

Romans 12:3-11

Second Baptist Church
Stephen Wisthoff Mar. 14, 2010

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,

⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

I've seen it, and perhaps you've seen it too. Various churches across the united states have a two-word play on words posted above the door to their church. "Servant's Entrance". Other churches have a slightly different version. Their sign reads, "Enter to Worship, depart to serve."

When I was in high school and went on a mission trip to Brazil, the t-shirts we wore were blazoned with the organization's motto: "Get Dirty for God." Service. It's what Jesus taught his disciples. He knelt down and washed his disciple's feet and told them in a creative way that that is what they are to do for one another. From Mary Magdalene to Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Christian Service has been the outlet of our faith for 2000 years.

There are two elements we see in our society. On one side, we have those who are hurting and broken and lost, and on the other, we have those who have been redeemed by the Grace of God and have something to offer those who are broken and lost. Jesus taught us that we are the servants of the poor and the broken. He healed the blind and the lame and he taught them by his actions that they are beloved children of God. The church is called to be the servants to the world around us. The church is the safety net for those who are falling. When the church, as the safety net, is functioning as it should, the

members of the body develop **MINISTRY SENSITIVITY**. What is that? It is learning to detect needs and aggressively mobilizing to meet those needs.

When we who make up the church are functioning properly, each of us develop a ministry sensitivity. It happens by spreading from person to person like a pandemic. So how do we get it? Look at your insert in the bulletin for just a minute. There is a progression that takes place

Begin Praying for your neighbor or people around you, including strangers. God will begin to bring about a change that will lead to the second step which is **CARING** for those around you. When this begins to happen, it will eventually lead to the third step which is **SHARING** yourself with people in need. That is the meaning of developing a ministry sensitivity. We learn how to recognize needs and we take the initiative to reach out and meet those needs.

D.L Moody once said, *“A great many people have a false idea about the church. They have the idea that the church is a place to rest in...To get into a nicely cushioned pew, and contribute to the charities, listen to the minister, and do their share to keep the church out of bankruptcy, is all they want. The idea of work for them – actual work in the church—never enters their mind.”*

Moody made this observation over a hundred years ago. In case you wonder if he put his money where his mouth is, Moody was first and foremost known as an evangelist. He did his evangelism in the inner city. He founded the YMCA as a boys club to get kids off the street and tell them about Jesus. In his busy schedule, during the civil war, he ministered to and converted dying confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas, the Prison Camp outside Chicago.

In Romans 12:10 which was read today, we’re told, *“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.”* Vs. 13 goes on to say, *“Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”*

According to the first part of today’s scripture, we first have to get over ourselves. We have to shed the problem of self-importance. Verses 3-5 read, *“³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,

⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others”.

When we can get beyond self-importance and see ourselves as Paul did – as a bond-servant of Christ, something changes. Referring back to our theme of the PRESENCE OF CHRIST, if we knew that Jesus was here with us this morning, we would see ourselves in comparison to him which would take our eyes off ourselves. Furthermore, we would see the very person, the person of Christ, and realize that what we are doing is for him. Jesus said in Matthew 25, “*Whenever you do this unto the least of these my brothers, you have done it unto me.*” That fact in itself – that what we do is for JESUS, is a huge boost to our ministry sensitivity. It’s not even about making us feel good.

Watch Oprah some time and the good deeds she and others encourage people to do. “It will just make you feel so good about yourself” is what we hear them say. For the person motivated by Christ, it isn’t about making us feel good. It is about serving Christ. I think once we get a hold of this concept of doing our service for the Lord, once we become keenly aware of his presence in the church, and when we begin to share some of the grief he feels when one of his children is hurting – then I’m convinced we will be motivated to minister to the needs of others.

That is my message today reduced to a few minutes. To reduce it to a single sentence, it would be, “*Becoming sensitive to Christ’s presence in the church motivates his people to go out of their way to minister to the needs of others*”.

We do some of this. We have some avenues of service. God has used us to touch the lives of others. He will continue to use us to use us in even more creative ways if we pray for ministry sensitivity to inhabit our hearts and transform our minds. Even right here in our own building there are ministries going on that reach out to others.

What are some of the ministries that will continue on into the future...things we haven’t even thought of yet nor have we prayed about what God might do through this congregation? Amen.