



“Extraordinary Ordinary Servants”
Luke 17:7-10

Idea: The faith of a disciple produces faithfulness in the duties of the Christian life.

Intro: Everyone runs the risk of thinking too highly of oneself. A pastor friend of Chuck Swindoll once shared with him, “You know, I preached this terrific message one Sunday, and afterward, boy the comments were terrific. One great comment after another. I was so glad to see the people realized it was an outstanding message.”

Then the pastor went home. His wife was busy trying to get lunch on the table, and the five kids seemed to be everywhere at once. Rather than “Welcome home, O great orator (or whatever else she might want to say),” he heard from the kitchen, “Honey, the baby is dirty. Would you change him?” That was the first comment he got when he got home. So, he thought, “That is an awfully lowly task for someone who just preached such a fantastic message.” But he got the baby cleaned up. Then she said, “The garbage needs to be dumped too. It has been here for a couple days.” He thought, “This is terrible.” But he did it.

Finally, lunch was ready, and they came to the table and sat down to eat. He said, “Well, what did you think of the message?” He was all ready for her to just go wild over it. She said, “Honey, I heard them at the door today, and they said enough to last for two weeks.”

It has been said that “Pride grows in the human heart like lard on a pig” (Alexander Solzhenitsyn). It comes naturally, and everyone is susceptible to it. A frog once asked two geese to take him south with them. At first, they resisted. They did not see how it could be done. Finally, the frog suggested that the two geese hold a stick in their beaks, and he would hold on to it with his mouth. So, off they went flying toward the south, and it was really quite a sight. People looked up and expressed great admiration. One person said, “That is incredible! Who was so clever to discover such a fine way to travel?” Whereupon the frog opened his mouth and said, “It was I.”

Pride will lead you to a fall. It can wiggle its way into every situation of life. It is deceptive. It is so deceptive that Christians can find themselves believing their own news clippings, creating a disposition that serves the Lord and others solely for the recognition of others and the feeling it brings. It is equally deceptive by leading others to believe that one is received and blessed by the Lord through service rendered to others. In other situations, pride prevents service to others because the person has been led to believe that he or she is above serving.

Inquiry: As we take the next step in our trek through The Gospel of Luke, Jesus presents a short parable that illustrates the ideal attitude that a disciple should have in serving God. This parable is found only in this Gospel. It highlights the necessity of faithfulness coupled with humility.

The scene begins near the end of daytime chores. A servant who plows the field or watches the sheep returns from a day's work. Jesus raises the question whether this slave will get to rest and eat upon returning to the house. In other words, will the master prepare a meal for the slave to sit down and enjoy? Of course, as we shall see, the master does not. So, the obvious answer is no. No master would do this. The slave will prepare the master's meal immediately after completing the chores. The house that serves as the basis of the illustration is not a wealthy one, since one servant does all the chores. However, the point is not the economic level, but the sense of duty a slave is to have.

As we work our way through the verses, I want you to see that the faith of a disciple produces faithfulness in the duties of the Christian life. Luke places the request from the disciples for their faith to be increased in verse 6 between the Lord's teaching on forgiveness and faithfulness. Therefore, being grounded by a solid belief in God and His Word, believers can faithfully serve the Lord and people.

Read Luke 17:6-10.

Servants who serve the Lord are not a special class of people. There is nothing extraordinary about them other than the fact that they are rare. So, let's look at what we are calling extraordinary ordinary servants. We see here that extraordinary ordinary servants believe what God has said. Their faith has three dispositions. Extraordinary ordinary servants:

1. Do what is expected. (vs. 10)

Jesus applies the parable to His disciples in verse 10 by comparing the picture to their service to God. Obedience is not to be accepted as a cause for merit. Instead, it is to be accepted solely as a fulfillment of duty. The servant in the parable has simply done what was expected of him. By putting the parable in these terms, the stress is on the servant's humble self-esteem. He does not think too highly of himself, knowing he does not possess the authority to pick and choose what to do.

This term "unworthy" (ἀχρεῖος) is translated in some versions as "useless." Unworthy is the better translation for the context of this verse. The term refers to function rather than inherent worth. This servant is unworthy in the sense of not having the authority to command himself. Knowing his rightful place as a servant, his responsibility is to do all that is expected of him, and he is to do it faithfully without grumble or complaint. Like the prodigal son (Luke 15:17), he also knows that faithfully serving the master is the best place to be. It is the most functional.

This servant knows his unworthiness, and so should we. Christians have a Master. His name is King Jesus. He calls the shots. He gives the orders. Therefore, as servants of the King we must do what is expected of us. We do what is expected of us out of duty because He commands it. But we also do what is expected because we love the one who gives the command.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

– John 14:15

If you want to be an extraordinary ordinary servant of King Jesus, then simply do what He says. Do what is expected of you. What is that?

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

– Micah 6:8

Elsewhere, the Bible calls believers to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thess 5:17), to “*rejoice in the Lord*” (Phil 4:4), to “*be doers of the word*” (James 1:22), to “*make disciples*” (Matt 28:19), and among many other things to use our giftedness in service of the Lord (2 Tim 1:5).

There is a second disposition.

2. Require no recognition. (vs. 9)

The question in verse 9 sets at the center of this comparison. It is rhetorical, but the expected negative answer is in the Greek text. The sentence begins with μή (not). There are no “thank you” gestures accompanying the activity of the servant, which is the point. He has simply done what was commanded and expected. He does his duty.

As I read through this parable and think about how many Christians put their spiritual gifts to work serving the Lord by serving others in and through the church, verse 9 comes across harsh. I want to recognize people for their faithful service. I want to make a big deal about what they are doing. I want our people who serve to see and know that their work does not go unnoticed and that it makes a difference. When a parent texts me to tell me how they led their son or daughter to the Lord at bedtime, I cannot help but tell them, “Great job!...Well done!”. The same is true of those who give hours of their time preparing for a big event or serving lunch after a funeral. All of these and more are expressions of servants serving the Lord, and we should say thank you.

Jesus’ point in the parable is to argue that extraordinary ordinary servants do not serve for the recognition. They serve because they are simply doing what was commanded of them. So, this is a great reminder for all of us because all of us are tempted to serve for the praise of others. It is human to like the pat on the back, the public shout out, and the prestige. For this reason, it is wise to check our motives periodically and ask, “Why am I doing what I am doing?”

There is a third disposition.

3. Find blessing in the work. (vs. 7-8)

The servant works in the field all day to come home and wait on the master. It is only after every chore is finished that the servant then sets down to eat and rest. The main thrust of these two verses is to undergird the idea of the servant doing what is commanded of him. However, there is a blessing or a sense of sustenance that comes from engaging in the work. The servant gets to eat and drink.

Here is the idea I want to highlight: while extraordinary ordinary servants are to do what is expected and must not require recognition, they can and should find blessing in the work God gives to them. It is so rewarding to get a text like I did on Wednesday saying, “Pastor, we have been having conversations with our son about accepting Christ, and the other night he decided to make that decision. He would love to get baptized on Sunday if possible.” It blesses my heart when I hear that a man has become convicted over his sin, repented of it, told his wife, and brought men into his circle for accountability and encouragement. It fires me up to hear how a student texted another student about surrendering to Jesus. Then the following week that student turns from her sin and believes on Jesus. Goodness church, there is tremendous blessing in the work of the gospel!

If you have served long enough, then you know what I am talking about today. All the time put in, the strain, the frustrations of people floundering around are worth it when you get to partake in the blessing of a changed life. Most of the time, the blessings are little and incremental. It is three steps forward and one step back, but it is progress. The work is often dirty and messy. Plowing and tending sheep are both dirty and messy jobs. Walking with a family through a crisis is messy and painful. Unfortunately,

the desired outcome is not reached always, but there is nothing like watching the gospel transform a family, bringing it back from death to life. It is in those moments that you get to eat and partake in the blessing.

Extraordinary ordinary servants find blessing in the work.

Conclusion: What kind of servant are you? Sadly, there are probably some people who serve in our church from a disposition of merit. They are attempting to earn favor with the Lord. They have a skewed perspective of the gospel. Others probably serve from a disposition of recognition. They love the praise and lauding of others. They too have a skewed perspective of the gospel. No one can earn favor with the Lord. His grace is a free gift that must be received. Likewise, as the recipient of God's grace, a true servant of Christ wants all recognition to go to Him, while understanding that He graciously allows us to enjoy the blessing of seeing His grace change lives.

How do you serve today? Have you answered God's call to serve and do what is expected of you? Do you serve for the recognition it brings? Are you partaking of the wonderful blessing of seeing God change people's lives?