

- At Our Core: Serve; Matthew 25:31-46

Summary

The sermon begins with a personal story about the pastor's college experience, particularly his encounter with an underprivileged elementary school that led to the creation of a successful mentoring program. This experience is tied to Matthew 25's parable of the sheep and goats, emphasizing that true followers of Christ must actively serve others through generous, sacrificial love rather than just giving leftovers. The sermon then details various outreach programs of First United Methodist Church of Dothan, demonstrating how the church body can collectively serve as Christ's hands and feet in the community.

Key Verses

- Matthew 25:31-46
- John 13:1-17
- John 15:1-8

Life Application

This week, identify one need in your community that you've been aware of but haven't acted upon. Make a concrete plan to address that need, whether through direct service, organizing others to help, or supporting an existing ministry. Remember that serving others is serving Christ himself.

Key Takeaways

- True Christian service requires generous, sacrificial love, not just giving our leftovers
- When we serve others, we are directly serving Christ himself
- We are saved not just for our own salvation, but to be instruments of Christ's salvation in the world
- It takes the whole church body working together to effectively serve and impact the community
- Our service should be intentional and systematic, addressing both immediate and long-term needs

Devotionals

Day 1:

Called to Serve

Devotional When we think about our Christian journey, it's easy to focus solely on our personal relationship with God. However, our salvation has a broader purpose. We are called not just to receive God's love, but to be active participants in sharing that love with others. Like branches connected to a vine, our connection to Christ should naturally produce fruit that nourishes others. This calling isn't about perfection - it's about progress and willingness to be used by God to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

Bible Verse

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." - Matthew 25:35-36

Reflection Question

How might your perspective on serving others change if you viewed each act of service as a direct interaction with Jesus Himself?

Quote We are saved not just for our own salvation, but we are saved to be instruments of Christ's salvation in the world, to be instruments of his redemption, instruments of his compassion.

Prayer

Lord, help me see that my salvation is not just for me, but for Your greater purpose. Open my eyes to the opportunities around me to be Your hands and feet in this world. Amen.

Day 2:

Beyond the Leftovers

Devotional God's love for us wasn't an afterthought - it was intentional, sacrificial, and complete. As recipients of such extraordinary love, we're called to give our best, not just what's convenient or left over. This means being intentional with our time, talents, and resources. When we prioritize serving others, we reflect the heart of Jesus who gave everything for us. True generosity isn't measured by the quantity of what we give, but by the priority we place on giving.

Bible Verse

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" - Matthew 25:40

Reflection Question

What areas of your life are you giving God your 'leftovers' rather than your best?

Quote Let me tell you something about sharing the generous love of Jesus Christ. It's not the leftovers. That's not what he's really looking for. Most of us, me included, pretty good at handing out our leftovers. He wants our first fruits of time and talent and energy, treasure.

Prayer

Father, forgive me for times I've given You less than my best. Help me to be intentional in serving others with excellence and joy. Amen.

Day 3:

Serving Like Jesus

Devotional Jesus demonstrated the ultimate example of servant leadership when He washed His disciples' feet. This wasn't just a lesson in humility - it was a model for how we should live our lives. True Christian service often means getting our hands dirty, doing the uncomfortable, and serving in ways that might surprise others. When we serve like Jesus, we break down barriers and show people what God's love really looks like in action.

Bible Verse

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'" - Matthew 25:37

Reflection Question

What acts of service have you avoided because they seemed beneath you or made you uncomfortable?

Quote He got down on his knees, crawled around a table and washed his disciples feet. They protested. One even said, you're not going to wash my feet, I'm going to wash yours. And he took your foot in his hands and he washed it. And he said, this is how you're to live, in service to one another.

Prayer

Jesus, give me Your servant's heart. Help me to serve others with humility and love, just as You served Your disciples. Amen.

Day 4:

Creating Lasting Change

Devotional Christian service isn't just about meeting immediate needs - it's about creating lasting change in our communities. When we partner with others and focus on systematic solutions, we become pioneers of the new world that Christ initiated. This might mean starting new initiatives, supporting existing ministries, or finding innovative ways to address ongoing needs. Every small act of service, when done with intentionality and love, contributes to this larger vision of transformation.

Bible Verse

"All those who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel." - Matthew 25:41

Reflection Question

What long-term needs do you see in your community that God might be calling you to address?

Quote This is a generative love. It creates new initiatives and new ministries where there is need.

Prayer

Lord, help me see beyond immediate solutions to the lasting change You want to bring through my service. Guide me in being part of Your transformative work. Amen.

Day 5:

Together in Service

Devotional God never intended for us to serve alone. As the body of Christ, we each have unique gifts and roles to play in sharing His love with the world. When we work together, combining our different strengths and resources, we can accomplish far more than we could individually. This collaborative approach to service not only increases our impact but also demonstrates the unity and love that should characterize Christ's church.

Bible Verse

"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'" - Matthew 25:45

Reflection Question

How can you better collaborate with others in your church community to serve more effectively?

Quote It takes all of us to be the body of Christ.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the gift of community. Help us work together in unity to share Your love and serve others effectively. Amen.