

THE JOY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

1 CORINTHIANS 13: 1-13

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Giving honor to God and to Bishop Johnson, Cabinet, members and visiting friends of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, good morning. It is my pleasure to be able to stand before you another year as your conference Lay Leader. My topic today will be on, “The Joy of Christian Service”.

According to the dictionary, nursing is a profession concerned with caring for and waiting on the infirm, the injured, or the sick. It is the care of the sick or of those who are unable to look after themselves. Florence Nightingale did more than anyone else to revolutionize the care of the sick and to establish nursing as a profession back in the 1800's. During the war she worked in the hospital dressing wounds; tending the sick; and pressing the British government for better food, supplies and hygiene for the soldiers. After the war, she set up the Nightingale School of Nursing in London and established the first formal training course for nursing. Today, all systems of nurse training throughout the world have their roots in the Nightingale system.

It is true that anyone can serve, but not everyone is a Christian servant. The difference lies not in the physical aspect of your service, but rather in the spiritual. If we are going to be like Christ in our service to others, we must serve as Christ served with caring, compassion and love.

Christ did not complain, because He knew that He was on a mission for His Father, and He sought to please God in everything that He did. Christ did not pick the people that He served. He was compassionate, kind, and loving to everyone that He met on His journey. He was not partial to family, friends, and VIP's. It was the lowliest of God's people that He chose to serve. Why? Because these were the people who needed God. A well person does not need a doctor. Jesus was in the world, but not of the world". Christ knew how to deal with adversity. He knew that everybody we serve is not a Christian. However, He did not fight fire with fire, but rather used the Word of God to challenge, condemn, and convict. Even though some people were rude and nasty to Him, He still maintained His loving spirit and helped them all that He could. Christ was not selfish. He was always giving, even at the expense of risking His own life. His spiritual life and the spiritual lives of those whom He served were more important than His earthly life. Christ knew how to put God first in everything that He did. This brought Him joy, knowing that His work was not in vain and that it brought Him glory and honor to the Father in Heaven.

When some of us do things for others, our expressions often show that we do not want to do them. We do not understand that it is not what we do, but how we do it. Sometimes it is not the job that we are doing, but rather who we doing it for that determines whether we smile or frown, but I came to tell you that “you cannot love God and hate your brother or sister that you see every day”. God’s love and care is not strictly for our friends. We have to serve everyone in the spirit of Christ.

Nursing is a caring profession, and it would stand to reason that those finding themselves in this position count it as a joy to help others. Nursing is a profession that one must love doing because of the nature of the work that it involves. Let me give you an example. When you go to the hospital, do you realize that your life is most of the time is in the hands of the nurses, and if you have a nurse who does not care, your welfare could be at stake? Just think about it!! The nurse takes your vital signs. The nurse gives you medication. The nurse reviews your chart for instructions from the doctor. The nurse records on your chart vital information about your state of health. The nurse handles your blood and substances given to sustain life. The nurse cannot afford to make a mistake, whether it is in the hospital or in God’s church!! The church is really a hospital for sinners, and all of us come with different problems, whether they are mental, physical, or spiritual. Thus, the nurse in God’s house must be ready to render care when needed.

There are several things that we must do before we can find joy in Christian service. (1) We must consecrate ourselves to the Lord. This means complete surrender and absolute devotion to the Lord. Paul, In Acts (:6 say, “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

(2) We must consecrate ourselves to the task. This means complete dedication and unreserved willingness to serve God in every responsibility. (3) We must consecrate ourselves to the individuals that we serve. This means having unselfish love and spiritual desire to help other people. Matt: 25: 40 says, And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

So, the main purpose of our serving is to present Christ in the Spirit of humility. John 3:30 says, He must increase, but I must decrease” The secondary purpose is to exemplify Christ or always to show forth your faith in Christ and your loyal devotion to Christ. Be filled with the Holy Spirit yourself before you try to help others. Serving others means that we have to pray. Our folk can be a mess sometimes, and we cannot, as leaders afford to be a mess with them. We must pray to be sure that our strength is in Christ and not in our own power. We must pray to follow the example of Jesus. Luke :6:12 says, And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a

mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” To serve others, we must have charity, the greatest virtue of all. It is written in 1Corinthians 13: 4-7 New Revised Standard Version, that,

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

The truth is that joy comes in knowing that when we help others, we show our love for Jesus Christ. We get joy in knowing that others are made better by our sacrifices. We get joy in knowing that in due season we will reap, if we faint not. Helping others is not tit-for-tat. We help because it is our Christian duty to do so, and not because we want accolades, favors, power, prestige, or recognition our recognition comes from God, not man, so we must not lower ourselves to that level. To serve is divine.

We must not be angered when others tell us that our job is small, because Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us, and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelist, and some pastors, and some lay and some teachers. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Our gifts are for the perfecting of the saints, in order that the body of Christ will be edified. Whether your job is to carry water, to help those who are faint, to wheel the handicapped, or to help the elderly, be assured that you have a very important task to do in the church, and God is depending on you to do your best. Count it all joy, for you cannot lose when you work for Christ.

I don't know about you, but when I go on to meet my Maker, I want the work that I done to speak for me. When I go before God's throne, I want the service that I give to speak for me. No matter how insignificant my work may be to the world, I want to hear God say, well done, my good and Faithful servant!! Well done!!

- *Dr. Mary White, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Lay Leader*