

Series: *Growing in Christ*
Message Title: *Serving Grace*
Date: Sunday, February 19, 2017
Scripture: Romans 12:3-8, 2 Corinthians 9:8
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

At the risk of creating a craving you can't satisfy today, I want to take a few minutes to talk about Chick-fil-A. Anybody else ever get this craving on a Sunday? One of their best and most distinctive practices is the fact that they are closed on Sundays! This is something I have respected and admired for many years.

There have been many articles written on the Chick-fil-A business plan and training model. Over a decade, they have seen a 13% growth per year! What is their secret? It's not in the sauce; it's in the service.

"The first mile is the foundation—good customer service, hot food is hot, cold food is cold. The second mile is what we do that's remarkable, like carrying people's trays to their tables." —Kristen Hunter, Marketing Consultant with Chick-fil-A

"My pleasure" is the common response to the customer instead of "You're welcome."

But it all begins at the counter or drive through window with the greeting: "Welcome to Chick-fil-A. How may I serve you?"

Serving is what Chick-fil-A does best and they service many people every day!

I say this because service is an act of grace based upon an attitude of humility.

We are talking about, learning about and expanding our understanding of grace in these days.

An understanding of the biblical concept of grace is the cornerstone of discipleship.

Over the past few weeks, we have observed:

Saving Grace	Ephesians 2:8-10
Sustaining Grace	2 Corinthians 12:9-10
Serving Grace	2 Corinthians 9:8

"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8 ESV).

“Everything God directs us and expects us to do, He enables us to do by His grace and for His glory.”

The same grace that saves us and sustains us, enables us to serve the Lord Jesus Christ as we grow in grace

Notice the comprehensive nature of the passage we just read: all grace, all sufficiency, all things, all times, that you may abound!

I love this. God doesn't want us to serve Him in our “own little way,” but in His great grace, power and love.

There is an old adage, “Saved to Serve.” While God doesn't need you or need me, God chooses to use us by His grace. This grace is the grace that allows us guidance and growth as we seek to live to serve Him.

“Saved by grace, saved for His glory; gifted to serve, graced with His power.”

This is the heart and truth in which I want us to focus today.

God wants us to so encounter the magnitude of His grace in us that the only normal and natural expression of our hearts toward God and others is this: "How may I serve you?" Sadly, my own experience has too often been, "How will you serve me?"

In order to help us grasp this, we need to go back a few pages to Romans 12—moving us from the doctrinal discussion of what God has done for us in Christ to what God wants to do through us because of Christ.

Read Romans 12:1-8.

Notice the reference and connection of this call to service with the gracious work of God on our behalf—Romans 12:3, 6.

All of God's gifts are works of grace in our lives.

To this end, the work of God's kingdom depends on our usefulness, faithfulness and commitment to the grace-gifts God has bestowed upon us.

As we consider the matter of serving grace and how it relates and applies to each of our lives, I want us to trace this unfolding grace in Romans 12.



1. Our Call to Serve is Rooted in Gratitude, not Guilt

See Romans 12:1-2.

This is one requirement for every believer. You don't have to be a pastor, minister or missionary to read and respond to this. Because of God's great mercies, we are called to surrender and sacrifice our lives to prove His good, acceptable and perfect will and work in our lives.

Thus, the attitude and motivation for Christian service is the opposite of guilt; it is gratitude. Guilt is negative. Guilt can be resentful, and always burdensome.

To the contrary, we are moved by grace to the total release of our lives for God's

purposes. This is where it all begins. I am available to God to be used by God.

What about you? Take my life? Make me a living sacrifice? The thing about living sacrifices is that they can crawl off the altar.

Yet, here we find the common ground for every Christian. Each of us is to give ourselves to God in spiritual worship.

On our website we have three words: Worship. Connect. Serve.

We live to make much of God and His mercy, and as we reflect this attitude and action of worship, we willingly surrender. There is to be unity at the altar with God for us all.

2. Our Call to Serve Involves a Diversity of Gifts For the Common Good

See Romans 12:3-5.

12:1-2 teaches us that the will of God is identical for all of us in respect to holiness and total dedication, but diverse in its application and need for the well-being of the body.

By God's grace, we are given gifts with different functions within one body to be used for the common good! Our goal is not conformity or uniformity, but unity through diversity. The most vital part of membership in the body is dependency and loyalty.

God's plan and design for His redeemed family are that we would see ourselves as belonging to one another and living our dependency and loyalty. It is just like the body—connected and committed to the common good.

"Something for everyone of you"(Romans 12:3).

But your gift does not make you more valuable than others. There is a call from pride to humility; from individuality to community; from "me-ness" to a "we-ness."

I am not the star—the MVP. But I am part of an amazing team—a member of an incredible body. We love MVP status, but God has called us to MHP (Most Humble Player).

No member of your body is in competition with the other members, but each is

dependent and loyal. Our common ground in the world outside of the church is often competition, not dedication.

“Competition is really warfare, and the only competitor I have is myself. Competition is a Pandora’s box that releases a number of negative feelings toward others. This must be discouraged. But I must encourage negative feelings toward my own pride, laziness, self-will, love of praise, and unwillingness to put myself out for others. I must avoid the religion of comparison, for God’s plan for me is as individual and distinctive as the formation of a snowflake. A true disciple compares himself with himself and he is able to say, ‘The Lord has enabled me to grow in a particular discipline.’” —Glyn Evans

This text challenges the idea that we can patronize ourselves—thinking we are totally committed to God while there is no meaningful service going on in our lives.

Listen to this testimony of one of our faithful Warren members (Chris Wilkins video). Chris and Rebecca became more active in their service when they began attending at the

new Grovetown campus. Now they have relocated to Knysna, South Africa, and have begun a life of ministry among the people there.

Chris and Rebecca discovered the secret to success in life—service!

You can't do what I can do and I can't do what you can do and we can't do what they can do, but we can do what God has uniquely, distinctly and sovereignly given us to do.

3. Our Call to Serve is Practical, Not Theoretical

Romans 12:6-8: "let us use them"

The goal of these gifts is not possession, but activation.

Let's look at these gifts. There are seven general areas of giftedness: prophesy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and mercy.

All of this is spoken in the active voice: if service—serving; teaches—teaching, etc.

The church is not to be a curator or collector of these gifts, but a gym where the active exercise of gifts is underway.

I recently saw a You Tube clip about a visit comedian Billy Connolly made to a guitar collector in Springfield, MO, on his Route 66 travels. When he arrived, he met a man named Rob Lurvey—fascinating walk through an “undisclosed location” where 3,000 specialty guitars are gathered and stored. The walls were lined with amazing instruments, but the sad reality is that most of them are never played. They just hang there!

Some believers are like that. They are part of a collection, but they are not engaged in a mission.

“Life is a mission. Every other definition of life is false, and leads all who accept it astray.”
—Giuseppe Mazzini

What about you? Are you useful for His service?

So many of us are so absorbed in our lives, we simply have not made ourselves available to God.

A number of years ago, William Kirk Kilpatrick, Harvard Graduate and Professor of Educational Psychology at Boston College, wrote a provocative and prophetic book, *Psychological Seduction*, in which he addressed *The Failure of Modern Psychology*:

“Extreme forms of mental illness are always extreme cases of self-absorption. The distinctive quality, that literally sets paranoid people apart, is hyper-self-consciousness.”

—William Kirk Kilpatrick

We live in a world that glamorizes individuality and promotes narcissistic attitudes (Greek Mythology—Narcissus—handsome young man who fell in love with his own image in a pool of water). Christians struggle to break free from the restraints of self-absorption and to engage in selfless service.

The greatest joys of life are not found in personal pampering, but in sacrificial service for others. Do you agree? Where, how, when are you serving?

4. Our Call to Serve is Powerful, Not Anemic

In Romans 12, Paul moves on to other instructions regarding the faith.

Yet Peter, another of the Apostles, picks up this idea of grace-gifts and service, and says:

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10-11 ESV).

“Everything God directs us and expects us to do, He enables us to do by His grace and for His glory.”

Discipleship is a stewardship of God’s grace-gifts to you and through you to strengthen and support His body, the Church.