

Service With A Smile Genesis 29:20

Dr. Seuss, author of the weird and the wonderful, the fun and fictional in such books as Green Eggs and Ham, and The Cat in the Hat once stated that “You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams.”

Franklin Jones noted that “love doesn't make the world go round. Love is what makes the ride worthwhile.”

Ancient Chinese Philosopher Lao Tzu said that “love is of all passions the strongest, for it attacks simultaneously the head, the heart and the senses.”

Poet and activist Maya Angelou says that “love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.”

Today we to return to **Genesis 29** because that is where we find Jacob as he lingers longingly at the doorstep of love. We read in **verse 14** that Jacob had only been there a month, but he had fallen head over heels madly in love with Rachel. In **verses 14-19** he made a deal Laban so serve him for seven years to obtain Rachel's hand in marriage. Between **verses 19 and 20** seven years have passed with the snap of a finger. “**So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.**”

We aren't told what those years were like for Jacob. We can only speculate that Laban didn't make it easy for him. We'll see in **chapter 31** that Laban was not an easy boss to work for. He cheated Jacob and changed his wages time after time. Yet we read in these first seven years that none of that mattered to Jacob, that's how strong his love was for Rachel.

So here's the question I want to pose at the beginning of the message from the life of Jacob. Is the way in which we serve the Lord done with the same kind of love and devotion as Jacob had for Rachel? In other words, does our love for God make the time fly no matter what the task? Or as our title suggests is our service with a smile?

With your Bibles opened to **Genesis 29**, let's look closer at **verse 20** and the love Jacob had for Rachel and see that we are to have a passion for serving.

I. HAVE A PASSION FOR SERVING – Genesis 29:20

The first thing I would suggest from this verse and is that true service is motivated by genuine love.

A. True Service Is Motivated By Genuine Love

In her famous sonnet 43, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote about the epitome of love in her work titled “How Do I Love Thee?”

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

That was the kind of love Jacob held for Rachel, a love not affected by hard labor, cold nights or the searing heat of day. No task was too mundane. If Laban asked him to count all the curls of wool on a sheep, he would have done it instantly. If Laban asked him to sweep out the stalls twice a day or go pick all the weeds in the pasture by hand, no problem. If he was told to do the laundry or wash dishes, no task was beneath him. He loved Rachel so much no task was too mundane, but then neither did any task seem too difficult. If Laban asked him to move all the bails of hay to another barn. Gladly. And the next day if he was asked to move them all back to their original location, right away without question or hesitation. If he was told to gather all the stones from a field and build fence around an acre of land no problem.

He would have walked to the ends of the earth and back for her, uphill both ways in knee deep snow. No task was too difficult because of his great love for Rachel.

You have heard the saying that time flies when you're having fun, but time also flies when you're in love.

Ephesians 6:7

What a powerfully compelling message. Do everything as if you are doing it for the Lord.

Would that change how you do things?

Would it change how you do tasks around the house?

Would it change how you do tasks at work?

Would it change how you do tasks for school?

Would it change how you do things for the church?

Folks, the kind of motivation we have for doing anything should stem from a genuine love for God. Everyday tasks would take on a whole new meaning and done with an entirely different attitude and the time will just fly by.

True service is motivated by genuine love.

The second thought I have from **Genesis 29:20** is that true service is measured by genuine longing.

B. True Service Is Measured By Genuine Longing

Seven years seems like such a long time. If you're counting, it's 2,535 days, but because of his love for Rachel, they seemed like only a few days.

Are you a clock watcher? Punch in at 8 and punch out at 5? I don't think Jacob was. Sure, he probably checked the calendar each day to count how many days he had left, but I think the only date he was really concerned about was seven years from the day his service for Laban began until he got his bride. He longed for the day he could claim her as his own.

We read in **II Peter 3:8** that a day for the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day referring to His being outside time and His patience toward those who have yet to be saved. The longing of Jacob for the woman he loved made

seven years seem like just a few days. The days for Jacob were never a drag, like it would never get there. He never moaned "will this day never end?"

When we realize that in everything we do we are serving the Lord, time should pass quickly. **Is your service measured by a genuine longing for the reward you will receive at the end of your time here on earth?**

I Corinthians 3:8-15

A day is coming when we will receive rewards for how we worked here on earth. The true motivation of our service will be revealed and we will be rewarded accordingly. True service is measured by genuine longing. **Do we eagerly look forward to serving the Lord each day? Do we eagerly serve looking forward to the end of our service and the reward we will receive?**

I find a third principle from **Genesis 29:20**.

True service is manifested by genuine labor.

C. True Service Is Manifested By Genuine Labor

We talked about it a moment ago that our love for God will transform how we work. When we do everything as if it was being done for the Lord, that will change how we work. We will work hard. Every task for Jacob was a labor of love.

To quote Maya Angelou again "love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope."

Would I work seven years for the love of my life?

Would the time pass by as if they were mere days?

When I read that Jacob served seven years because of his love for Rachel I believe that means there wasn't any task he wouldn't do because of her. Laban may have thought he had a golden egg, that he had Jacob over the proverbial barrel, but it didn't matter to Jacob, he loved Rachel that much. So he worked hard. He didn't do eight and skate, he labored, he went above what was required.

Is that the kind of attitude we have knowing that we serve God?

Do we complain or murmur about the workload?

Do we perform just enough to get by?

**Do we try and pawn off our work on others?
Why should I work hard if others are being lazy?**

If that's our attitude, that's not true service manifested in genuine labor. Scripture tells us that whatever our hands find to do, do it with all our strength.

Genesis 29:20 tells us that we are to have a passion for serving.

When we have a passion for serving the next logical step is to have the pursuit of serving.

II. HAVE THE PURSUIT OF SERVING

Two passages help guide us. The first **Ephesians 2:8-10**. Turn there with me. We are familiar with **verses 8-9 "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."**

We rightly understand that passage to say that grace produces salvation through our faith. But we stop right there. We miss going on to **verse 10** which says that **"we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."**

Noodle this for a moment. Grace not only produces salvation in us, grace also prepares us for service or according to the verse good works. Underline two words in that verse. They are the words **'prepared'** and **'do'**. We have been saved to do good works that God has prepared for us to do. If I could take a phrase out of the Obama era, God has prepared acts of service for us that are shovel ready, they are out there waiting for us to do them. All we need to do is pursue after them.

Let's turn to a second passage.

Galatians 5:13

This verse tells us that our motivation to serve stems from our love for others. This is a command folks, one that is born out of duty and devotion.

Let me give you my four points right away about our pursuit of serving.

A. We Must Have The Want To Serve

B. We Must Have The Will To Serve

C. We Must Have A Way To Serve

D. We Must Have The Wherewithal To Serve

Even though serving one another is a command, we have to want to serve. Want means to feel the need or desire, but desire alone doesn't get the job done.

I can have a want to do a lot of things.

I can want to lose weight.

I can want to clean the house.

I can want to start a project.

I can want to read a book that's on my shelf.

I can want to do something for my neighbor.

That's where my will comes in. Will is the power to do something. Will gives the want a boost to get going. Will carries with it an expectation or the determination to act.

So now that I have the resolve. Now what? That's where we find a way to serve. When we begin to look around with an eye to serve others, there is no lack of opportunity. **Hebrews 10:24-25** gives us two compelling reasons we are to regularly assemble as a body of believers. As we gather we spur each other to love and good works. We are energized when we work with others on a task.

Galatians 6:9-10 tell us that we are to do good to all men especially to those who are of the household of faith. That's another way of saying we are to serve. There are many opportunities to serve if we only look and listen. That's when we must consider the wherewithal to serve. **Do we have the means, the skills, the time, the money or other resources or even the health to do some of those things?**

There isn't any greater example in Scripture of a servant than Jesus. In **Philippians 2:7** Paul sums up nicely the reason Jesus came to earth. He came to be a servant. In **Mark 10:45** we read that His purpose in coming was to serve rather than to be served and become our ransom. He had the desire and the determination. He took the time and found ways to serve and had the ability to serve.

An example is found in **John 13:1-5**. Jesus and His disciples are gathered on the eve of what is the

darkest but greatest day of all history. He is about 12 hours from shouldering the burden of all sin on the cross. The weight was enormous. Later that night as He is engaged in fervent prayer, the strain was so great He sweat blood. While all that was on His mind, they prepared to eat. He got up from the table before the first dish was passed and went over to a stand by the door. He threw a towel over His shoulder and took a pitcher of water and poured it into a bowl. He then proceeded to wash the feet of each disciple as they looked on.

I'm sure some were surprised even stunned that He, of all people, would do such a menial task.

Others may have been reluctant like Peter, who was unwilling for Christ to wash his feet.

None of them had thought to do it and apparently none of them had not paid much attention in the 3 ½ years they traveled with Jesus to notice that Jesus was always serving others. That should have been evident to them, the example He gave them.

Jesus gives the reason in **John 13:12-17**. Listen in on His conversation with them. **“When he had finished washing their feet, he put on His clothes and returned to His place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” He asked them. “You call Me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”**

He wasn't telling them to go out and just wash feet, although that might be one of their acts of service. He was telling them to go out and serve others. He was telling them that they should be willing to serve and that no act of service was beneath them, that no one was beneath them. Washing feet was considered the most menial job, the lowest job a servant could do and Jesus did it to show them that they should serve others. He even washed the feet of the one who would betray Him. Jesus spent His

ministry years serving others.

The sad truth is that just before He washed their feet they had been arguing about who the greatest of them was. It wasn't the first time.

Matthew 20:20-26

Last week I had a gentleman's discussion with someone who found me cleaning the church. It was after men's study and I had to go over to the church to drop something off for Sunday. I noticed the church hadn't been cleaned so I started to empty waste baskets and clean toilets. I was kindly but firmly rebuked that I shouldn't have to clean because I have other more important things to do. I'm going to tell you that if I'm unwilling to put my hand to the plow, I'm unfit to lead.

Jesus had every right to demand one of His disciples wash His feet. He wasn't just their teacher and master, He was God the Creator. From a human perspective He had the right to expect to be served. If you notice the account, you notice that we aren't told whether anyone got up and washed His feet. Maybe they were too ashamed. But that doesn't matter. The point is, we don't serve others with the expectation that they in return serve us. According to **Galatians 5:13**, we serve out of love and that kind of love has no expectations, no quid pro quo. So let me say this: *If we aren't serving in love, we aren't serving.*

Genuine love will pursue serving others and Paul in **I Corinthians 4:2** writes that it is required of stewards or servants to be found faithful.

If you have been following me to this point, the degree of love we have for God will determine the degree of our motivation to serve others with the same love.

How do we do that?

Thinking again about **Ephesians 2:10** and **Galatians 6:9-10** God has created good works or acts of service for us to do both is serving both Christians and non-Christians. **So what does that look like for us as individuals and as a church?** This is where we become the hands and feet of

Jesus to those around us.

Changing up Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem a bit let me put it this way: How do I serve thee? Let me count the ways. In short, there are many.

According to **I Corinthians 12** each believer has been given a spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit. Each believer is then empowered by the Holy Spirit to use that gift for the benefit of other believers. In a word that is serving the body of Christ.

The gift of serving is a specific spiritual gift. That does not mean that if you do not have that gift you are off the hook and serving others doesn't apply to you. **Galatians 5:13** is a command for all believers to serve one another. Each person's spiritual gift is given as a way of serving the rest of the body.

The person with the gift of teaching serves by opening Scripture to others through diligent study. The person with the gift of giving serves by meeting needs in a tangible way.

The person with the gift of administration serves by helping someone else become organized.

Using your spiritual gift is an act of serving the body of Christ.

Besides using your spiritual gift, what are some other tangible ways that we can serve each other?

I think that if our desire is to serve out of love we will both see and hear of needs where we can help.

A couple in my Dad's church serves his church by offering rides to folks who need to go to a doctor's appointment, or even to the hospital. The pastor will mention someone who needs prayer for an upcoming surgery. They call up and offer a ride. They listen to see who needs a ride to see the doctor. That's their act of service.

Meals or cleaning house are acts of service after someone has been in the hospital or who has had an extended illness. The great thing is it can be just one person or the whole church who gets involved.

Too often we tend to be reactionary in our serving. Sometimes reacting after the need can't be helped. We can't anticipate someone having a house fire or emergency surgery, so it's good to step in and serve

in some way.

Where possible, I'd like to suggest that instead of being reactionary we become proactive. If you hear about someone having surgery, instead of waiting until after the surgery, maybe drop off some meals before the day that they can put in the freezer. They may not be up to a visitor afterward. Offer to clean the house or mow the lawn or shovel the driveway.

Now sometimes we can offer to serve in some way and we might get a no, that's not necessary, we'll be okay, or you don't need to do that. Let me say this. **When my folks were serving at Barakel, they were visiting their home church in Pontiac. After the service an elderly gentleman, who didn't have a lot of money gave a monetary gift to my dad. Knowing his financial situation, my Dad didn't want to take it, but the gentleman said to him, "Don't rob me of a blessing."**

So folks if you find yourself in a position where someone wants to serve you in some way, receive the blessing of their service and be a blessing to the person who desires out of love to serve you.

We could spend a lot of time talking about ways to serve the body of Christ because the list is endless. We only need to look around and listen. You will be amazed what you can pick up in casual conversation with someone about ways to serve.

Not only are we called to serve the church, we are also called to serve the community.

Over the past several weeks the Strategic Planning Committee has been reviewing all the surveys that were turned in. Thank you for your input. It is helping to shape the direction of our church. A number of comments had to do with how we as a church can serve our community.

At our last meeting we began to discuss some ways. Again, this can be reactionary or proactive.

Several weeks ago I mentioned in Prayer meeting that one of Robyn's co-workers, a single mother, lost everything in a fire around Christmas. Several of you have already gathered things to give to her.

You hear a neighbor has cancer so you take over a meal or offer to drive them to appointments because their family lives out of town.

Collecting diapers for the local Right to Life.
Working at a soup kitchen to feed the homeless.
Sponsoring a school so CEF can have GNC.
Mowing the lawn of an elderly neighbor.

Serving others demonstrates the love of Christ as we become His hands and feet. In the weeks ahead you will be hearing more as we complete a strategy to serve our community, but we don't have to wait until the survey comes out to begin. What can we do right now, with what we have?

There is no end to a pursuit of serving others both in the church and in the community. This became evident in the early church as we read in **Acts 2:42-47** that this newly formed body of believers met the needs of each other resulting in more people coming to Christ. I believe it's because they served the community as well.

We need to have a passion for serving like Jacob. He shows us how to have true service motivated by genuine love, measured by genuine longing, and manifested by genuine labor.

We need to have a pursuit of serving.
We must have the want to serve, the will to serve, a way to serve, and the wherewithal to serve.
Finally, have a purpose for serving.

III. HAVE A PURPOSE FOR SERVING

There are two primary reasons we serve.

A. We Point Others To God In Serving –
Matthew 5:16

B. We Praise Our God Through Serving –
I Corinthians 10:31
Psalm 100:2
Matthew 4:10

When we serve others we point them to the God we love and the reason for serving them the way we do. People will see God at work through you. The Pharisees weren't interested in pointing to God,

they were in it for their own notoriety. Jesus says when you serve do it in secret. In other words, don't tell others about it, just humbly do it.

Matthew 5:16 says that when our good works point to Him, He is praised, He receives the glory.

I Corinthians 10:31 says that everything we do should be done for the glory of God.

We find something very important in **Psalm 100:2** and **Matthew 4:10**.

The KJV says “**serve the Lord with gladness**” while the NIV says “**worship the Lord with gladness.**” They sound like two entirely different things. Jesus sheds some light for us when in the final temptation Satan says that if Jesus would bow down and worship him, He would receive all the kingdoms. Jesus responded by saying that God alone is to worshipped and served. He was saying that the one you worship is the one you serve. To put it another way, the one you serve is the one you worship. To serve is to worship and to worship is to serve. To worship the devil was to serve the devil and Jesus said that is reserved for God alone. Worship and service go together, our service is worship and our worship is service. God is glorified through our service.

Our purpose in serving is to point others to God through which He receives the glory. Let's take a clue from Jacob. If we love God as we should our service will be done with joy and make time pass by quickly. What remains to be seen is how our church and each of us will serve God by serving each other in our church and in our community. **There's a lot we can do, what are we willing to do?**