

Ephesians 2:1-11 NIV

1As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

As I mentioned last week we have taken a brief break from our walk through the Gospel of St. Luke. Over the next few weeks I will be sharing a series of messages to help us identify what I believe should be the basic core values of each of our lives and specifically of Christ United Church.

A core value is defined as those values we hold which form the foundation on which we conduct ourselves. Core values are not descriptions of what we do or the strategies we employ to accomplish our mission. Our core values underlie our work, how we interact with each other, and which strategies we employ to fulfill our mission. The core values are the basic elements of how we go about our work. They are the practices we use (or should be using) every day in everything we do. [Not what we do as much as why we do it].

Last week we kind of breezed through a brief overview of the first core value which was 'we are called to be a loving people: loving God, loving each other, and loving the lost.'

This morning I want to introduce you to the second of the four core values: serving.

'We are called to be a serving people: serving God, serving each other, and serving the lost.'

I want to spend the next few moments laying a biblical foundation for each of us as believers to realize the implications of verse 10. I love the way The Message frames this particular verse:

Ephesians 2:10 The Message

'He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.'

The work we had better be doing is this:

1. Serving God
2. Serving each other
3. Serving the lost

1. Serving God

In response to the enemy's attempt to entice Jesus to bow down and serve him recorded in **Matthew 4:10** Jesus declared *'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve'* which is drawn from **Deuteronomy 6:13**

We are first called to serve the Lord our God. It all starts there.

All of our service to God, to each other, and to the lost should flow from our love to God and our heart of service to Him for His goodness shown us in Jesus Christ.

Remember, we had better be serving God from a heart of a 'golden shield of love' rather than a 'brass one.'

Our primary focus of service to God is our worship which is our adoration expressed to God in response to God's act of grace to us through Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1

'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.'

'in view of God's mercy...' Because of God's heart of compassion.

We don't serve God to receive His acceptance; we serve God because we have been accepted.

Because God loves us we minister to Him. Our ministry to God is to be a natural outflow from a heart of love.

*On Sunday June 1 Lee Behnken will be with us in the morning service sharing with us concerning expressing our love to the Lord in service to Him through our intimate worship.

Another way we minister to God is by serving each other. As a matter of fact, it isn't natural to believe you can claim to serve God and not serve each other.

Much like the truth found in **1 John 4:20** concerning the love we proclaim to have for God, whom we have not seen, while we harbor hatred and disdain towards our Christian brother who we can see; saying we serve God without serving one another simply doesn't add up.

'If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?'

Do you think it is too far of a stretch to read this verse this way?
'If someone says, "I serve God," and doesn't serve his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not serve his brother whom he has seen, how can he serve God whom he has not seen?'

2. Serving each other

Jesus left us with the perfect example when He modeled serving each other in **John 13** as He served the disciples by washing their feet. Remember, Jesus betrayal and subsequent death was imminent.

John 13:1-17

Washing their feet held both a spiritual and a practical significance. It wasn't a silly little religious observance. The act of washing their feet was special because it modeled the principle of serving each other with a willing heart, from a shield of gold if you will.

Remember, **Ephesians 2:10** reminds us that *'He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.'*

When we serve each other we are actually serving God, Get this, God may actually be 'seen' as serving those we are serving as well.

[Last weeks Sunday school class led by Paul Truax: excellent]

Much like in **Genesis 33:10** at Jacob and Esau's reconciliation when Esau extended grace through acceptance and forgiveness to his brother the deceiver and Jacob declared '*I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God...*'

When we serve from a heart of love God it's almost as if God Himself is re-presented to us!

3. Serving the lost

Matthew 25:31-40 The Message

31-33"When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.

34-36"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why:

*I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.'*

37-40"Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.'

Matthew 5:44-46 NKJV

44But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

One of the greatest ways of 'loving your enemies' is by serving them!

The basis of what we do for God is because of what Jesus has already done for us.

We can in no way pay God back for what He has done and who He is, nor should we even consider trying to do so.

Closing: prayer of consecration to God for service to Him, to each other, and to the lost.

Because...

Ephesians 2:10 The Message

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Therefore...

Romans 12:1

'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.'