

Known for Serving

“If you have ever had the pleasure of staying at a Ritz-Carlton hotel, you know it is one amazing experience. From the moment one arrives, each staff member is mindful of one thing: serving guests. The hotel chain’s corporate motto is ‘We are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.’ Serving doesn’t happen by chance. Employees are genuinely empowered to correct a problem or handle a complaint. Stories describing the lengths to which staff members have gone to serve customers are legendary. When a guest thanks a wait person, chambermaid or concierge, rather than responding, ‘Hey, it’s OK’ or ‘No problem,’ the employee looks the guest in the eye and with a smile responds, ‘It’s a pleasure to serve you.’ Service like that is winsome. ... The company understands the power of service.”

Rick Rusaw & Eric Swanson, The Externally Focused Church

Monday – Unexpected Help

“Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitiful wail for help.”

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army

He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 22:16

1. Please read Luke 10:25-37. What changed in the religious expert’s attitude between v. 25 and v. 37?
2. In Jesus’ story, the way the story is supposed to go is not the way it does go. What should have happened (i.e. what would you have expected the Priest and Levite to have done)? What would you have done?

Text Insights: 1) Levites worked in the temple carrying out various religious duties. 2) Samaritans were foreigners considered by the Israelites to be unworthy of worshipping God. 3) The two silver coins were enough money to provide food and lodging for two full months.

3. Which person in the story fulfilled Jeremiah 22:16? The Priest, Levite or Samaritan? How?

Making it Personal: Our relationship with God is one of faith. But the fruit that we know him is seen in our actions. We may not be given the dramatic opportunity that the Samaritan received but everyday in little ways and big, God brings people across our path whom we can serve. In what practical ways can you show others that you know God, as in Jeremiah 22:16? Ask God to open up opportunities and strengthen you to act on them.

Tuesday – Foreign Service

“I have but one passion ... and henceforth that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ.” Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, 18th c. German pastor and social reformer

1. Please read Jeremiah 1:4-9 and 29:1-10. Jeremiah was a prophet to the exiled Israelites (approximately 600 B.C.). Why should the exiles listen to Jeremiah? What instructions did he give? How do you think it made the exiles feel to be told to make the best of a bad situation?
2. How do the insights and commands in Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-4, 1 Peter 2:13-17 relate to the passage we read in Jeremiah 29? What guidance do they offer you as you settle down and make your home in this culture in which we live?

Prayer Focus: Pray for those in authority over you, whether in government, at work, in school or at church.

Wednesday – Homecoming

“His native home deep imag’d in his soul.” Homer, The Odyssey

1. Please read Jeremiah 33:6-9. What promise did God make to those in exile? How might this sustain them in their years away from home?
2. Another man who had to learn to make his home in a strange land was Abraham (please read Hebrews 11: 8-16). What was it about Abraham’s future that gave him confidence to live in the present? How does this apply to you today?

Making it Personal: Look at the society in which you live and call home. Consider how God wants you to live in the present by serving it.

Thursday – Loving the Unlovable, the Unlovely, the Unloved

“A new power ... was let loose upon our suffering world, the power to love those who have not deserved love, the unworthy, the unlovely and unlovable, a man’s enemies, and even his torturers. Christians, in imitation of the Savior, became, as it were, Christs ... to the world.” Theodore O. Wedel, 20th c. American pastor

1. Please read Luke 6:27-36. List the ways Jesus said you can love those who are hard to love. What insights do verses 33-35 give you in your own attitude toward helping others?

Text Insight: A tunic is a type of shirt. A cloak is a heavy outer garment which, for poor people, doubled as their bedding to keep them warm at night. To give them both away could be life threatening.

2. Now look at 1 John 4:19 and James 1:17. What enables us to love others?

Making it Personal: Think of someone you find very hard to love. Ask God to give you an opportunity to serve that person, and for the strength to follow through even if the person never appreciates it.

Friday – What’s on God’s Heart

“Man may dismiss compassion from his heart, but God never will.” William Cowper, 18th c. English poet

1. Please read Psalm 68:5, 146:5-9, and James 1:27. What do these passages tell us about God’s heart?
2. How does Romans 12:1-2 help you understand the warning in James 1:27?
3. Take a look at Deuteronomy 10:17-20, 14:28-29 and Isaiah 1:17. How does God want his people to share in the concerns he has for those in need? Who are the people today who fit into the categories listed in these passages?

Making it Personal: Is there somebody whom God has put in your life that you can care for and serve? Write his/her name here.

For the Weekend: Read Matthew 25:31-46. How can you serve Christ by serving the world around you?