

Service

Matthew 25:31:-46; John 13:1-17

March 14, 2010

[rootbeer/donut picture]

There once was a little boy who wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with donuts and a six-pack of root beer, and he started his journey.

When he had gone about three blocks, he met an old man. He was sitting in the park just staring at some pigeons. The boy sat down next to him and opened his suitcase. He was about to take a drink from his root beer when he noticed that the old man looked hungry so he offered him a donut.

He gratefully accepted it and smiled at him. His smile was so incredible that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered him a root beer. Once again, he smiled at him.

The boy was delighted! They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word.

As it grew dark, the boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave, but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old man, and gave him a hug. The old man gave him his biggest smile ever

When the boy opened the door to his own house a short time later; his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked him, "What did you do today that made you so happy?"

He replied, "I had lunch with God." But before his mother could respond, he added, "You know what? He's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old man, also radiant with joy on his face was asked by his son, "Father, what did you do today that made you so happy?" He replied, "I ate donuts in the park with God." But before his son could respond, he added, "You know, he's much younger than I expected."

We're continuing in our sermon series: Bii Fit. We're trying to get our spiritual lives in shape as we walk towards Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. This morning we dive into the spiritual discipline of service.

Now Jesus never told a single story about donuts and root beer, but Jesus did talk about how we find God and how we put into practice the spiritual discipline of service. If you would like to turn in your bibles to Matthew 25:31-46. I'm going to read this morning, Jesus' parable on the sheep and the goats. This is a very pointed story of how service is a part of our ultimate accountability. [Read Matthew 25]

So there isn't any root beer or donuts, but Jesus praises those people who give away their items not knowing if it is Jesus or not. Jesus praises the sheep because they didn't think about their own needs but gave freely. The little boy didn't think about storing up his donuts for later, he

gave it to the man sitting beside him. And so too the sheep gave their food, clothing and water to those who were desperately in need.

This parable is where the rubber meets the road. Jesus is telling his disciples then and now what it means to live out the faith. When we get to heaven, Jesus the King will separate each and every one of us based upon how we practiced the spiritual discipline of service and how we treated all of God's children. Jesus notices who we share our root beer with. Did we go looking for God? Or have we been concerned with our own desires that we forgot that there were those out there hurting while we sit with so much.

Service is sharing what we have.

A few years ago I was a part of a book study where one of the chapters focused on this bible passage. We went around the room and took a straw poll and I was shocked. Over half of the 10 participants had never heard a single sermon preached on this text... What ... I couldn't imagine, because this is one of my favorite scriptures because to me it creates a foundation of how we follow Christ. I mean you can have a lot spiritual questions, you can wonder how the bread and the cup become the body and blood of Christ. You can try to figure out how Jesus ascended into heaven and you can wonder about what the resurrection means. But there is no doubt in how Jesus wants us to treat our brothers and sisters. He is very clear in this passage and leaves no room for doubts about how we Love Others ... if you want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, then look at each and every person you encounter as being the face of Jesus. Don't walk on the street and turn your nose up at the homeless person sitting on the doorstep. Don't slide to the other end of the pew when that person shows up and smells just a bit different. Don't eat a big buffet and not provide a meal for someone else at least once in your life. Jesus says, if you want to be part of heaven, if you want eternal life then you have to be like me ... and serve even the least of your brother and sisters ... then and only then can you enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Service is seeing Jesus in others.

[**Dorothy Day picture**] Dorothy Day was one of the amazing Christians in this country who reached out to the poor. Dorothy was a born again Catholic in the early 1900's. During the industrial revolution there was a huge disparity between rich and poor and factory workers and immigrants were struggling just to survive. Dorothy started what we now know as the Catholic worker movement. One of her most famous quotes says, "Those who cannot see the face of Christ in the poor, are atheists indeed." She hits the nail on the end and sums up Matthew 25 ... you can not be a Christian without seeing those in need and offering help.

Service is at the core of who Jesus was. Over and over again in the gospels, Jesus talks about how we treat each other and how we serve others.

- He says the 2nd greatest commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself"
- "the first must be last and the last first"
- "The Son of Man came to serve and not be served."

And then on his very last night, Jesus not only talks about serving but he gets down on his hands and knees and lives it out. [Read John 13:1-17] [**Foot washing picture**]

Here he is, he knows that in less than 18 hours he is going to hang on a cross and face the most humiliating and painful death and what does he do to get ready. When the feast is ready and he sees that no one is going to do the obligatory washing of feet, Jesus gets up from the table and washes the disciples' feet. Even as he is about to serve the world by sacrificing his life, Jesus serves his brothers by doing the most menial and demeaning task of his day. He does the job of a common house slave – washes the dirtiest part of the body.

If you read the gospel of John in its entirety, you find that there is no communion story in John. While all the other gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) write about the sacrament of Holy Communion and have Jesus blessing the cup and bread, John doesn't say a word. Instead, John has Jesus wash the feet – for John, this is a sacramental act. Now a sacrament is defined as a 'sign of the real presence of Christ.' John knows what the other gospels have written, and he wants to make clear that in our service Christ is very real and very present. That's why service is the second part of our mission statement here at CrossPoint Church – *LOVE OTHERS*, because we know that when we serve Christ is present.

We *LOVE OTHERS* when we serve like Jesus.

Now the discipline of service can be in the big things of life...serving at the food pantry, mission trips to Tennessee and Arkansas, supporting our sister church in Sierra Leone, spending a day at Habitat for Humanity.

It is also the little things of service in our lives. How we treat our spouse, kids – whether we wash the dishes without being asked. Getting a cup of coffee for a coworker whose not having a great day. Stopping in to see a shut in rather than heading home for Gray's Anatomy. How do we do the little things for Christ?

With will you share your root beer and donuts with?

This discipline of service is one of the main reasons why I'm a United Methodist. John Wesley, the founder spent his entire life serving others. When he was in college he started visiting the prisons, teaching children how to read and visiting the sick. And he kept that up and instructed the early Methodists to make a covenant for themselves that included serving others. And so this morning, we are going to end by praying John Wesley's Covenant Prayer that asks God for help in serving our brothers and sisters.

{Covenant Prayer in every worship folder}

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you,
praised for you or criticized for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and fully surrender all things to your hope and service.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
you are mine, and I am yours.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be made also in heaven.

Amen.