

Serving God by Serving Others

Those who are obedient to the gospel become servants of righteousness (Romans 6:17-18). As servants, they are to serve. They are to be doing those good works for which they were created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). In fact, they are to be "zealous" for those works (Titus 2:14).

Romans 12:1-2 encourages Christians to be "living sacrifices" for the Lord. That is accomplished when we start living for the Lord and doing those things His will would have him do. One of the things the Lord wants His disciples to do is to serve others. He illustrated and emphasized this in John 13.

At what many have come to call the "Last Supper," Jesus paused, girded Himself with a towel, took water, and washed His disciples' feet. He told them, "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him" (John 13:13-16). Jesus was not binding the rite of "foot-washing," rather, He was showing that those who would be His disciples were to be of a mind to serve others, regard their needs, and do what they could to help them.

James declares that if one is going to have a saving faith, that serving others is an essential aspect of that faith. In the second chapter he states, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:14-17). One can profess again and again to be a Christian and to have great faith, but if he does not see to the needs of his brethren he, in reality, has no faith.

Serving others is an important matter to the Lord. When He depicted the judgment scene in Matthew 25, He stressed how important it is to Him and how it should be to us for He showed that it affects one's eternal destiny. To the righteous He said, "'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me.'" (Matt. 25:34-40). The unrighteous were told to depart because they had neglected to be of service to others (Matt. 25:41-46).

Opportunities abound for those who would be like Christ to demonstrate their love for Him by their service to their brethren. They can start by giving their brethren a friendly hello and a warm greeting. They can speak a kind word of encouragement; send a card to the sick or those absent from services; prepare a meal for the shut-ins; visit the sick, elderly, the weak, or discouraged; help the sick and/or elderly with chores; provide financial assistance when needed; and, of course, pray for their brethren.

It is vitally important for all Christians to actively serve their brethren for in so doing, they serve the Lord.

- by Gene Taylor

Did Jesus Use Carnal Methods to Attract Crowds?

Many religious groups use a variety of carnal appeals to draw people to their assemblies. For instance, there are suppers and ice cream socials, ball games and entertainment events, etc. When asked to justify these activities they will commonly refer to the episodes where Jesus fed the multitudes. Some have said, "If you first feed a man's body, then you'll have a chance to feed his soul." Let's see if their reference to Jesus' activities will really support their practices.

There were two separate instances in which Jesus miraculously fed huge crowds of people with small quantities of food. One time there were 5000 men, plus women and children (Mt. 14:15-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14). On another occasion there were 4000 men, plus

women and children (Mt. 15:32-38; Mk. 8:1-9).

In both instances, the people had followed Jesus to hear His marvelous teaching and to see His amazing miracles. There had never been a promise of food to draw them. In fact, both episodes show the people following long distances and for a long time before they were offered food. For example, in Matthew 15:32 we read: *"Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."* Do you see it? The people were not lured to follow by an offer of food. The food came *AFTERWARDS*, as an act of compassion. The people had *NOT* come in anticipation of being fed.

We have one reference where Jesus suspected that the people did, indeed, come with a desire of receiving food (Jn. 6:22ff). On that occasion He *DID NOT* feed them!

Those who would use the example of Jesus feeding the multitudes to justify their carnal practices today are simply wrong!

- by Greg Gwin