

THE VALUE OF SERVING

1 Corinthians 12:12-19 and Ephesians 2:10

Pastor Tim Nixon

Turn to 1 Corinthians 12:12

Every Spring, Major League baseball teams from around the country begin their annual Spring Training. Spring Training is a somewhat unique phenomenon. Why? Because during Spring Training the players and coaches don't introduce exciting new plays or ideas, they go back to the basics. During Spring Training, they players:

- play catch
- field fly balls and ground balls
- practice stealing bases and sliding
- play pepper
- and review all sorts of basic skills and drills.

They go back and do the same things they did when they were just learning to play baseball.

Tonight we are going back to a basic, fundamental truth from Scripture. We are going to look at an elementary principle that will help us go deep.

In 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Paul has just finished instructing them regarding spiritual gifts and his illustration begins in verse 12.

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be?

After last Sunday's morning message, I just realized how wonderful it was to focus completely on the cross.

I realized how thankful I was and I started thanking God for:

- My home – think about it – In this area
- Two cars
- No pets
- Two wonderful grown daughters
- I'm married to a super model
- I love this church
- My relationship with Jesus...

And then I realized that I had lumped Jesus in with all the other stuff. My relationship with God, through Jesus Christ is the most important relationship in my life! Nothing compares! What would my life be like without that relationship? I can't imagine.

But let me tell you, it is more than just knowing Jesus. It is knowing that God has called me to a specific purpose in life – and that is incredibly fulfilling. And I am not talking about the call to the Pastorate. I know my purpose here on this earth. I was created to serve God. The Bible makes it clear.

Ephesians 2:10 reads, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Did you catch that – why were we created – for good works. You have a purpose. People go through life asking who am I, why am I here, what is my purpose? Some people head off to the woods and spend years, “trying to find themselves”

We were all designed a certain way to do certain things. There isn't any random chance about it. I believe there are certain things I can do better than anyone else in this room, because that's what God made me to do. Those things we may call talents or abilities. And when God brought me to salvation, the Bible plainly teaches that the Holy Spirit gifted me with certain supernatural, spiritual gifts. Gifts that I am to use for the edification, the building up, of the members of this specific congregation.

And I believe there are things you can do that I or no one else in this room can do as well as you.

What an incredible thought.... To know your purpose!

I saw this illustration once and want to show it to you tonight.

Do you know what this is? It is a cheese grater.

Now do you think the guy that designed the cheese grater just picked up a piece of metal, put some holes in it and thought, “Hmmm, what should I do with this?”

No, he had in his mind ahead of time, “I'm going to make something that will grate cheese.”

And look at how this thing is made. I never had a cheese grater growing up so I thought this was really neat the first time I used one. You just slide the cheese. The truth is, there is nothing else in the house that grates cheese like a cheese grater. You could use a knife, or the potato peeler, or a blender...but nothing works as well as this – because this is what it was designed for.

And you and I are the same way.

In 1 Peter 4:10 it says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace”

Each one has received a special gift if you are a Christian. You **have** to believe that.

So often in the church people say:

- Oh - I could never speak or teach like him
- I could never sing like her

Good! It would be horrible if we all did the same thing.

Do you know what this is? Do you know what it does? It cuts apples.

Now this apple corer can get frustrated and say, "Well I can't grate cheese." Who cares...look what you did with that apple!

OK, have you ever seen one of these? Do you know what this is? It is a cherry pitter. I had never seen one of these until two nights ago when Jayne brought it out to me with a bowl of cherries.

And the point is, is one more important than the other? God has gifted us all. And many still wonder what your spiritual gift is. How do we know? How do you determine it?

I don't think the answer is a Spiritual Gifts Test. And as I say that, I don't mean to offend all of you who have taken one, but they don't measure spiritual gifts. They are aptitude tests. How do I know this? Because you can give one of these tests to an unbeliever and it will tell him what his spiritual gift is.

But go back to 1 Peter 4:10. "As each has received a gift, use it to **serve** one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace"

You start serving one another. And that is how you will find what your gift is. The idea of this passage is serving within the church body.

So what are you doing? How are you serving others at the Chapel?

- Maybe you help a family in need by cooking or cleaning their home
- Maybe you are an encourager
- Maybe you can teach children
- Maybe you can work in a nursery
- Maybe you can join the mowing team
- Maybe you can volunteer to teach an ABE class
- Maybe you can help make coffee each Sunday
- Maybe you can write to our missionaries to encourage them
- Maybe you can write notes of encouragement to our Pastors
- Maybe you can help decorate or setup or work at special events
- Maybe you can wash the windows
- Maybe you can give sacrificially for the youth or to pay down the debt

You will find that gifts play themselves out in unique ways. For example:

- You may not be a spiritually gifted teacher, but your gift of mercy or encouragement allows you to teach our young ones with great compassion and love.
- You may not have the gift of leadership or administration, but your gift of exhortation and wisdom would be a great help to the counseling ministry.

And just because you don't have a spiritual gift for a certain area, doesn't mean you cannot serve in that area. There are many things you can do because of your love for the brethren.

I talk to so many people that say, "I don't need church." Did you ever think that the reason to go to church isn't just to be fed, but to serve? Since God has gifted you and placed you here, when you are missing, someone is getting short-changed. This is what God is talking about 1 Corinthians 12. And he is talking about the church body using the metaphor of the physical body. God wants us to see ourselves as one unit.

Look again at verse 15 and 16

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

The foot says, "I can't do all things the hand can do. I really don't belong here. I can't snap, I can't clap...they never use me to eat." If the foot would stop working because it isn't a hand, is it any less a part of the body? No, it just becomes dead weight. So, if I want to get over there I have to hop on one leg or crawl, and it puts an un-necessary strain on the rest of the body.

I am so pleased to praise you this evening because so many here in the body serve.

Most churches get 10% - we have way more.

Imagine what can be accomplished if we could get 80% serving as we grow. Imagine how amazing it would be if 100% would serve.

Look at verses 17-19

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be?

Imagine for a second how gross it would be if I was one big eye. Imagine that. How useful would that be?

And how annoying would it be if you all thought you could preach and teach...

And how annoying would it be if you all thought you could sing...

I am so grateful for you when I think about all the things I am not good at.

I have taught young children in the past. But Cheryl Watkins team does a much better job than I. I love children, but I have trouble relating. Some of our teachers here, on the other hand are amazing!! But I can still serve our children even when others are better. In fact, it is because others are better that I am confident in serving in those areas. I have an example to watch and I am not on my own.

And we discover these things by doing them and determining where we are gifted.

What are you striving for on this earth?

What are you spending your time and money on?

When you are on your deathbed, do you think you will say, "I wish I had spent more time at work."

I wish I had more things

Did you ever see the movie Castaway with Tom Hanks? It is the story of a FEDEX exec who is stranded on an Island after a FEDEX plane crashes and he uses a lot of the things that were to be delivered to survive.

For some reason he vows to keep one box and deliver it himself if he is ever rescued. Years later he is able to fulfill that mission.

After the movie came out a company did a Commercial spoof of him delivering the box to its final, rightful owner. The owner opened the box and it contained a satellite phone, GPS device, water purifier, seeds, etc. It was full of the things he could have used to get off the island quickly and survive while he waited for rescue.

That's how a lot of us live the Christian life – never opening up and using the treasure and talents God has provided for us.

THERE IS NOTHING MORE FULFILLING IN LIFE THAN TO KNOW YOU ARE DOING EXACTLY WHAT GOD DESIGNED YOU TO DO.

Beliefs lead to Values that lead to Behavior.

For those of us in Christ, we must get beyond belief to service.

I can't explain it to you. You have to experience it yourself. And that's when you will find out what true life is all about.