

November 21, 2015 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
Matthew 20:25-28 Why Church? For Service by Andy McDonald

Today is a day which the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it! What a day! What an experience! To give ourselves away expecting nothing in return.

Really the very title of this day “Meet, Worship, Serve” mirrors our three answers to the question “Why Church?” The order may be different but the answers are the same.

Why church? Rooted in all of our answers, at the very heart of purpose and meaning for the ecclesia, the ones called, at the heart we were made to worship and like I said a couple of weeks ago a group of nice people may get together and fellowship well and may even do great service in their community and all kinds of good stuff but if the heart of that group isn't worship they may be a great civic club or do gooder's club, or whatever but without being worshippers they really aren't a church.

It is in the recognition of who God is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
It is in laying down our lives before God
It is in response to all God has done, is now doing, and will accomplish that we worship.

Our fellowship is not just because we might like each other our fellowship is this shared realization of who God is and what he has done.

What binds us together in our second answer to Why Church? For Fellowship, that answer flows out our shared worship.

We are here gathered to meet in fellowship because we share the common understanding that we are messed up humans, a fellowship of sinners, depraved in so many ways but God is our Saving God, He saved us, not because of our being worthy or obedient or even

cooperative He saved us because of his great kindness and mercy. Why Church? For the fellowship of messed up humans, who recognize no hope, no confidence in themselves, but who rejoice and worship together the God who saves. We are a fellowship of sinners

And then today we've participated in the third answer to Why Church? For Service, to serve!

Get this straight we don't serve because we are so gracious and kind and nice. The source of our serving is not our generosity and our benevolence, but it is simply a response to the One who has served us.

We are loved so we love and it evidences itself in acts of service.

We are redeemed so we work and serve to redeem others

Our feet have been washed by the Lord of all and what he has done for us we do for one another and for the world.

Today we have practiced our vision 2018. That vision says "We will be a church without walls fully engaged in serving the people of our community!"

Wherever you served today I hope you caught a sense of being part of a church without walls. While we did have some service opportunities within these walls even those were being done for those outside these walls. The prison bags that were packed here will go beyond these walls into the interior of prison walls and bless a prisoner. And together we didn't just pack the bags a few weeks ago you gave \$4000 on a Sabbath morning and we thought that would pack 1000 bags but we had our figures wrong and instead today we were able to pack 2000 bags.

As you went out from here on different service projects in the community you were being a church without walls.

Maybe in some of the areas you visited parts of our community you don't normally visit.

Maybe you heard or saw or encountered a level of need you don't

often bump up against.
Maybe you had the opportunity to hear or see or know of a need that is bigger than you could meet.

Now you have something concrete about which to pray. It is important to regularly lift one another up in prayer. But today I hope you found something to talk with God about beyond blessing your food and giving safe travels, or getting you over a bad cold. Hopefully today inspires you to talk to the God who has saved you about some group who needs are great.

Today those we served in a funny sort of way served us in allowing us to serve them.

It is when we serve that we are most like Jesus. And in allowing us to serve them today the people we served allowed us to come closer to Jesus.

Today we practiced our Vision 2018 a church without walls fully engaged in serving the people of our community.

Why Church? For Service.

Let me remind you that when we are engaged in serving the people of our community that service doesn't just hang out there by itself.

We serve in the context of our mission to love people into lifelong friendship with God. Our service is a concrete demonstration of loving people.

We serve and in that serving we mingle, show compassion, meet needs, win people's confidence in preparation to invite them to join us in following Jesus.

We serve and guiding all our service are our values of Forgiveness, Love, Acceptance and Grace, the value of worship, the Bible and participation.

And in our serving we demonstrate our alignment with our measures or metrics. We are engaged in the mission, in the context of being regular at worship, volunteering in some capacity, and our support financially underwrites the whole service component.

So often we think of service as some big exhausting thing. But both from your experience today and very poignantly from Joseph's monologue recognize that service is about providing what is needed. Maybe it's a meal, maybe it's help cleaning something up, maybe its bringing cheer to a homebound person, or sharing a song, or maybe it is simply seeing a person and hearing their story, and in that moment of listening relieving their loneliness.

Why Church? For Service.

Jesus changed the paradigm. Success, greatness isn't coming out on top it's about finding the joy of service.

That night when the God of the universe incarnate in Jesus Christ, took the basin and towel and washed 24 dirty feet, he concluded by saying, "I have given you an example to follow, do as I have done to you."

On another occasion Jesus said that he did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

Greatness in the kingdom of God is love that evidences itself through sacrificial service.

In the book Steps to Christ we find these words: "The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has enjoined upon us—to engage, to the extent of our ability, in helping and blessing those who need the help we can give them."

Our scripture reading a few moments ago was from the familiar story we call the “Good Samaritan”. For the Jew who was helped he never had put those two words together, “Good—Samaritan.” He wasn’t sure they could go together. But what makes the story for me is that Jesus told it to teach about who comprises our neighbor, and the answer seems to be anyone in need and anyone who cares for them is a neighbor to them.

That Samaritan didn’t stop and help because it was convenient. He had somewhere to be, an appointment to keep, a clock to punch, money to be made. or safe.

That Samaritan didn’t stop and help because it was the safe thing to do. He put himself at risk from the same robbers who had bloodied this wounded traveler.

The Samaritan didn’t stop because there was great affinity between him and the unfortunate Jewish traveler. It might be like a Christian helping relieve the suffering of even a radicalized Muslim!

It wasn’t safe, it didn’t feel culturally “right”, it cost money as he paid for this guy’s room and care.

It was Jesus who said love your neighbor (anyone in need) as yourself. It was Jesus who stretched our ability to comprehend and said, “love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.” I’m not sure of all the implications of this for refugees today but I’m sure there are some.

And on the judgment day it is Jesus who explains to those who enter the kingdom: I was hungry and you fed me, I was naked and you got me clothes, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was in prison and you visited me, for whatever you do, however you serve, the least of these that is exactly what you do, exactly how you serve me.

There is a lot of darkness in our world. Lots of bad stuff happening some like Paris last week a horrible moment in time, and some of the

darkness just oppressive and quietly ongoing like greed that manifests in everything from legitimized loan sharking to human trafficking. There's the darkness of disease and the lack of safe drinking water. The darkness of abused children and ignorance.

And maybe it was his familiarity with the darkness that inspired Jesus to say, "I am the light of the world," and to say of us his body the church, You are the light of the world. How will we shine? What will it mean for us to serve our world so that it brings light to dark places? Will we be content to worship and fellowship or will we also seek to be light in the darkness by serving our world.

So ...

Why Church? For Worship, which is adoring God alone without ever mentioning ourselves.

Why Church? For Fellowship the fellowship of sinners

Why Church? For Service To give ourselves away to be the light that dispels the darkness—to be like Jesus and serve.

TAKE *away* →

What is your favorite experience of serving?

How would you explain Vision 2018 (We will be a church without walls fully engaged in serving the people of our community) to some who has never heard it?

What do you think about the idea that whoever wants to be great must be the servant of all?

How is it possible to fulfill Jesus directive, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”?

In light of the story of the “Good Samaritan” how legitimate are our concerns about safety, culture, and economics in our being “neighborly”?

What are two ways you could engage in serving this week?

What is an area of need about which you can pray this week?

What steps can you take to develop the habit of being a servant?

Service archives are available at www.hospitalchurch.org

Follow us on Twitter



@FloridaHC

TAKE *away* →

What is your favorite experience of serving?

How would you explain Vision 2018 (We will be a church without walls fully engaged in serving the people of our community) to some who has never heard it?

What do you think about the idea that whoever wants to be great must be the servant of all?

How is it possible to fulfill Jesus directive, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”?

In light of the story of the “Good Samaritan” how legitimate are our concerns about safety, culture, and economics in our being “neighborly”?

What are two ways you could engage in serving this week?

What is an area of need about which you can pray this week?

What steps can you take to develop the habit of being a servant?

Service archives are available at www.hospitalchurch.org

Follow us on Twitter



@FloridaHC