

Title: "Service"

Text: Philippians 2:19-30

Date: May 25, 2014

Place: Decatur Church of God

Theme: "A Life That Counts"

We gathered today to pay tribute to those who have gone on before us. We acknowledge those of our nations military as well as our own loved ones who sacrificed that we might have a more rewarding life in every way. For many it aligns with the American dream.

The American dream generally centers on the commitment of our lives to serve ourselves. Accumulation is often the goal. The reality of this life, however, is that significant financial ability is required of all of us to navigate through the rough waters of a demanding life. There is a fine line between accumulation for mere personal pleasure and the accumulation for the purpose of serving our families, benefitting the kingdom of God, and serving the needs of others.

Many people become lavishly successful in worldly terms. Less of us become significant. It is quite possible to become successful without becoming significant. Those of us who are significant, however, are always successful. Ministry ought always to be preferred over success.

Paul wrote a brief note to the Philippian church thanking them for their unbelievable generosity in providing for his financial needs as a traveling missionary. He wrote of their practical faith in glowing terms.

Scholars tell us that he wrote from a dark and cold dungeon cell. Perhaps he existed on small portions of food which were shoved through the bars and sought ways to avoid concentrating on the nauseating smell of human excrement which drifted through the prison. Perhaps he heard the gentle tapping of rat's feet as they

scurried across the dirty floor occasionally hopping over his shackled legs.

Paul needed a friend. The church in Philippi sent the vivacious Epaphroditus to the rescue. His name translates as “charming.” He was a welcomed sight for weary eyes.

Essentially, all of us as believers are either consumers or ministers. We exist to serve or be served. To live a life of servanthood, we must realize that...

I. SERVICE AUTHENTICATES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

Philip. 2:19-22

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. [20] I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. [21] For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. [22] But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

- A. Even in prison, Paul had a burning desire to encourage the church family at Philippi by sending Timothy to them.
 - a. He knew that Timothy was the only one in his memory who had that “kindred spirit” which would motivate him to show genuine love to them.
- B. Paul needs the love as well. He thought that he would see them “shortly”.

Philip. 2:24

And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

- C. The letter to the Philippian church was entrusted to Epaphroditus who was to deliver it to the church upon his arrival.

- D. Paul served the church with a selfless spirit as did his companions, Timothy and Epaphroditus.
- a. He looked for men who did not “seek after their own interests”.
 - b. We must realize that our faith is not taken seriously until we show it in compassionate acts.
 - c. Service indicates “proven worth”.

* When I was preparing to purchase our current house and looking at moving, it was a frightening time. I was struggling with two knees that then needed to be replaced and I didn't have the ability to do all the physical lifting and preparation. A number of people stepped up to help us move. Among them were Lew and Mona Simmerman, Larry and Rose Myers, Don Baker, Chad and Linda Cornett, and Jerry Hamrick. These people were life savers and they continue to be important in our lives.

I was able to invest in the life of Aaron Lee during the time of his Father's passing. To this day Aaron holds our relationship in high esteem.

Aaron has performed work for Art and Diane Crozier. He continues to do extra things to help Art out each week. Art sees Aaron as a blessing in his life.

Do you see a pattern?

II. SERVICE INSERTS OUR LIVES INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

Philip. 2:25-26

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. [26] For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

- A. In these verses Paul gives us a resume' of a true servant.
 - a. Epaphroditus is one who exemplifies the value of inserting his life in others.
 - b. The resume' reads as follows:

- Spiritual kinship – “my brother and fellow worker”
 - Calmness under pressure – “My fellow soldier”
 - A compassionate sensitivity – “minister to my needs”
 - A giver of grace – “longing for you all”
- B. Epaphroditus is praised by Paul as one who did not want others to be aware that he was sick.
- a. So ill was Epaphroditus that he was “close to death”.

Philip. 2:30

Because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

- C. Yet Epaphroditus desired no sympathy.
- a. Attention directed his way was the last item on his wish.
 - b. Giving service to others was his goal.

* Is it ours?

III. SERVICE JEOPARDIZES PERSONAL COMFORT.

Philip. 2:27

Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

- A. It has been said that ministry to human heartache is the most demanding work of all.
- a. It has been described as akin to a hypodermic needle inserted into the heart of the giver and extracting every ounce of emotional strength which the giver has.
 - b. Exhaustion is often the result.
- B. Paul asked the church to “receive him in the Lord with all joy”.

Philip. 2:29

Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him,

- C. The experienced Paul knew that the joy of others would serve to rejuvenate Epaphroditus as he served them.
- D. He instructed the church to “hold men like him in high regard.”
 - a. Every servant could use a kind word or two.
 - b. Words of praise are like spoonfuls of honey.
 - c. Even though service is potentially exhausting and discouraging and jeopardizes our own sense of comfort, the rewards are divine.

Are you a servant? Are you sensitive to the needs around you? As you serve, are you aware of the need for emotional and spiritual rest in order to serve more effectively?

* As we spend this Memorial Day Sunday together, I must reflect on some of my family who are now with the Lord. Deb’s parents, Sterling and Ruth Dade, were servants of God, the church, and others around them. They were true givers.

My Dad had a heart for the work of the Lord and many in my home church would tell you stories of how he had helped them through the years.

I suspect that you can think of some who have preceded you that cause you to thank God for the generosity and help. Am I correct?

What do you want to be remembered for? Are you a servant? Will your life make a difference?

