

# Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## **Sincere Worship**

### ***Servants of God, Part 1***

#### **A Mixed Group**

Matthew 13 unfolds the parable of the wheat and the tares in which Christ spoke of the make-up of the church.

Matthew 13:30, “Let both [the wheat and tares] grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

The visible body of Christ is comprised of wheat and tares, genuine believers and sham believers. While it is not our place to determine who these are, it is our place to recognize that the church is a mixed-group of people.

When Timothy was wounded by the people he was called to serve, Paul reminded him — speaking of the church “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour” (2 Timothy 2:20). In other words, don’t be discouraged Timothy when people in the body of Christ attack you. Not all in the church are genuine followers of Christ.

In fact think about it. During the Apostolic age, the church was at its smallest and arguably purest state. Yet, we read of sundry and different disciples of the Lord. For example:

- Alexander the coppersmith who did Paul much harm, 2 Timothy 4:14.
- Demas who loved the world, 2 Timothy 4:10.
- The church leaders in Rome who preached Christ from impure motives, Philippians 1:15, 17.
- Timothy and Epaphroditus who genuinely served out of a love for the Lord, Philippians. 2:19-30.
- False brethren who sought to undermine the gospel, Galatians 1:9; 6:12.

From all of this it should be obvious that in the kingdom of God there are a variety of kinds of servants. Some are genuine ministers who long only for the Lord to be glorified. Others are in it so long as they get their needs met. There are the givers and takers; servants and snakes; and mixed motives and impure motives. The question we must ask ourselves is this: Which am I?

This passage gives a description of four types of servants that can be found in the Kingdom of God — even today. In order that we might “secure undistracted devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35), let's examine this passage considering our service in the Kingdom.

## Worship

Let's begin looking at the first kind of Servant that can be found in the Kingdom of God — the sincere servant of God.

1 Samuel 2:18, “But Samuel ministered<sup>1</sup> [this speaks of an on-going activity, not just a one time event]<sup>2</sup> before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.”

This verse is packed with significance as it gives us three important characteristics about Samuel and thus the service of sincerity. Notice first that he was ministering.

This word *minister* is not the usual word for service in the Old Testament. It is not the usual word<sup>3</sup> which emphasizes menial employment but it is the word used for a higher category of service. This term is used of Joseph when he was entrusted with the household of Potiphar.

Genesis 39:4, “And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served<sup>4</sup> him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.”

The serving that this text speaks of is not that of washing floors and working out in the hot sun but one of second in command.

Genesis 39:5, “And it came to pass from the time that **he had made him overseer in his house**, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.”

Joshua was said to be Moses' servant.<sup>5</sup> Joshua never was Moses' slave. Rather he was his “go to man” or second in command. Joshua was the future leader of Israel.

This is what the term *serve* speaks of: not just any old work, but that which is most important. It is the term used to describe the service of the angels in heaven.

Psalms 103:21, “Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers<sup>6</sup> of his, that do his pleasure.”

The term *serve* is the primary word used in reference to the service of a priest in the house of the Lord.<sup>7</sup> And thus in the context of a temple or high place, this term *serve* referenced the all important ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> שָׂרַת sharath

<sup>2</sup> Robert Bergen, 1&2 Samuel, NAC, page 79

<sup>3</sup> עָבַד 'abad

<sup>4</sup> שָׂרַת sharath

<sup>5</sup> Compare Exodus 24:13; 33:11; Joshua 1:1

<sup>6</sup> שָׂרַת sharath

<sup>7</sup> Compare Exodus 28:35, 43; Joel 1:13; 1 Chronicles 6:17; 16:4, 37

worship! In fact, the Septuagint<sup>8</sup> used the Greek equivalent (a word primarily dealing with worship of God).

From all of this we conclude that in its most essential form, the work of a Servant of God is the work of worship! This is what Samuel was all about! And this is what we are all about in Christ! In fact recall that Scripture identifies that the purpose of salvation is nothing less than securing a worshipping people.

1 Peter 2:4-5, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, [for what purpose?] to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

Winning someone to Christ is an act of worship. Paul spoke of the conversion of Gentiles to Christ as an offering.

Romans 15:15-16, “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.”

Holy living is considered to be an activity of worship.

Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service<sup>9</sup> [worship].”

Giving money to meet the needs of the body is considered to be worship.

Philippians 4:18, “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”

The Christian's life of godliness and honesty is the activity of worship.

1 Timothy 2:2-3, “[That prayer} For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.”

Loving the brethren is worship.

Romans 14:18, “For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.”

In fact, ALL that we do is to be done to the exaltation of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

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<sup>8</sup> λατρευω latreuo λατρεία latreia

<sup>9</sup> λατρεία latreia

Truly from these passages we see that worship is not just an activity of the child of God — it is everything we do! It is what we are about. Whether we are at home, work, or school what we do is worship. Whether we are parenting, working, or playing our time is spent at worship. And thus, a synonym for the child of God in Scripture is that he is one who worships!

John 4:23, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship [servants and ministers of Christ] him.”

And so, when it comes to Service in the Kingdom of God, we recognize that one of its most essential elements is worship — this is what Samuel was all about!

And thus we see the first characteristic of the service of sincerity: Worship.

## **Given for the Lord**

Notice that the second one is a service given for the Lord...

1 Samuel 2:18, “**But Samuel ministered before the LORD**, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.”

In this text we are not told specifically what Samuel was doing — that which comprised the worship that he offered. But this we do know, his ministry/worship was before the Lord!

What an important truth!

So often our ministry in the kingdom of God is done before man, to be noticed by man.. Oh yes, we are servants of Christ. We think (if we don't say it ) “I certainly hope that you just saw what I did” or “when it comes time for credit, I'll get my due!” and “I hope you appreciate the sacrifice I made in order to help you!” Indeed, we are man-pleasers! In fact, this is such a problem that Christ Himself exhorted us this way:

Matthew 6:1, “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 6:5, “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

Such was not the case for Samuel. What he did was done before the Lord, for the Lord, unto the Lord, to the glory of the Lord!

This must be our focus as well! Indeed, the sincere minister understands that all he does is an offering unto the Lord. He serves ever mindful that the Lord is the object of his ministry.

## **No Bounds**

Finally notice, his service knows no bounds.

1 Samuel 2:18, “But Samuel ministered before the LORD, **being a child, girded with a linen ephod.**”

The significance of the “linen ephod” is that it was understood to be the clothing of a priest. Truly, Samuel's time under Eli was spent serving as a priest by virtue of the fact that he wore an ephod.

What is an “ephod”?

An ephod was a linen garment akin to a long shirt. In the case of the high priest it was quite elaborate. It was made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen, fastened by two shoulder pieces and a woven band for a girdle. Two onyx stones, on which were engraved the names of the tribes of Israel, were placed on the shoulder pieces. A breastplate with twelve precious stones in four rows was attached to the ephod with pure gold chains. Under the ephod was a blue robe which extended all the way to the feet of the priest. And yet, the high priest is not the only one who wore an ephod. In Scripture, many others are said to have worn one.

- The 85 priests at Nob were girded with linen ephods, 1 Samuel 22:18.
- David was wearing an ephod when he accompanied the procession bringing the ark into Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 6:14.
- And in our text, Samuel himself is wearing a linen ephod, 1 Samuel 2:18.

What was the ephod's function?

It served a two-fold purpose. First, it was used to determine the will of the Lord.<sup>10</sup> A pouch on the breast next to the heart was designed to carry the Urim and Thummim.<sup>11</sup> This is why we read of David requesting the ephod to determine the will of the Lord.<sup>12</sup> But secondly, together with the ark, it served as a kind of miniature tabernacle/temple.<sup>13</sup> Wearing the ephod, the priest understood that he ever and always was the dwelling place of God!

And so once again, we see the emphasis on worship — wearing the ephod. Samuel ever and always worshipped the Lord!

And yet what is truly amazing here is that Samuel was “worshipping before the Lord wearing a linen ephod...” Samuel was not a full-grown man having been trained at the finest seminary in Shiloh. He was but a boy!

Do you understand the significance behind this?

Everything that we have seen about the ministry of sincerity from this passage — that it is nothing less than worship, and done before the Lord, unto the Lord, for the glory of the Lord — is relevant even for the smallest children in our midst! Amazing!

From this we derive the implication that a sincere minister knows few bounds. He serves without self-imposed limits such as age, gender, race, education, or handicap. Such are the components of a sincere

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<sup>10</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 23:9; 3:7

<sup>11</sup> Compare Exodus 28:30

<sup>12</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 23:9

<sup>13</sup> Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Harris, Archer, Waltke, Volume 1, page 63

minister. And such therefore must be our aspiration when it comes to service in the Kingdom of God!

Accordingly let me ask you three questions — correlating to the three points of this verse:

- Question #1: Do you understand that all that you do is worship?

From the sinful activity on Friday night to the board meeting on Monday morning — Do you understand that ALL OF IT CONSTITUTES AN OFFERING TO THE LORD? And thus the question is NOT this: Will I or won't I worship the Lord? BUT this: What offering am I currently presenting to God?

This was the exhortation that Malachi gave to his generation.

Malachi 1:8, “And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.”

The issue in Malachi's day was not necessarily that the worshippers were offering that which was defiled — though that was true. Indeed! This passage makes it clear that the root issue was their attitude.

Malachi 1:7, “Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.”

Do you see it?

It wasn't just their offering that constituted their worship; it was their attitude as well! Don't miss it. All that we do, think, and say is an offering unto the Lord! Thus when we live with a bad attitude, that is part of our worship for that day! When we serve out of selfishness and pride, that again constitutes our worship! When we indulge our flesh, that is our offering!

Truly to recognize this is to serve in the Kingdom of God with sincerity!

- Question #2: Is the labor of your hand done for man or God?

Answer the question, Moms, are you changing diapers for the Lord or for your child? Students, are you writing your assignments for a teacher or for the Lord? Marrieds, are you serving your spouse or the Lord? Servants of Christ, are you ministering before man or before God?

You say, “For the Lord!”

Well then let me ask you, “Why are you so bothered when you don't get the respect you think you deserve? Why are you upset when your teacher marks you down? Why throw a fit when others don't notice? Why mutter when your good is evil spoken of?”

How you respond to defeat (not victory) will determine the real object of your service!

Let us get out of the service of self! May our life ever and always be lived out before the Lord! Let us cultivate a Ministry characterized by Sincerity!

- Question #3: What excuse have you submitted for neglect when it comes to the ministry of God's

kingdom?

Here are a few excuses that I have heard:

- I'm not qualified.
- I'm not old enough.
- People won't respect me.
- I don't have much to offer.
- I'm a sinner.

This passage should shame everyone of us who have allowed a perceived inability or incapacity to limit their ministry. Again if Samuel could minister before the Lord as a boy wearing a linen ephod, there are few excuses for why we can't do the same today!

I'm not talking about women serving as elders or children serving as teachers in the body. Indeed there are qualifications for office and for many areas of service in the body. Rather, I'm talking about the general ministry given to each and every member of a household of God — the ministries of

- Visitation, James 1:27.
- Refreshing the saints, Romans 1:11.
- Prayer, 1 Timothy 2:1-2.
- Encouragement, Galatians 6:1.
- Building up one another, 1 Corinthians 12:7.

Of these ministries, we have no excuse for neglect. Truly to avail yourself to the service of Christ with no strings attached is to become a Sincere Servant!

You say, I'm failing on all three counts this morning! My offering is pathetic. I'm a man-pleaser. And so often I allow my insecurities to limit the ministry to which I have been called.

## **What are you wearing?**

Family of God, let me ask you what do you have on this day? Are you not wearing a linen ephod?

You say, "What are you talking about?"

Remember the purpose of the ephod — it was a reminder to the one wearing it that they are a tabernacle of the Lord. Well brothers and sisters, if you are in Christ Jesus then you have been clothed in the linen ephod of Christ's righteousness.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, at all times and in all places you are a tabernacle of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

And thus, to all who are struggling with Sincerity, realize what you have become in Christ! You are acceptable in His sight. You are ever and always pleasing. You are the dwelling place of God. You are

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<sup>14</sup> Compare Isaiah 61:10 and Galatians 3:24-27

the place wherein a holy God interacts with an unholy world.

In awe let us therefore respond with sobriety, and so offer to the Lord the ministry of sincerity!

## Christian Growth

Now notice the result of being a sincere minister of Christ: Their Circumstances

1 Samuel 2:21, “And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. **And the child Samuel grew<sup>15</sup> before the LORD.**”

Now that we understand Samuel's ministry (and thus the Ministry of Sincerity), notice that this verse gives a description of what happened to Samuel as a result: he “grew.” In this passage this is a double entendre! The word has two meanings in the Hebrew. First it references the physical growth of people or living things. From this we conclude that while Samuel ministered before the Lord, he continued to mature physically. However, the term also references a growth in importance — a qualitative growth. For example we discover this in the following passages:

- In 1 Samuel 26:24 the word means to set a high value on one's life.
- In Job 2:13 it is used for expressing intense grief.
- In 1 Kings 10:23 it refers to the importance of a king.
- In 2 Samuel 7:22 it speaks of God's greatness.
- And the Messiah is described as one who “will be great to the ends of the earth” (Micah 5:4).

From this we conclude that Samuel not only matured physically before the Lord, he also grew spiritually such that his reputation for being a man of God widened. In fact if there is any doubt, notice the description of Samuel.

1 Samuel 2:26, “And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.”

As a result of his service in God's kingdom, Samuel grew in his walk with Christ — this is clear! And yet we also see it in the contrast that is being made between Samuel and Hophni and Phinehas.

1 Samuel 2:17, “Wherefore **the sin of the young men was very great** [גָּדַל *gadal*] before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.”

! Samuel 2:21, “And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. **And the child Samuel grew[*great*] [גָּדַל *gadal*] before the LORD.**’

There is no question that a contrast is being painted here between Samuel and Eli's sons. While Eli's sons were growing as sinners, Samuel was growing in grace!<sup>16</sup>

And so behold the “state of affairs” as Samuel served the Lord in Sincerity — he

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<sup>15</sup> גָּדַל *gadal*

<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, Robert Bergen wrote, “Samuel's life certainly contrasted sharply with Eli's sons. While the sins of Hophni and Phinehas were increasing in magnitude (2:17), Samuel's stature and good standing were increasing. As God and society were condemning Hophni and Phinehas, Samuel was being commended” (*1, 2 Samuel*, NAC, page 81)



- Grew in Christ.
- Matured as a man of God.
- His love deepened.
- His devotion widened.
- His Christlikeness became evident to all.

This always is the result of sincerity in the life of the Minister of God!<sup>1</sup>

And thus if you want to be a father/mother in the faith cultivate sincerity such that you are ever mindful that all you do is an offering of worship to the Lord. Serve before the Lord, and not before man. Minister regardless of your age, gender, race, education, or handicap.

And yet as we consider this we need to be careful. Samuel did not grow in Christ as a reward for faithful service. Rather, Samuel grew in the Lord as a result of it. And we must never think otherwise.

See, there is a “Benjamin Franklin Ethic” that accompanies many today as they serve in God's kingdom. Franklin said, “God helps those who help themselves.” Accordingly, it is believed by many that if they deny themselves, serve the Lord, read the Bible, go to church and seek the Lord then God will help them; in fact God will be obligated to reward them with great and numerous blessing.

Yet listen, this ethic comes right from the pit of hell!

Truly the blessings of the Lord are not compensatory; they are organic! Let me explain this.

What is the difference between these two statements? If you eat your vegetables, I'll give you five dollars. Or, if you eat your vegetables, you'll be healthy.

The first is given by way of reward, the second is simply declaring a result or consequence of good eating. The first speaks of a system of merit, the second reflects a cause/effect relationship. Such is the relationship between our service in the kingdom of God and our growth in grace.

We grow in the Lord not as compensation for worshipping Him aright or serving unto His glory alone, or being faithful to the ministry regardless of a perceived inability. Rather, we grow in the Lord as a result of these things. Paul said it when he wrote, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:7-8).

And thus as we consider this text and the circumstances that accompanied Samuel's service, let us be careful. We must NOT think that Samuel's growth was God's reward. Rather, we must understand that such progress accompanies the life of faithfulness.

Let us be clothed in the linen ephod of Christ's Righteousness. Let us live in light of it. Let us ever and always strive to offer the Lord acceptable worship, living for the praise and glory of God alone, and allowing no one or thing to place a limitation on our service. Such are the component parts of a Sincere Minister of Christ!

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## **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on April 17, 2005. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.

## Additional Exhortation

i There is an exhortation that is found in this text that we must not pass over — specifically as it relates to parenting. It is so easy to gaze upon Samuel and think this is the exception, not the rule. I ought not to expect my children to follow his path.

Based on many popular Christian books today on parenting the prevalent attitude is this one: I simply want to get through those turbulent-teenaged years without killing my son or daughter.

.Listen! You are aiming too low in your parenting if this is your attitude. If you look at redemptive and church history you will discover that this passage is not the exception when it comes to the environment which produces spiritual giants, but the rule!

Eli's children, David's children, Hezekiah's children, and the like all had one thing in common: A formalism and an hypocrisy when it came to their parent's walk with Christ. In contrast, consider once again the parenting of Elkanah and Hannah.. While it wasn't perfect — in fact, recall in 1 Samuel 1:6 that Hannah was provoked unto despair in her walk with Christ — nevertheless it was an environment of genuineness and integrity.

- Behold Elkanah's heart to worship the Lord at a time when few cared, v. 3.
- His loving care of Hannah which clearly adorned the gospel of Christ, v. 5.
- Hannah's very public grappling with the Lord, v. 8.
- Hannah's prayer, vv. 10ff.
- Her longing for a man of God who would serve the Lord, v. 11.
- Her open hand when it came to a son whereby she freely gave him to the Lord, v. 24.
- Her sincere gratitude for having been used by the Lord, 2:1-10.

Again while we do not see perfect parents, we do see ones who had a sincere walk before the Lord- such that when they hurt, they cried out to God; when they sinned, they repented; and when they were in want, they took their claim to the court of heaven. Their walk speaks of a genuineness and a depth in their love and relationship with God.

“No one can make a child love anything, from spinach to sparrows to Scripture, but a parents' love for things exerts a powerful thrust in that direction” (*The Shaping of a Christian Family*, page 60).

And so let us take note that raising spiritual giants in the Kingdom of God is not complicated nor is it a course laden with land-mines. Rather it is a household in which the parent's love the Lord; strive to please Him- and often-times fail; openly repent; and are genuine in their walks.

You will find that this always is the soil from which spiritual giants arise!