

THE FAITH & DUTY OF A SERVANT (Luke 16:19-17:10)

The title of our message today is "The Faith & Duty of a Servant", that is, a servant of God, aka a child of God. The questions that may come to mind are, first of all, what does God our Creator expect from His creation; from us? Ah, thank you Lord for Your Word! Just before Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, of which He was then falsely accused, unlawfully tried and convicted, and then crucified, we can read in **John 17:17**, where Jesus prayed to our Heavenly Father, "Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your word is truth.**" While Jesus was praying for His disciples, He also prayed, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me **through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.**" (**John 17:20-21**) We have an incredible gift from God, His holy & inspired Word, with the writings of the prophets and apostles of God and the Words of Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul reminded his spiritual son Timothy, that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [teachings], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**" (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**) To make it a trifecta of passages of Scripture that confirms to us the great value of the Word of God, **Psalms 119:105** says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

So what does God's Word tell us of what He expects from us and in what way are we to be God's servants? We'll look at how presently being a child of God is synonymous with being technically, a servant of God. Some of you may be thinking, with regard to being called a servant, of what Jesus said in **John 15**, in speaking to His disciples, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another." (**John 15:14-17**) Yet we can't overlook what Jesus said also to His disciples, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." (**John 12:26**) While Jesus was, as I said, speaking to His disciples, the Apostle John tells us, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (**2 John 1:9**) In a more personal way, that may not sound as harsh, Jesus tells us, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (**John 14:23**) I want to be a friend of God's don't you? To be a friend of God's, or Jesus, is to be a servant of God's or Jesus.

To be a true child of God is to be a servant of God's, which can then lead to being a friend of God's. That comes about from understanding God for who HE IS, and from recognizing the love of God, that we love God and WANT to serve Him as He first loved us!

Speaking of love, the fullness of the doctrine, or teachings of Christ Jesus are in what He stated was the great commandment of God's, to love Him with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then to also love others as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-32) In Matthew's account of Jesus saying that, Jesus concluded by saying "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:40) You want to be a friend of God's? It is so much more than just being a mere servant. To truly love God, and the key to being a friend of God's rests upon what the Apostle Peter said 1 Peter 5:5-7, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

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The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 6:19-31)

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. [That was prior to Jesus dying on a cross & then being seated on His throne at the right hand of the Father. The Apostle Paul tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). Also Jesus spoke of the Patriarchs, quoting God in saying, "'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matt. 22:32) Also Jesus told the thief on the cross, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)] The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead,

they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "

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One has for us risen from the dead, His name is JESUS! We have His Words and His promise! "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

(John 3:16-17) Also, what we are promised is that the blessings that follow our faith, as we won't be living by faith forever, are far beyond our greatest imagination, as we will be joint-heirs with Jesus and we will reign with Him in His eternal kingdom. In context, the Apostle Paul tells us, "If we **endure**, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us." (2 Timothy 2:12) "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**" (Romans 8:16-17) So what is expected of us as children of God and how are we then to be His faithful servants, that is, aside from our enduring, knowing there are times of suffering in this lifetime? Hopefully, for us, not to the extent of what Lazarus had to suffer and endure, or of what Jesus Himself had to suffer through and endure.

In the past, we've looked at how we are God's ambassadors through Christ, His representatives, His ministers of reconciliation, as God seeks to reconcile the world back to Himself through Christ. That is where we say that God IS presently building His eternal kingdom, seeking those who want to live in and according to His Righteousness. The Apostle Paul put it this way, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20) The two verses just prior to that Paul told the folks at Corinth, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:17-19) The Holy Spirit then works in the children of God, to those who have believed on and received the Spirit of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) Combine that with our being God's ambassadors to the gospel of Christ Jesus, we can and do say, that we are called and led by the Holy Spirit to share and show the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Jesus Warns of Offenses (Luke 17:1-4)

Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

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We looked at the **Matthew 18** account of that last week. While Jesus was used hyperbole, that is, extreme exaggeration in many of His examples, such as saying to cut off your hand if it offends, the point made here though is that we are to take our faith in Christ seriously, as it does affect and influence other people. Sometimes good and sometimes bad. While Jesus was referring to not offending little children and causing them harm or to stumble in their faith, He also was referring to other Christians, aka children of God, not causing others harm or to stumble in their faith. Those who have believed on Christ Jesus, for dying on a cross for our sins, Christ Jesus taking our sins upon Himself to the grave, and that He rose from the grave on the third day, ultimately conquering death, sin, and evil, and making a way for us also, to overcome death and have everlasting life in Christ Jesus, in God's eternal kingdom, is to all those who will repent and turn to Christ Jesus for forgiveness of their sins against God. Repent, is the Greek word "metanoeo", to recognize a need for change and then heeding to that need for change. With each of us, as children of God, God is working in us, through Christ, the 4 things Paul mentioned in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. We must be careful, very careful, as Jesus warned, to not be causing others to stumble in their faith, as Jesus said, "woe to him" who does. Praise the Lord, the Apostle John comforts us by saying, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (**1 John 2:1**) Prior to that John tells us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) Always being reminded though, that as Jesus said, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (**Luke 6:37**) To go along with that, when Peter asked Jesus how many times must he forgive his brother, Jesus said "'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" (**Matthew 18:22**)

As we've been looking at the teachings and the parables of Jesus this summer, we've noticed that it is first and foremost God doing the

seeking out of the lost, saving the lost, and then rejoicing when they are found, such as the 3 successive parables in **Luke 15** of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and then the lost son, aka "The Prodigal Son". In **Matthew 13**, we are given the understanding through the parables of the field that was purchased and the pearl of great price that it is God through Christ Who has paid a great price for us, through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus. If one wants to think of Jesus as the pearl of great price of which we give our all for Him, so be it. But it is really Christ Jesus who has paid the full price for our salvation. Jesus said as much when He said on the cross just before He died, "Tetelestai", meaning "It is Finished", or it is fulfilled (paid in full!).

What we are being taught by God, through His Word and by the Holy Spirit is explained nicely by the Apostle John. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (**1 John 3:1-3**) That process of believing on Christ and the doing the work that is expected of us is succinctly stated in **Ephesians 2:8-10**. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." We are not doing works to be saved but because we are saved. "We love Him because He first loved us." (**1 John 4:19**)

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Faith and Duty (Luke 17:5-10)
And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.' "
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While Jesus was using, once again, hyperbole in speaking of casting a mulberry tree into the sea, His point being made is do we believe in God's Word? If God were to tell you to cast a mulberry tree into the

sea, would you do it? What about then, what His Word already is telling us? **Psalm 24:1** tells us, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." We are also told, according to the Scriptures, being God's Word, that God "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds [aeons]; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and **upholding all things by the word of His power**, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Can we trust God who says through Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." (**Isaiah 40:10**)

Our final Word of encouragement for this message is in **Psalm 31:23-23**, "Oh, love the Lord, all you His saints! For the Lord preserves the faithful, and fully repays the proud person. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord."