

*Nazarene Essentials* Sermon #7

Wrap Up Message

 **To Serve or Not To Serve**

**Introduction**
William Shakespeare’s Hamlet gives us this contemplative question… “To be or not to be, that is the question.” For Hamlet, this came at the pinnacle of his struggle as he bemoans the difficulties and unfairness of life. “To be or not to be” was a deep question of his own existence.

We have a deep question as well that needs to be asked individually. It is a question that effects our existence in the body of Christ and affects others around us. Our question comes not at the pinnacle of struggle but rather at the beginning of our new life in Christ. When Christ redeems us, He changes us and makes us new. That “newness” is the forgiveness of sins, and the realization that life is to be lived differently. Instead of living to please our own nature and desires, we are now striving to live and please God the Father through Jesus Christ. There is a question that surfaces, that most new believers ask themselves. That question is, “To serve or not to serve.”

* There are a myriad of reasons not to serve.
* I am not worthy.
* I am not talented enough.
* I am too new in my faith.
* I don’t have it all together yet.

The list could continue endlessly. To focus on the reasons not to serve would miss the important work that God wants to do in our lives. In truth there is only one reason to serve: the power of Jesus Christ in your life.

*Scripture:
Ephesians 3:7 (NIV)
I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.*

Notice the words here, I became a servant of this gospel, not the gospel serves me. It should be understood that to be a part of the body of Christ, to be the church that God intends us to be, we need everyone participating in the mission to tell others of the love and grace of Jesus Christ. That telling of the message is the power of Christ in our lives. The mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to make Christlike disciples in the nations. To accomplish that mission each of us must focus our lives on serving the Lord Jesus out of our love and appreciation for His saving work in us. Serving others, loving on our community, and meeting needs have laid the foundation for our identity as a global church. So for just a moment, let’s look at each spectrum of this question, “To Serve or Not to Serve.”

**I. Be Served**Sadly, many people, many Christians, come to church simply to be served. Sunday after Sunday, theirs is a gospel of consumption. They might say something like:

*(Have fun with these as they are presented to your congregation)*

1. I didn’t get anything out of that service.
2. I am not going to greet someone because I don’t like to talk to people.
3. No one ever shakes my hand.
4. I always hear about the church needing help in various areas, but I just don’t have the time. After all, the game starts at 12:30.
5. I know they need help in the nursery, but my kids are grown, I have already done that.
6. It’s someone else’s responsibility to watch my kid on Sunday morning, so that I can get a break.
7. Why should I call sick people? They never called me when I was sick.
8. Who does that new person think they are sitting in my seat? I have sat in that location for 10 years.
9. I paid for that chair and now look at it. Someone has stained it.
10. That person shows up here every week, and never speaks to me.
11. All they did was say hello to me; they never even asked me how my week went. Can you believe that?
12. Let’s get out of here after service before someone asks us to move chairs.
13. Why should I keep coming here? The coffee is not good; the chairs are uncomfortable; the sanctuary is too hot and dark, and the pastor’s messages aren’t that good.

Someone who likes being served decides it is someone else’s responsibility to contribute to the church’s mission and finances. A “being-served” person likes to complain about all that is not right instead of asking how their resources, talents and treasures could help the church achieve its mission. That is the contrast that exists in the book of Titus chapter 3, the contrast of living for self and living for others. In fact, if you look in your Bibles at the caption to these verses you will see the title, “Saved in Order To Do Good.”

*Scripture:
Titus 3:3-8 (NIV)
3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*

*4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,
5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,
6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,
7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.*

These verses answer the question for us…. “To serve or not to serve?”

Let’s consider how we are to be eager to do what is good, by looking at what it means to serve.

**II. To Serve**

Those who are eager to serve say things such as:

1. I want to ensure I am ready to worship today. There might be someone at church who needs to be encouraged to follow Christ.
2. I don’t love putting myself out there greeting others, because I am an introvert, but I sure do like seeing others smile when I say it is good to see them.
3. I can’t wait to see that new family the “Grays,” who were here last week; I hope they are there today.
4. I know I have served in this ministry for years; but if she wants to join in, it will be great to have her. I can’t wait for her to experience the joy when someone makes a decision to follow Christ.
5. The church needs help in this area. I better find the time, because there are people who need to know Christ.
6. I know my kids are grown. However, we have younger parents who need to be able to hear what Christ can do in their lives, so I will be happy to serve in the nursery.
7. The Jones are sick; I better call them this week. I want them to know God cares about them.
8. I love it that we try new ways to reach people for Jesus.
9. Can you believe a new family was where I usually sit? It was great; they have just moved to town.
10. See that chair? It’s not as clean as it was when we first bought it. Isn’t it great that the chairs have been used for ministry?
11. That person shows up here every week and never seems to speak. I am going to talk to them today and invite them to dinner.
12. I love it when we get stretched to new areas because God loves it when we live in faith.
13. I know they need to move chairs after service for our kids program through the week, so we better stay just a little longer to help out.
14. I really want people to see Jesus in me.
15. I better give to this ministry so that we can ensure that family has their needs met.
16. I am sure trying to win my neighbor to Jesus Christ. I need the church to help me pray that they will find Jesus in me.
17. I see this need in our community that I think as a church we should meet. I want to see people know the same love of Christ that I know.

A “serving” person says, whatever, whenever, however, Lord, you want use me. I will live and move and work in faith because I trust who you are. I am trusting in You so that my “eagerness to do good” is profitable for others to know You.

Paul said again…
*Scripture:
Ephesians 3:7
I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.*

The concept of being a servant of the gospel doesn’t mean we are a servant of a program or simply obedient to church leadership. Our New Testament heritage is that we are to be servants of the gospel. We are to be obedient to Christ, and His leading in our lives.

Servant means: a person under obligation to serve a master. Some servants were slaves under legal bondage; others were servants voluntarily.

The servant of the gospel is both a legal servant and one who also serves voluntarily. In fact, voluntary obedience to Him is the mark of our love for Him according to 1 John 5:3.

*Scripture:
1 John 5:3 (NIV)
In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.*

Grace is free. It is a gift.

But once I accept, it costs me everything. In fact, I voluntarily give Him everything.

**Conclusion**
It is only possible to truly serve by the power of Christ living in us. And as we serve in that power, we will experience transformation and renewal as a congregation.

We have discovered over these last 7 weeks what is Essential to be a Nazarene. As we complete this series, as we take the steps in faith as a local church to join with our Nazarene brothers and sisters around the world, we proclaim that we will serve the gospel of Jesus Christ. We trust His power to do anything through us, and we believe that God can supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory.

As we complete this series, we embrace our heritage and trust the Word of God to guide and direct our steps. We are here to serve and not to be served. We are here to let God lead and shape and guide us in the days ahead.

Today we are going to end this series with prayer as a church. Let’s gather together and pray that God will give us what we need to reach our community and world. Let’s ask God to birth in us dreams that can only be realized through His power, and let’s be obedient both individually and collectively to follow wherever He leads.

After Prayer: We just asked God to guide and direct our steps. In our small groups today as we complete Nazarene Essentials, we will be vision casting what God would have us do to reach people for Jesus Christ. May God richly bless us as we strive to please Him in all that we do.