Who Are You Serving?

A Study Outline on Colossians 3:23-24

Text: Colossians 3:23-24

Central Truth: Serve people out of love for Jesus, not for their approval. Jesus sees what people miss, and He is the reason, the reward, and the source.

Key Question: If nobody thanked you, would you still serve?

Companion to the article by Raffi at go-me.org. For personal study and small group discussion. All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (1995).

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You for the privilege of serving You. Search our hearts today. Show us where we have begun to serve for people's eyes instead of Yours, and give us grace to pick up the towel again with a willing heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Read the Passage Aloud

> *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.* *(Colossians 3:23-24)*

I. Whatever You Do (Colossians 3:23-24)

A. The slow drift

1. We start by serving Jesus and slowly, without realizing it, begin serving people.

2. We look at people's faces for approval. Did they see what I did? Why him and not me?

3. We are still serving, but for people, and when people stop appreciating us we want to quit.

4. The reason is that we were looking for our reward from people.

B. Whatever you do

1. Not only preaching, leading, or the platform. Cleaning, welcoming, arranging chairs, making coffee.

2. "It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

3. People may not see, may forget, and may not say thank you. Jesus sees, never forgets, and sees your heart.

C. The person who came early

1. He opened the door, cleaned, arranged the chairs, and made the coffee before anyone arrived.

2. Nobody knows who did it, and he is smiling, because he did it for Jesus.

3. If people are your reward you will tire and quit. If Jesus is your reward you can keep going.

Application Questions

Where have you noticed yourself looking at people's faces for approval in your service?

What did you do this month that nobody saw, and how did you feel about it?

Transition: Who deserves to be served more than Jesus? Watch what He did with a towel.

II. The Towel (John 13:1-17)

> *If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.* (John 13:14-15)

A. The King washes feet

1. These were not perfect feet. They belonged to men who would fail Him.

2. One of them was Judas. Jesus knew, and He washed his feet anyway.

3. Jesus served someone who was about to hurt Him.

B. The world and Jesus

1. The world says, make people notice you. Jesus says, serve.

2. The world says, ask what you can get. Jesus says, ask what you can give.

C. Stop waiting for somebody else

1. The disciples sat waiting for someone else to wash feet. Jesus stood up and took the towel.

2. Why does nobody help? Why does nobody clean? The answer is, you can do it.

3. You do not need a title or your name announced. You need a willing heart.

4. A towel is nothing, but in the hands of Jesus a towel became a ministry.

Application Questions

Who is the "Judas" you find hardest to serve, and what would washing his feet look like this week?

What have you been waiting for somebody else to do?

Transition: Serving people is not the problem. The question is why we serve them.

III. Why Am I Serving? (Matthew 6:1, Hebrews 13:8)

> *Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 6:1)

A. Same action, different heart

1. Preach for honor, or so people know Jesus.

2. Sing to be praised, or so Jesus receives the glory.

3. Give so people know, or in secret because you love Jesus.

4. God looks at the heart.

B. Live for God's eyes

1. People change. Today they say you are amazing, tomorrow they forget your name.

2. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

3. Identity built on people's opinion goes up and down. Identity from Jesus is secure.

C. When nobody says thank you

1. After everything I did, I will never help that person again. Why? Because you expected something back.

2. We serve because Jesus is worthy.

3. Jesus sees the service done with a broken heart, the gift given from little, the prayer nobody knew about. None of it was wasted.

Application Questions

Name one thing you do in ministry and answer honestly, why am I doing it?

When someone failed to thank you, what did you decide, and what does that reveal about your reward?

Transition: When Jesus is your reason, nobody can stop you. Mary and Peter show us both sides.

IV. When Jesus Is Your Reason (John 12:1-8, John 21:15-17, Philippians 2:5-11)

> *Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep." (John 21:17)*

A. Mary's perfume

1. Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus, and Judas asked why the waste (John 12:5).

2. Mary did not do it for Judas, so Judas could not stop her.

3. When Jesus is your reason, people cannot stop your worship, service, or calling.

B. Peter's restoration

1. Peter loved Jesus and denied Him three times.

2. After the resurrection Jesus restored him. "Do you love Me? Tend My sheep."

3. Jesus did not say, become famous. He gave Peter sheep to feed.

C. The towel before the cross

1. We want the microphone but not the towel, the platform but not the sacrifice, the crown but not the cross.

2. Jesus "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant" and "humbled Himself." Then "God highly exalted Him" (Philippians 2:7-9).

3. Do not follow the promotion. Follow the obedience.

4. If God gives you a platform, use it for Him. If He gives you a towel, use it for Him.

Application Questions

Where have you wanted the platform without the sacrifice?

What has God put in your hand right now, a towel or a microphone, and how are you using it for Him?

Transition: Many of us think our part is too small. Here is what I learned when GoChurch began.

V. Nothing Is Small (Mark 12:41-44)

> *Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury.* *(Mark 12:43)*

A. A personal lesson

1. When GoChurch started and Pastor Matt and Julie came to Lebanon, I brought chairs and food, cleaned the car, and put in gas.

2. I asked whether that was my only work in the ministry.

3. Pastor Matt said, in the kingdom of God there is no small thing and no big thing. If I am preaching and you bring the food, how can I preach without it? You and I are the same in the eyes of Jesus.

B. The widow's two coins

1. Others gave more money. Jesus saw her heart.

2. Give what you can. Speak to one. Pray for the nations. Do something with your whole heart.

Application Questions

What task have you labeled too small to matter?

Who in your church does the unseen work, and how could you honor that this week?

Transition: Serving is not always easy. Here is where the strength comes from.

VI. When You Are Empty (Isaiah 40:31, Romans 5:8)

> *Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.* *(Isaiah 40:31)*

> *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* *(Romans 5:8)*

A. His strength, not yours

1. Sometimes you say, Lord, I have nothing left.

2. We do not serve from our own strength. Go back to Him and say, Father, renew me.

B. Do not let one person stop you

1. One person hurts us and we want to quit everything.

2. People are not your calling, reward, or source. Jesus is.

3. Somebody hurt you, but Jesus is still worthy.

C. Jesus served first

1. He did not wait for us to become perfect.

2. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He served us when we could give Him nothing.

D. The question to ask yourself

1. If nobody thanked me, would I still serve? If somebody else got the credit? If I never stood on a platform?

2. Jesus answers, yes, you can, because I am your reason.

3. One day you will hear, "Well done, good and faithful slave" (Matthew 25:21).

Application Questions

When were you last so tired you wanted to quit, and where did you go for strength?

Answer in writing: if nobody ever thanked me, would I still serve?

Summary

The drift from serving Jesus to serving people is slow and quiet, and it ends in disappointment. Jesus took the towel and washed the feet of the man who would betray Him. He sees the early morning chairs, the two coins, and the prayer nobody knew about. He is the reason, the reward, and the source. Serve because He is worthy.

Live From It This Week

1. Answer the question in writing. If nobody thanked me, would I still serve? If somebody else received the credit? If I never stood on a platform? Bring your answers to Jesus.

2. Pick up a towel. Do one task this week that nobody will see or credit, with your whole heart as for the Lord.

3. Serve the person who disappointed you. Choose one person who never said thank you and serve them again.

4. Stop comparing. When you measure your service against someone else's, say aloud, "In the kingdom there is nothing small and nothing big."

5. Go back to the source. Before you quit, pray Isaiah 40:31 and ask the Father to renew your strength.

6. Remember who served first. Each morning, read Romans 5:8 and thank Jesus for serving you before you could give Him anything.

Memory Verse

> *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.* *(Colossians 3:23)*

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for speaking to our hearts. Help us to live with one desire, to please You only. Teach us to serve with the right heart, not looking for recognition or the approval of people. Give us grace to stay faithful when no one sees us. Remind us why we started and who we are doing it for. May our lives point people to Jesus and not to ourselves. Jesus, You are the One we serve, the One we follow, and the One we want to please. In Jesus' name. Amen.

References

Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible. (1995). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

Adapted from a message preached by Raffi at GoChurch Beirut. Watch the full teaching at youtu.be/G8VEmWU6DnI. Published by Go Middle East, go-me.org.