

One only has to look at the pictures coming out of Japan to know that there are a lot of needs in the world. Locally, the needs are likewise great, although they often go unnoticed. All of these needs, globally and locally, require individuals to step up and give of themselves in more than just financial ways. Sometimes the onslaught of those needs becomes overwhelming; and we are left to think that we can't possibly meet every need; so we don't do anything.

Well when we leave here today I believe that each and every one of us will be challenged to meet at least one need this year that will not only change the life of someone else but also change your life.

Let's first go to the scripture this morning and hear the word of God. Let me just set the scene briefly. Jesus has spent his entire ministry at odds with the Pharisees. They have butted heads continually over what it means to live out God's commands. Now in what may have been his final public address, Jesus shared these comments with the crowd and the Disciples.

Matthew 23:1-12

To Jesus, the Pharisees had gotten it wrong. They knew the commandments which God handed down through Moses; but they failed at living out the commandments. And what caused them to live lives that were not good models for others was a self-righteous, or a self-serving attitude. The Pharisees, as far as Jesus was concerned, had never learned the lesson about humility.

Certainly, the Pharisees knew the truth; Jesus acknowledged that when he said they sit in the seat of Moses. But Jesus also acknowledged that the Pharisees lacked the humility to move beyond a selfish, self-righteous application of the truth.

Sadly, what has driven many away from the church today is the same attitude that was prevalent in the Pharisees. Our attitude is not the same as Jesus; it is more like that of the Pharisees.

That is why need to learn this Bible Memory verse which I introduced last Sunday: "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." 1 John 4:12

Last week we began our series, *In His Steps*, by focusing on Philippians 2:5-12 where Jesus is described as letting go of the top rung of the ladder and humbling himself, literally becoming a servant, to become like us and die on the cross. As a result of Jesus humble action God exalted him; so that every knee would bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Jesus exemplified what a humble spirit was and how important humility is to someone who will follow in Jesus steps.

So what is humility?

First, we need to understand that humility is a virtue not gained by seeking it. Richard Foster explains it this way: "The more we pursue it the more distant it becomes. To think we have it is sure evidence that we don't. Therefore most of us assume there is nothing we can do to gain this prized Christian virtue and so we do nothing." (*Celebration of Discipline*, p. 113) Humility is found in developing a lifestyle that comes by serving. More about that in a moment.

Second, we need to understand that humility is not self-degradation. We can say that because putting yourself down is still all about you and about self.

So what is humility?

Humility is a lifestyle in which we consistently think of others first; considering others more important than yourself and living it out in practical ways. That certainly fits with the lifestyle Jesus lived. And if we seek to be covered in the dust of the rabbi our life will be marked with humility.

[On your sermon outline there is a list of scriptures about humility which you can read this week.]

Here's a story that challenges us to think about what humility is.

Taylor University is a Christian college in Indiana. Years ago, they were pleased to learn that an African student, Sam, was going to be enrolling in their school. This was before it was commonplace for international students to come to the U.S. to study. He was a bright young man with great promise, and the school felt honored to have him.

When he arrived on campus, the President of the University took him on a tour, showing him all the dorms. When the tour was over, the President asked Sam where he would like to live. The young man replied, "If there is a room that no one wants, give that room to me." The President turned away in tears. Over the years he had welcomed thousands of Christian men and women to the campus, and none had ever made such a request.

"If there is a room that no one wants, give that room to me." That's the kind of humility Jesus wants us to emulate.

If there is a job that no one wants to do, I'll do that job.

If there's a kid that no one wants to eat lunch with, I'll eat with that kid.

If there's a piece of toast that's burnt, I'll take that piece.

If there's a parking space that's far away from the church, I'll park in that space.

So how does one become humble or practice humility? Serving others is the most conducive path to the growth of humility.

In his classic book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster makes a comparison of ways in which we serve out of humility (what he calls true service)

and ways we serve out of self-righteousness. [They are all listed in your sermon outline but we're only going to look at a few of them.]

When Jesus spoke about the Pharisees I believe he saw this contrast in them. And if we will be honest there are times that we become Pharisees in our service. So let's examine several of these comparisons that Foster makes.

Self-righteous service comes from human effort. True service comes from a relationship with Jesus.

Self-righteous service is impressed with the 'big deal.' True service is doing the small things.

Self-righteous service requires external rewards. True service is hidden.

This was probably the big issue that Jesus addressed in Matthew 23. The Pharisees operated out of an attitude that said, "Look at me!" They were interested in the applause of man as opposed to the applause of heaven. Humble service, true service, looks to serve in a way that is hidden and doesn't draw attention to itself.

Self-righteous service is concerned about results and waits for reciprocation. True service is free of the need to calculate results.

Self-righteous service picks and chooses whom to serve. True service is indiscriminate.

Humility allows us to serve everyone. I know first hand how easy it is to look at a person in need and say to myself, "You don't really need help. You're just looking for another hand-out." Sometimes we get weary with the incessant needs that come with their hands out. When we pick and choose we fail the humble test.

Self-righteous service is affected by moods and whims. True service ministers simply because there is a need.

Self-righteous service is temporary. True service is a life-style.

I'm excited about our Day of Service on April 17. I'll be even more excited if as a result of your participation you get involved with serving in that organization, or seeking out a regular place of service.

What Jesus demonstrates and what sets apart those who walk in his steps is a lifestyle of service. True service doesn't wait for an opportunity to present itself; it is not an afterthought but a way of looking at life that sees the opportunity and acts.

Self-righteous service fractures community. True service builds community.  
(page 112-113 Celebration of Discipline)

Those eight comparisons would make a good discussion among yourselves after the service today. They would also be a good barometer of your humble service.

Remember how I said at the beginning of my sermon that today 'each and every one of us will be challenged to meet at least one need this year that will not only change the life of someone else but also change your life?' Well here is how I propose we do that.

Andy Stanley (Watch Andy Stanley's sermon <http://www.northpoint.org/messages/one-not-everyone>) has coined a phrase that I want to leave you with this morning.

"Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone."

We can't meet every need out there. We would be overwhelmed with trying to serve everyone and everything that came our way. But we can't ignore the need of one because we can't meet all the needs. So, "Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone."

Andy challenged his church with three steps to make this a reality:

First, go deep rather than wide. The problem with trying to meet every need is that we spread out so vastly that while we look impressively wide we're only ankle deep. Sort of like the Susquehanna River in summer!

So choose one, maybe two people or organizations, and determine that you will go deep. Dive in; immerse yourself in the life of that person or organization.

Second, go long rather than short. Determine that you are in this for the long-term. Remember that we are looking for a lifestyle not just a temporary experience.

Third, go time, not just money. Every need that comes along presents an opportunity to give financially. But what is more valuable than money? That's right, time! Time is the most precious gift that you can give.

"Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone."  
Go Deep. Go Long. Go Time.

So this morning, before you leave here I want you to think about that person, that need with which you can go deep, go long and go time.

Just imagine if all of us 'do for one.' That's 400 touches of God's grace into the lives of individuals. That is impressive! That is life changing!

In His Steps Pastor George S. Reynolds  
March 20, 2011 Linglestown Life

**Matthew 23:1-12**

**Memory Verse**

“No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” 1 John 4:12

**What is Humility?**

Scriptures on Humility:

Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:12-17; Titus 3:1-2; James 3:13-18; 1 Peter 5:5-6

**Self-righteous vs True Service**

*Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster, pg 112-13

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- Self-righteous service is temporary. True service is a life-style.
- Self-righteous service fractures community. True service builds community.

**“Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.”** Andy Stanley

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