christian serving should be a way of life.

In thinking about serving, I want to share five basic thoughts concerning Christian servanthood: model for service, mankind, motive for service, mandate for service, and mission for service.

Let us look at the perfect **Model** of a servant and service, Jesus Christ. In Matthew 20 Jesus says that He did not come to *be* served, but *to serve* —giving His life a ransom for many. Jesus summarized two main objectives for His coming into the world: serving and giving His life as payment for sin. When Jesus used the word serve, what did He mean? The word serve is defined as: to care for, to contribute to the support of, and to wait on. Jesus declared that service and sacrifice are interrelated.

Christ showed caring to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4); the woman caught in adultery (John 8); and feeding the 5,000 (likely 20,000 people counting women and children (John 6). Not only did He show caring, but also supported these people with a meal. In John 13, Jesus demonstrated servant hood by washing the disciples' feet. Foot washing in the Jewish culture was not the typical work of a house servant —but the task of the lowest type of slave. ***Jesus identified Himself at this level of servant hood a slave.***

Next, I would like to talk about **Mankind**. The Bible has a great deal to say about mankind. Mankind was created in the image of God (Gen 1); was given dominion over creation (Gen 1 and 9); is a spiritual being (Acts 7) and is valuable to God (John 3 and 1 Cor. 6). Yet the Bible also makes it very clear that mankind sinned against God (Rom 5); is not in right relationship with God (Eph 2); is sinful by nature (Rom 3); and has a character that resists and rebels against God (2 Tim 3). It is against the backdrop of this truth about mankind that Christ came and paid the ultimate price of service, the giving of His life; though we were yet sinners, helpless, hopeless, rebellious, hateful, blasphemers with deceitfully wicked hearts (Jer. 17) —destined to eternal separation from God (Rom 5) —Christ served mankind. He personally experienced great hostility, betrayal, denial, desertion,

rejection, and the most cruel form of capital punishment —death on the cross (Isa 53 and Psa 22). He *voluntarily* died (John 10). Jesus said His payment for sin is complete (John 19). Amazingly, while He was on the cross He continued to serve —making caring provision for His mother (John 19). Jesus offers mankind the way back to a right relationship with God —repenting and trusting in Him alone (John 6:47; Rom 10:9-13; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 12:1-2).

When a person receives this gift from God —by faith —the Bible declares you are a new creation (2 Cor 5); you are not condemned (Rom 8); heaven will be your eternal home (John 14); you have peace with God (Rom 5); you are indwelt by the presence of God (Acts 2 and Eph 4); you are created for good works (Eph 2); and many more precious promises which should motivate us to serve God and others.

### **Motive for Serving**

After looking at the tremendous service Jesus Christ offered mankind and when we recognize —at a deep level —our sinful, lost state *without* this gift of salvation —each of us should *serve* Christ out of:

Obedience:	Jesus said if you love Me keep My commandments (Jn 15).
Love:	Not just for what He did for us, but love for who He is and for one another (John 15).
Thankfulness:	Serving is an expression of gratitude (1 Thess 5).
Faith:	A deeper trust and dependence on God to not only provide for us, but for others we are serving (Acts 2).
The promises	He made to reward us (Matt 10).
The desire to	please, honor, and glorify Christ (Matt 10).
Joy:	The joy it brings to others (Matt 20).
The gifts	God has given us to serve (1 Cor 12).
The need	that people be saved and discipled (Matt 28 and Acts 1).

These are but a few of the basic reasons we should serve God, the church, and others.

Now I want to look more closely at the servant and the characteristics or basic requirements of service.

## Mandate for Service

Jesus, in a total act of service, washed the disciples' feet (John 13), displaying a basic characteristic needed for a servant's heart. What characterizes the Christian servant's heart? First, the servant's heart must be genuinely humble. This characteristic is cultivated as we continually focus on our Lord's service —His finished work —and reflect on what would be our state *without* Christ's sacrifice. Someone has said humility is knowing *how* great God is, and *what* great sinners we are! Secondly, the apostle Paul gives us a bottom line requirement for a servant's heart: Agape (unconditional love) (1 Cor 13) — love for God —love for others, and yes —God expects us to love ourselves (Mark 12). So that we do not get confused about this kind of love —Paul gives us an up close and personal breakdown of what love looks like. Love is an action word —it is what we *do*. Paul says a servant's heart is: patient (long suffering); kind (not mean or hateful); not jealous (insecure); not arrogant (full of pride); polite (not rude); selfless (putting others first); Spirit controlled and Spirit lead (not a "hot head"); thinking on good, pure, honorable things; not practicing sin (not delighting in it); *rejoicing* in the truth of God; empathetic; *believing* all things (the truth of God's word); having great faith; persevering in love (despite failure, heartbreak, tragedy and disappointments).

### **Other mandates of servanthood are:**

Faithfulness	(2 Cor 15)
Having an undivided attitude	(Luke 4)
Promptness to serve	(Mark 1)
Joy	(Acts 11)
Giving glory to God	(Matt 5)
Completing one's Service	(2 Tim 4)
Consuming desire to please God	(Acts 5)

The list could go on but I think the point is made that a servant of God must be Godly in their thought, word, and deed. Finally, let's speak to the mission of service.

## Mission of Service

I believe the mission of service can be summed up in the following passage: "When you did it to the least of these —you did it unto Me" (Matt 25:34-46).