

Finding Joy in Serving Others

Series: *Unstoppable Joy (Philippians 2:1-11)*

Introduction

- While preparing a sermon, a pastor posted this question on Facebook: "What makes it hard for you to serve other people?" Here are some of the answers:
 - "Serving is hard when it doesn't fit into my schedule or plan. Like when I want to go for a walk or take a long bath, but my aging parent needs me to sort their meds, run an errand, or simply be with them."
 - "It's hard when their needs seem endless. I don't want to risk helping/serving because I may get sucked in. Being swallowed up in the serving and not getting to be the me I think I am or should be."
 - "There is such limited energy left after a demanding workday, meeting our basic responsibilities (whether with young kids or in the corporate world). How do you balance the need for rest & self-care with serving others?"
 - But the most profound answer was this: "What makes it hard to serve others? Others."
- As Christians, we know that we should be involved in serving others, but it's not always easy, for any and all the reasons listed above.
 - Service and serving others are one of the topics that Paul addresses in his letter to the Philippians.
 - And like the other topics that Paul addresses in this letter, they are both connected to the theme of joy. (Read passage)
- For the sake of this study, we've defined joy as "*A deep and abiding delight that springs from a heart & mind consumed with gospel truth & work.*"
 - It's more than a feeling or an emotion.
 - It comes from being focused on the gospel message.
 - Today I want to focus on the last part of the definition – "gospel work."
 - Gospel work is the personal transformation that happens inside us and inside the fellowship of the church.
 - We usually call that participation "service" – we serve others for the sake of the gospel.
- When we read Phil. 2:1-11, we learn that **there is great joy in serving others!**
 - After writing about some difficult circumstances in ch. 1, Paul strikes a positive tone in ch. 2
 - He encourages readers to find joy in serving others by addressing the environment, the encouragement, and an example of service.

Body

I. The Environment of Service: The Local Church (v. 1-2)

- A. Paul introduces 4 statements with "If there is any..."
1. "Encouragement in Christ" (encouragement from commitment)
 2. "Consolation of love" (Comfort from Christ's love for His people)
 3. "Fellowship of the Spirit" (The HS that brings the church together)
 4. "Affection & compassion" (These are strong emotions felt in the church)

- B. He follows those statements up with 4-fold call to unity in the church. (same mind & love, united in spirit, one purpose).
- C. The Apostle links the 2 with a command to "fill up" His joy by being united in the fellowship of the church at Philippi.
- D. Fire departments are broken up into battalions & stations strategically located across their jurisdiction to minimize emergency response times. For example, the Indianapolis Fire Department operates 44 stations divided across 7 battalions. These stations all function under the principle of "first-due coverage," which requires them to serve their own geographic area first before assisting other stations. Christians may serve in many parts of God's expansive Kingdom, but they have a duty to serve in their local church first.

II. An Encouragement for Service: Spiritual Formation (v. 3-4)

- A. Paul makes 2 statements about the goal of service.
1. Avoid the attitude of selfishness & embrace the attitude of humility.
 2. Don't look out for your needs only; look out for the needs of others.
- B. The activity in the church was to focus on the value & growth of the group.
- C. Contrary to popular opinion, your house plants don't have feelings. They don't engage in photosynthesis or cell division to reach a state of contentment. Every mechanism inside them is intent on 1 thing: growth and reproduction. Similarly, the activities inside the church must also be focused on the spiritual formation and multiplication of its members.

III. An Example of Service: The Lord Jesus Christ (v. 5-11)

- A. Paul held up the Lord Jesus as the ultimate example of a servant.
1. He gave up his position. (v. 6)
 2. He gave up his rights. (v. 7)
 3. He gave up his life. (v. 8)
- B. The end goal of His dishonor was that He was exalted above all.
- C. We must be careful about a gospel that only refers to Jesus as our example, and not our Savior. We cannot follow his pattern without personal transformation. But these verses are addressed to those who are already Christians, or literally "little Christs"

Conclusion

- There are many challenges to service, **but there is great joy in serving others!**
- The problem with this truth is that it's hard to set at the right volume.
 - Those who've already found joy in serving hear it with a resounding boom and look for ways to serve when their hands are full.
 - Those who've never experienced the joy of serving have a hard time hearing the call, as if it's stuck on mute.
 - And those who've never received the benefit of Christ's sacrificial service are confused by the whole thing – why serve is selfless way?
- Our church ministry strategy calls for everyone to engage in worship, grow in groups, and serve in ministry as we all formed into the image of Christ, so I'm going to turn it over to the Holy Spirit...