



“Why We Serve (Serve 2021)”

Ephesians 2:1-10

Sermon Date: January 17th, 2021

Reflections on Sunday’s Sermon

By way of reminder, the first three sermons of each year we study the three words which define all that we do at Living Grace - “Worship, Grow, and Serve.” Last week Brian preached a sermon on growing in our faith titled “Don’t Be A Pharisee” (you are strongly encouraged to listen to the sermon audio online if you were not able to be there - <https://www.livinggracebakersfield.com/sermons>). We will be resuming our study in the book of John on Sunday, January 31st.

Prayer

As you begin your study this week, spend some time praising the Lord for the truths contained in Ephesians 2:1-10. Ask that the Lord would continue to work these truths into your heart and mind in such a way that leads you to serve Him and His people diligently. As you pray, make the following words your own before the Lord (prayer taken from At the Throne of Grace: A Book of Prayers by John MacArthur).

“Thank You, Lord, for calling us into Your kingdom and family...

We recognize that all the moral duties Your law sets forth are precisely the same virtues that arise out of authentic love.

May we be faithful vessels of the love Your Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts.

May we never be guilty of hiding the light of Your love under a bushel...

*Fill us with gratitude and with generosity;
then open our hearts to be channels of blessing...*

Help us to be both wise and aggressive in taking advantage of the opportunities we have to do good to all, especially our own dear brothers and sisters and Christ.

Harness our gifts and abilities – along with all our human faculties – and employ them for Your glory.

Empower us to work harder, serve more faithfully, labor more diligently, and still press on – even when the trials and distractions of this life seem to offer compelling motives to turn away from the needs of others.

Energize us by Your Spirit and keep us faithful to our calling...

But we confess, Lord, that one of our greatest needs is for holiness.

We are prone to sin, predisposed to folly, given to stubbornness, and easily confounded by our self-will.

Guide, guard, and sustain us to keep our feet from slipping, and keep us ever mindful of – and firmly anchored to – the solid foundation You have given us in Christ.

Give us a greater love for Him, so that all our service flows from hearts of gladness...

Your grace is sufficient for all these things and Your truth strengthens us for all things.

We bow our hearts to worship You in Your Son’s blessed name. Amen.”

Scripture

Ephesians 2:1–10 – (English Standard Version)

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Handling the Word

1. The topic for this week’s sermon is service. Since we have been in the Gospel of John for the last couple of years, think back on times in this gospel when Jesus served others. Can you give some specific examples?
2. Our text this week is Ephesians 2:1-10, which of course is written by the Apostle Paul. Think back in Paul’s life and give examples of how he served the churches to whom he was ministering and to other specific Christians.

Understanding and Applying

1. The word “serve” in the Bible means to work or labor for another person. Our greatest example of this was Jesus Himself. Look up the following verses that describe Jesus as a servant. How should Jesus’ life as a servant impact our lives as servants?
 - Mark 10:45 –
 - John 13:1-15 –
 - Philippians 2:5-8 –

2. Does serving others come naturally for you? Is it something you enjoy and look forward to? What do you think this tells us about our own hearts? Look up the following story about the disciples of Jesus (Mark 10:34-45) and write down what you learn about their own understanding of serving. What were some specific sins they were dealing with? How can you relate to this story? How is this story encouraging or discouraging to you?

3. The Bible is clear that we are to imitate Jesus and serve others. Look up the following verses and write down what you learn about our own commands to be servants:
 - Luke 10:25-37 –
 - Galatians 5:13,14 –
 - Philippians 2:1-4 –
 - 1 Peter 4:7-11 –

4. People inside and outside the church serve in a multitude of ways and for many different causes. What are some of the motivations (good and bad) for people serving in the community or at church? As followers of Jesus, what should be our *primary* motivation for service? (Refer to Colossians 3:23-24; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15). As you search your own heart, consider if this is *your* motivation for service. Who is it that we should be ultimately serving as we serve others?

5. Read Ephesians 2:1-3 and write down some important points about what you learn about a person's spiritual condition before they give their life to Christ. How did these things play out in your life prior to you coming to Christ? Are these things still being lived out in your life?

6. One key point of this passage is found in v. 3 when Paul says, "among whom we *all* once lived..." Look up the following verses and write down what you find out about the universality of sin. Why is this crucial to our understanding of ourselves and the gospel?
 - Jeremiah 17:9 –
 - Romans 3:10-12 –
 - Romans 6:17 –

7. One of the things Paul mentions in v. 1 is that we “[followed] the course of this world.” What do you think Paul means by this statement? What is the “course of this world.?” How do you see yourself following in this pattern?

8. Thankfully, we come to v. 4 and those wonderful words, “But God...” Read verses 4-9 and write down what God has done for those who give their lives to Christ in spite of sin and the state of our spiritual condition (vv.1-3). What is your personal response to the reality of what God has done for you in Christ? How should this make a difference in our lives?

9. How is it that all these blessings might be ours in Christ? What is the means by which God gives us these things? Our good works? You being an awesome person? Look at verses 4-8 again and write down how it is that God saves a person. What does this tell you about the nature of God? How is this understanding crucial to understanding the gospel?

10. In response to our salvation through Christ alone, faith alone, and grace alone (not by our own merits), Paul writes verse 10, which brings us full circle back to the theme of serving. What is it that God has created us to do? What are you doing in service to God, not to gain His favor but in response to all that Christ has done for you? How are you modeling the life of Jesus as a servant of Christ’s Church and to others (Mark 10:45)?

11. As you conclude your study this week, spend a few minutes prayerfully contemplating the love God has shown you, especially through His Son, Jesus Christ. Ask that He would continue to transform you by His love in such a way that you are led to an even greater desire to serve Him with your life.

“Jesus does not want you to measure your life by your service of Him...He did not come to be served by you – He came to serve you. If we grasp this, then we will be set free to enjoy His love. And then, oddly, we will also be set free to serve Him longer, harder, braver, truer than we ever could otherwise. This is joy, and we’ll only find it in Christ.”

John Hindley