

September 4, 2022 Meeker Christian Church #5 PDL start page 223

## YOU WERE SHAPED FOR SERVING GOD

You were Shaped to Serve God Ephesians 2:10, *"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"*. **You were made to make a contribution, not just to consume life, but to contribute to life. God made you to make a difference.** What matters is not the duration of your life, but the donation of your life. On this planet nobody gets a free ride. We're all meant to give something back. We're all meant to make a contribution. The Bible says we're created to serve, we're saved to serve, we're gifted to serve, we're shaped to serve. We're commanded to serve! Do you sometimes feel alone, abandoned or missing something in life? Then check your service to your fellowman in the name of Jesus!

Now whenever God gives us an assignment to do something, He never gives it to us without equipping us. Job 10:8 *"Your hands shaped me and made me."* God made you unique and your uniqueness is not just for your benefit! Look at 1 Peter 4:10, *"Each of us should use whatever gift he's received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.* Do you remember the first line in the *Purpose Driven Life* book? "It's not about you." Your purpose in life is to be what God made you to be. And He gave you gifts and talents and abilities and background and experiences and all these things for the benefit of other people to be used by serving others and for God's glory. All in preparation for eternal life.

Hence, "Our fourth purpose in life is to **serve God by serving others.**" The Bible calls it "ministry." When I say the word "ministry" some people think of the work or position of a preacher, priest, pastor or elder. But the Bible says every believer is a minister. Ministry simply means using our gifts talents, abilities, background, and experiences to help somebody else in the name of God.

In the Bible the word "service" and "ministry" are the same word. So all of us are called to ministry. If you are a Christian, you are called to ministry/service! If you are called to salvation, you are called to ministry/service. Any time you use your talents and spiritual gifts to help somebody else, you are ministering. You are serving. All women are ministers. All men are ministers. All little kids, all old people, if we are believers, // we are all called to minister and serve in the name and model of our Lord Jesus Christ. You might ask how little kids are ministers? A friend handed me this quote a couple of weeks ago by Charles Dickens regarding children:

*I love these little people, and it is no small thing when those who are so fresh from God, love us!* In my language that love is ministry, a powerful ministry!

Now the good news is that God not only created us for service, He gave us a model. He came to earth Himself and said "This is how you do it. I want you to watch Me." And so he came to earth in the form of a man, the man Jesus Christ. And God said, "This is what I want you to do with your life." You were created to be like Christ, and what did Christ do while He was here on earth? He served. Matthew 20:28 *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* another version puts it like this: *Jesus said, "Your attitude must be like My own, for I did not come to be served, but to serve"* That is the example to model in our own lives.

In our culture it is fashionably and acceptable to spend our time searching for self-esteem, for self-worth, and significance. The Bible model is that you get those things from service! Jesus said to give your life away in order to find it. What does it take to be used and to learn to serve like Jesus? Let me share three things. Number one; Serving like Jesus means being **available**. One day Jesus was walking down to go to Jericho and some blind men start yelling at him. The Bible records it like this Matthew 20:30-32: *"Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" 31 The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" 32 Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" He asked. Jesus stopped!* If you want to be used by God, if you want to serve God, you must be willing to be interrupted. Serving like Jesus means being **available**. Here was John Wesley's motto: [Do all the good you can by all the means you can by all the ways you can in all the places you can and at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as you ever can.] Now that is being available! And that's what it means to serve God. We must be willing to step out of our comfort zone and ask "God what do You want me to do?" Let me give three common barriers we all find in being available for serving our fellowman in the name of Jesus: **self-centeredness**. Philippians 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.* Whenever you see a need God is giving you the opportunity to practice serving. Make it a testimony after the model of Jesus.

A second barrier to being available is **perfectionism**, wanting every thing to be perfect. We may think: "When it's all just right, when things settle down, then I'll serve." Ecclesiastics 11:4-6 in the Living Bible makes this very pertinent translation: *If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done. 5 God's ways are as mysterious as the pathway of the wind and as the manner in*

*which a human spirit is infused into the little body of a baby while it is yet in its mother's womb. 6 Keep on sowing your seed, for you never know which will grow—perhaps it all will.*

Humble, committed, passionate Christ-like servants, do the best they can with what they have for Jesus Christ today right where they are. They don't wait. They are **available** now!

If God only used perfect people, what would get done in this world? Nothing, zip, zero! We're all a bunch of misfits. We all have weaknesses. We all have faults. We all have failures. We all have handicaps. But guess what? God uses us all. Why? Because God doesn't use perfect people, he never has, and on earth never will because there are not any perfect people. We have all been tarnished from perfection by the injuries of the devil.

Number three barrier to being available for service after **self-centeredness and perfectionism, is materialism**. Jesus said in Luke 16:13 *"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."* The most important decision you're going to have to make in life once you become a believer is, "Am I going to be a kingdom-builder or am I going to be a wealth-builder?" Now if God wants to give a believer wealth, that's great. Wealth is a tool that God uses more in this generation in the United States than any generation anyplace ever before. Wealth is a tool God has gifted some believers so they may become kingdom builders. Let me add one more thing here – there are no greater or lesser gifts in the service of God. We are all an essential part of the body, a critical part of the team of believers in the location God has put us. The preacher may often get the credit, but I tell you based on a life in and around ministry – the serving church is the church where everyone together does the serving and praising God in the process. The preacher is just another tool God uses. Our culture carelessly and falsely categorizes values of giftedness – God does not! – and God is the only one who matters. You are a child of our Heavenly Father and equally important with anyone else you can name- who is honestly seeking to serve as they become like Jesus!!

Serving means being **available**. A second thing serving like Jesus means is being **grateful**. The Bible tells us a story in John Chapter 11 of Jesus serving in an incredible way. His friend Lazarus had died, and He went there some people thought for the funeral, but Jesus had a different idea in mind. He went there to do ministry, to raise Lazarus from the dead. Now, He could have walked up and prayed a prayer and not said anything to anybody but to Himself and God. But He

decided to pray the prayer out loud so that those present and we today could hear or read about it: John 11:41-42, *So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard me. I know that You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here that they may believe that you sent me."* Jesus had an attitude of gratefulness in everything that He did. That should be our attitude of gratefulness as in Psalm 100:1-5 *Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of his pasture." 4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. 5 For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.*

We serve Him with **gratefulness** because He has given life to us through Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 1:9 *"It is He who saved us and chose us for His holy work, not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan."* There are some things that get in the way of our modeling gratefulness on occasion: One of those barriers is **comparing and criticizing**. When you compare yourself to others, when you criticize others, that is a barrier that gets in the way for modeling gratefulness. The Bible tells us over in Romans 14:4, *"Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? The Lord will determine whether His servant has been successful."* We as believers are all God's servants, we are on the same team. We are to plant, and water – God takes care of the judging!!

The second barrier to modeling gratefulness is **wrong motivations**. Matthew 6:1. One version puts it like this: *Jesus said, "When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from your Father in heaven"*. How do you know if you have a wrong motivation? Gratitude. When you lose a sense of gratefulness, of gratitude in your life, you can know right away there's something wrong with your motivation

If you want to learn to serve like Jesus, you have to learn to **serve gratefully** with a generous heart and you make yourself **available**. There's a third thing. Serving like Jesus means being **faithful**. It means you don't give up. You keep on going. You don't quit in the middle of your assignment. At the end of Jesus' ministry on earth, Jesus said this in John 17:4 *"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work, that You gave me to do."* I want you to be able to say that when you get to heaven. You completed the work that God gave you to do. Jesus was faithful in fulfilling His service. He did not give up. He did not give in. He was persistent. And if we are going to be like Jesus it means we are going to serve as long as we are alive.

So what motivates us to keep on going? The Bible says faithfulness, 1 Corinthians 4:2 *"The one thing required of servants is that they be **faithful**."* Therefore

1 Corinthians 15:58, *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*

One day we are going to stand before God and He's going to say, "What did you do with what I gave you, the talents, the abilities, the background, the experiences, the freedom, the education, the family experiences? You see Hebrews 6:10 *"God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them."*

To those who serve faithfully He will say Matthew 25:21 *"Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things so; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness."*

God will say to you: "Good job! Well done! You did what I put you here on earth to do. You worked to live a Purpose Driven Life. You worshiped me. You fellowshiped with other believers. You grew in character to be like Christ. And you served Me the way I shaped you. Well done! Good job! Come on into my presence and enjoy eternity and all the rewards I've planned for you."

Question: Is God going to be able to say "well done" to you? The most important thing you'll ever do with your life is serving God in ministry. It's far more important than your career, it's far more important than your hobbies, it's more important than anything else you can think of because nothing else is going to last. But your ministry will. You were put here on earth to practice serving.

As we sing our invitation hymn this morning if you have made a decision that you are ready to testify before God and this church body, then please come forward and speak to me as we stand and sing....

Oran and Amy Rundberg