

Serving God One Cup at a Time

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Worship Grow Serve Appeal: Matthew 10:40-42

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Matthew 10:40-42

⁴⁰Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple — truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

When we serve others we are serving God. Service is a function of, a part of a vibrant faith filled relationship with God. It doesn't earn us eternal salvation. It is an extension of our Baptismal callings – let your light so shine. God's love for us is our motivation.

This week I was visiting with KOG member Kaylene Treece and her brother Bruce. They shared they had been to IHOP recently for a fabulous breakfast of pancakes. Yet when they ready to check out, the hostess informed Bruce that IHOP is no longer accepting checks, only credit cards or cash.

Bruce had only brought his checkbook, so suddenly they were without any means to pay the bill. A lovely young mother overheard the conversation and quickly offered to pick up their tab. Kaylene and Bruce were surprised and very grateful. He said to the woman, "Now it is my turn to pay it forward."

What motivated that young woman to offer to pay for their meal? We might never know, but it was an act of service; an expression of loving kindness in a moment of need.

Jesus said it this way, "Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me, Jesus. And whoever welcomes me, Jesus, welcomes the one who sent me, God! Yes, whoever offers even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, won't lose their reward."

You see my friends, when we serve others, we are actually serving God. It's an invisible ripple effect we might not think about regularly. Yet it's true. When we serve others, we're serving God.

Perhaps one of the most famous moments of Jesus serving others is when he took a towel, knelt down and washed the disciples' feet. (John 13:1-17) Peter resists thinking

that God himself, ought not stoop to the level of a servant or slave. He says to Jesus, “You should never wash my feet!”

To which the Lord responds, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Of course, then Peter hops right in! Jesus says this, “If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”

Wash others feet. Give a cup of cold water. Because God loves us, it is easy to serve.

Reflect for a moment upon how many people serve us in any given week: the newspaper boy, a mailman, a waiter or waitress, barber, checkout person, auto mechanic, bank teller, doctor or nurse.

If we were to stop them from serving us, we would refuse the gift they are offering. And in the process, we would also refuse the living presence of God within that person. Listen to that again, if we would refuse their service, we would refuse God.

Isn’t that what Jesus says? “Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.”

There are times when in our pride or stubbornness or desire to appear self-sufficient, we don’t want to accept others help. I’m guilty of it too! But when we do, we’re refusing God’s presence and God’s present to us through others. Accept their gift of service.

A cup of cold water. Paying for a meal. Sending a sympathy card. Cleaning up the dishes. Starting a movement.

Starting a movement is exactly what little Florence did. She was five years old when Hurricane Florence was about to hit. She told her mom, “Mom, people aren’t going to like me because my name is Florence and that storm is horrible. I got to go get band-aids.”

So she and her little brother rode around the neighborhood in their little red wagon collecting band-aids. When they had filled a garage full, someone took those supplies in a tractor-trailer down to North Carolina. And little Florence changed the world. (John Kasich new book “It’s Up to Us: Ten Little Ways we Can Make Big Change.” PBS News hour, October 17)

A cup of cold water. Paying for a meal. Collecting band-aids. Attending to others just as Jesus assists us.

Now you know we Lutherans have it in our collective DNA to be worried about doing these 'good works'. We've struggled with the Biblical book of James which says, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill." And yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead." (James 2:14-17)

St Paul was quick to remind that our good deeds, our service, our works is not the basis for our eternal salvation. He didn't want anyone to think that! In Romans, Paul says, "If Abraham (the father of our faith) was justified (made right) by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God....We are justified by faith....while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!"

So let's be clear. When we are washed in those baptismal waters of grace, we have an outward sign of our eternal salvation. And within that sacrament, we also light a candle and say according to St Matthew chapter 5, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to God!" (vs 16) "You are the light of the world. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand. It lights up the house!" (vs 14-15, Loughry paraphrase)

And even our dear Martin Luther said, "You are saved by faith alone, but if faith is alone...it is not faith."

Cups of cold water. Collecting band-aids. Letting our light shine because God loves us! Serving is a sign of a healthy relationship with God. This is why we serve!

Last Friday, Mike Dodge volunteered for the first time at Loveland Connect. Connect is a program that takes place in 160 cities around the country including Ft. Collins. Loveland Connect is a way for homeless individuals, couples and families to get connected to services they need.

At Truscott Elementary's cafeteria, tables were filled with information from 40 different agencies. Some attendees came to get one service, like a haircut or a vaccination for their pet, while some came and looked through all 40 agencies. People could get clothes, or flu shots or even cell phones through a food stamp program.

The volunteers' job was to escort an attendee through the fair. Mike said of his morning's service, "It was the most amazing experience! I'll never look at a homeless person sitting on a bench the same way. You get to know their stories and they're good people! Maybe they didn't have health insurance, or got laid off. And then you think, this could happen to me!"

Indeed and on this morning, we're hoping that King of Glory will live into God's dream of a center for homeless CSU students where they can get a cup of coffee, do a load of laundry and have a place to study. Just by writing a check, each of us can change a life. Today.

In little ways and large, cups of cold water are being given every day. As our Generosity Appeal devotions say, "Today, Jesus calls you to be, and to be as yourself, the way you were created. He lets you know he values your life and the ways you can serve. Sometimes opportunities (to serve) come in the most unpredictable places; places we hadn't planned on or thought of." (2020 Generosity Appeal Devotions by Cathy Simmering "Washing Feet")

This week, let's recommit ourselves to serving others and in doing so, serving God!
Amen?
Amen!