

## LOVING WITHOUT LIMITS

### Servant Hearts

We will serve those in the local community and beyond with integrity and love.

What does that mean in practice?

The great thing about our values is they are timeless, well in sentiment anyway, even if we would use different words today.

Life moves on, the world moves on and the challenge for us in our service, is how do we meet the challenges of this changing world, without compromising our faith, being in the world but not of the world.

A teacher was sharing the other day that they now have to check homework or course work submitted, to make sure Artificial Intelligence or AI has not written it. Gone are the days when you could just copy from the person next door! Now you can get a computer program to write in the style of a 13-year-old.

I think it's helpful to go back to the Old Testament to understand what it means to be a Servant of the Lord.

I am not sure what comes to mind when we talk about servants.

When I think of servants, I think of going into service, working as a cook or a maid at the local country house, someone who chooses to work in that way, I say choices, but there probably was not much else people could do at that time. They lived in the house and reported to the head housekeeper cook or butler of the house.

The Old Testament word for servant is Ebed which had two elements; action and obedience. In the Old Testament Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, Ruth, Moses and David are noted as being servants of God.

So, to be a servant of the Lord meant something, these people weren't slaves to other people, but served the purposes of God in their time.

When Samuel was called by God in Samuel 3 v 8

A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So, Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

To be a servant of the Lord was to be chosen, willing to serve God and relinquish their own agenda to follow Gods ways. Are we willing to serve and follow Gods ways, rather than our own?

In the New Testament the word servant is translated to Doulas; a master slave relationship where the slave has no say in what they can do.

However, Christ says we are no longer slaves to the world, but Children of God, in which we seek Gods Kingdom and righteousness first, choosing as best as we can, to be obedient to God and his ways, trusting in his provision and serving out of God's love for us.

But its hard to do it in our own strength, the world gets in the way, whatever we struggle with, the world tries to pull us away from God.

I think we all serve out of our brokenness – flawed as we all are, but in Gods strength, we can still make a difference in this world.

The apostle Paul in the new testament, refers to himself as "servant of Christ" (Rom 1:1; Php 1:1).

And I guess we should be as well.

God's word reminds us, as the son of God, Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45).

Do we enjoy our service for the Lord? I am not necessarily talking about serving in this place although, we have all been gifted and blessed to help in some way, I am not saying it to make us feel guilty but the reality is we are all gifted and called to serve.

It was Mental health awareness the other week and it's recommended that, giving your time volunteering, or helping others really improves your mental

health. So, serving here or volunteering somewhere else is part of being servant hearted, who God created us to be.

But 1 Corinthian's 10 v 31 says:

Whatever you do, do it for the Glory of God – in everything we are to do it with servants hearts.

How did Jesus show his servant heart?

John 13

<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup> "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup> "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup> "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an

example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus set the example taking the lowest job in society at the time in order to set the bar of our service,

As Christians whatever we do we should do it in service to God and in love, for God walks with us in all the circumstances of life. We just have to acknowledge God and invite him in.

I had a tricky problem to solve at work the other day and as I was thinking about it, I left it for a while and the answer popped into my head. I like to think it was God reminding me that he has called me to serve him in my work life.

In service we need soft hearts a loving attitude, it's never how much we do or do not do, but it's the attitude we do it with, God always looks at our motivation, our heart in service.

I must admit I have done things in the past to win favour with people, rather than resting in God's love for me, because he loves us because he loves us.

Our vision says we will Love (serve) without limit.

But to serve lovingly is hard:

I Corinthians 13 v4

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup>Love never fails.

There is always something in the list I have to acknowledge I struggle with and it changes whenever I read it. In our service for God we will face many challenges:

I always remember the story of Corrie Tan Boone in a book Wyn Sampson lent me called The Hiding Place.

She was Dutch resistance fighter and her family had hidden and saved many Jewish people during the war in their home, until they were betrayed and sent to Ravensbruck Concentration camp with her sister Betsie who died there with many others at the camp,

Corie, as a committed Christian served the people of the camp. She survived through a clerical error and promised her sister she would share the experience of this atrocity, and Gods love in the midst of their difficulties and travelled the world sharing her story.

*She writes:*

*“ it was at the Church service in Munich that I saw him, the former s.s. man who has stood guard at the shower room door in the processing centre at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there... the room full of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie’s pain-blانched face.*

*He came up to me as the Church was emptying “I am for your message, Fraulein” he said “to think that he has washed my sins away!” I kept my hand by my side*

*His hand was trustingly reaching to mine, and I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand by my side.*

*Even as the angry vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus had died for this man, was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.*

*I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand, I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus. I cannot forgive him. Give your forgiveness.*

*As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him. While into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.*

*And so, I discovered that it is not in our forgiveness, any more than in our goodness that the worlds healing hinges, but on His. When he tells us to love our enemies, he gives, along with the command, the love itself.*

I would suggest Jesus served in obedience and serviced his Father will in Love because of the Spirits power within and upon him .

In Isaiah 61 we read

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
<sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion—  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of joy  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the LORD  
for the display of his splendour.

This passage is in the servant passages of Isaiah, and it became Jesus' manifesto on earth. He was empowered through the Holy Spirit in his service.

We can read how the Spirit descended upon him like a dove and he was led out in service.

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the day we remember when the Holy spirit was poured out and birthed the early Church.

They had seen Jesus perform miracles, they had been sent out in Jesus name and performed wonders, but something changed that first Pentecost.

Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

<sup>7</sup> He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy

Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The mission team have taken these principles serving the local community and beyond, we support mission in the town, Judea, nationally in the UK Samaria and to the Ends of the earth.

That first Pentecost we read:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues<sup>[a]</sup> as the Spirit enabled them.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

If we are to be servant hearted, we need the power of the spirit to be within us and working through us.

But our value does say we are to do it with integrity, for me that just means being honest with each other and more importantly with God in our service for him.

Corrie could not forgive her guard; she could not serve with integrity so she prayed for Gods help and God In his grace answered and changed and healed her heart.

Sometimes our hearts are not really in things, we don't feel motivated to share Gods love with those around us.

As we think about our servant heart, my prayer is that, I would be real with God, that he would empower me to serve more passionately with love and integrity.

And it's a prayer I have for us all, that we will be real with God and each other, and ask that God would fill us with his Spirit for this mission month, for service to our families and friends and the places we work, that we would truly love without limit in our service for him.

Preached and Live Streamed at Crawley Baptist Church, on  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023 by Ian Larkham.