

Christian Service

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon calls Christians to recognize their unique roles in service, prioritize Jesus above all, and commit to sacrificial giving for missions.

Duration: 38:13

Scripture: Exodus 4:2, Matthew 28:19, Acts 11:26

Topics: "Service"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of each individual finding their niche in serving God. They encourage listeners to not only support those who are actively serving in missions but also to actively participate themselves. The speaker highlights the disparity in Christian work and giving, with a small percentage of the population carrying the majority of the burden. They urge listeners to consider their skills and abilities and how they can be used in missions, giving examples of nurses and doctors who are desperately needed in remote areas. The sermon concludes with a call to prayer for more workers to join in the mission field.

Transcript

Well, let's go through some of the stratas of learning and ability that we might have. Now, there may be nurses here, and I could take you up to a place tonight in an area where there are several thousand people who for years and years and years, since the colonial government went out of the country 11 years ago, have never known what it is to have a doctor. And in that area, there has been a nurse working, a nurse and a midwife.

And just recently, a doctor has joined for the very first time in that mission. And this doctor and this nurse are working a little hospital, a daily clinic, and a maternity work. And this nurse is also a wife and a mother.

And writing to me, she said that she is so snowed under with medical work that sometimes she only sees her family at meals, and she's wondering if this is right. And she says, pray with me that another nurse, maybe a single girl, will come out and help us. And this situation can be multiplied more times than you could possibly think of.

The urgent need for trained nurses in all parts of the world. Now, you may be a fellow who likes tinkering with things. You may be a mechanic and a technician.

Last year, we were in South America, and we were with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and part of their work is aviation and radio. And the need in these places for skilled technicians who can work miracles with very little equipment sometimes, well, that need is absolutely boundless. And some people think that, oh, well, because I'm not a doctor or I'm not a nurse or I'm not a teacher or I'm not a pastor, there's no place for me on the mission field.

But there's a tremendous need for technicians like that to go out, because more and more complicated pieces of machinery are now being used, even on the mission field. And then maybe there are teachers here. And not only is there teaching needs in schools for nationals, but also in schools for missionaries' children.

And very often, a short term in this capacity is an absolute lifesaver out in these countries. And I could speak of the doctors who are always in very, very great demand because there are so few of them. So many get the idea that they'll stay in the homeland and earn the money and support somebody on the field.

Maybe the Lord is calling them to be the ones to go out. And then there are also people like accountants and secretaries, and how they are needed. All these practical skills, even housekeepers and hostesses, are needed.

In one place where we were, out in South America, there were retired people going out. Men who, during their busy working life, had been plumbers or builders or in some kind of a trade. And they've gone out to these remote places where these skills have been desperately needed and very, very much appreciated.

And it's amazing how a man in his 60s can give five or six years of active service in this way, right on the front line of the mission field, and so relieving younger missionaries for doing all the other things. And you could go on endlessly with the multitudinous things that are needed. And there's not one single person, even if you had no training at all, can say, well that's not for me, because there's always a niche somewhere.

And you know, for those of us who can't go, and who feel that this is our right place, I'm sure we can't be absolved either, because we need to stand behind those who are out in these circumstances. And we need to know about them and to be able to pray for them. So I hope that we'll each feel that there is something that we can do, apart from just feeling that we've got to sit here and stay here.

Because while the Lord doesn't conscript us, he wants the willingness of our hearts to give that which is ours for his use. Remember what he said to Moses once, what is that in your hand? It was a piece of wood, and God used it in miraculous ways. And he often says to us, what have you got? Well, I can bang a typewriter, I can fiddle with motor car engines.

All right, these things too, in these days, God can use. And do you know that 90% of the Christian work is done among 10% of the world's population? 90% of Christian work, and 91% of Christian giving is among 9% of the population. The giving of Christian people to mission is absolutely unforgivable.

We tip the Lord with less than we would give a waitress after a meal at a restaurant, and we think that is giving to mission. And missions are almost down the drain for lack of money, and missionaries are absolutely faced with sometimes inability to have enough even to feed themselves. Our giving to missions is absolutely tragic.

But the giving of ourselves to missions is the thing that matters to me tonight most. And just look with me at this thing. What does the Lord Jesus say? If any man multitudes, but if any man, he holds them back.

If any man, and these are the terms, he's speaking of discipleship. Discipleship is the same as being a Christian. Being a disciple and being a Christian is the same thing.

The Christians were first, the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch, Acts 11, 26. It's the same word. It isn't Christianity on a higher level.

It's Jesus spelling out the terms of the kind of Christians that will survive in a world like this. Everything else and everyone else will be flung overboard, won't be able to stand the challenge to Christian living and the Christian faith. If any man would come after me.

So these are not my terms, they're his. He's the first of them. And hate not father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea, and his own life also.

He cannot be my disciple. Tough. My, it's tough.

Does that mean to say that if I'm to follow Christ, there's to be animosity in my heart to my parents? Of course it doesn't. Let me put it this way, as it's translated in another gospel. If any man loves father or mother, husband or wife, more than me, he is not worthy of me.

In other words, the Lord Jesus is saying to us, I'm the only one who can make a home. And I'm the only one who has the right to break a home. Oh yes, Jesus makes a home.

I hope that many of you know that. Flashes to my mind an occasion just a little while ago when I was visiting in the southwest of England. It was the home of a doctor, medical practitioner.

And I went to the home. I'd never been before. I arrived in time for a meeting and then came back later.

And during the evening, I noticed masses of children running around. I didn't know how many there were. I never got time to count them.

But there seemed to be scads of them. I went to bed after the meeting. And the next morning at seven, I heard a bell ring.

And I heard lots of feet running down the stairs. So I thought I'd better join in. So I joined in.

It was seven o'clock and I rushed downstairs too. I wondered what was happening. And there, would you believe it? There was the whole family.

I just got up to ten. There were still some more I hadn't counted. Ten kids, mother and father.

And they were all sitting around the table, tennis table. The only table that was big enough to accommodate the whole family. There they all were.

So I thought I'd better get in quickly and sat among them. So I sat down among, I think it was number nine was next to me, in age I mean. And number ten was on my right.

And I noticed they're all in different stages of dress. Those who needed to shave, obviously not shaved. And those who had to tidy their hair, you know, it hadn't been done.

But they'd all responded to the bell. And then, then, that doctor read a chapter from the Bible, a psalm actually. And then he passed to every one of his family, whom he told me later, varied in age from 23 to 4. Now that keeps your income tax down.

From 23 to 4. And he passed to each of them a prayer request for a missionary. And when he read that chapter, he said, let's all pray. And we all knelt down beside our chairs.

And everybody prayed, one after the other. Frankly, I found it very difficult to pray. I became so emotionally involved.

I was absolutely amazed that every one of those kids, even to the little one aged four, knew that missionary. Knew who he was, or who she was, where she was. Knew all her needs.

And prayed for them intelligently. Oh, Jesus makes a home. That's a Christian home.

Like it should be. Little taste of heaven. How easy it would have been for a busy medical practitioner to forget all that and leave it.

But no, Christ was at the center of his home. Jesus makes a home. But Jesus breaks a home.

Said I not unto you that I come not to bring peace, but a sword. Says that a father against son, mother against daughter. And in the sovereign will of God, Jesus can break into that home and help himself to a boy or girl and send them out in his service.

How many of us are parents here and have really prayed, Lord, help yourself to my children. Have really given them to the Lord like that. And said, Lord, if it's your will, take them anywhere, anywhere.

And you know something. Do you? Of that day when the first of them had their valedictory service from a church here in Adelaide, maybe. And I tell you, if I know anything of a mother or a father heart, there was in your eye a twinkle in one eye, but a tear in the other.

Thrilled that God had answered prayer and helped himself to your son or to your daughter. But your heart breaking because you would only see them again once in five years. The Lord breaks into a home and helps himself.

Tragedy is that most of us as parents would be thoroughly happy if our boy goes into our business and probably gets out of the will of God in doing so. If he sets up in business, nice and near home. If he gets married and settles down so that the grandchildren can be near us.

All wanting a little self-centered family, all of them in one. Lovely, lovely, lovely, if it's the will of God. But God in his sovereignty has the right to break into that home and help himself to your daughter and your son to send them out to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Because you see, if any man loved father, mother, son, daughter more than me, he's not worthy of me. There must be no rival in my love life. Jesus must be first.

Where is he in your love life? Come on, where is he? Face it. Where is he? First, second, third, nowhere. You love him? Oh, it's wonderful to see people fall in love.

A minister sees a lot more from a pulpit than you think. I remember when I was in Richmond in London, we had a choir that sat over here. And in the front of that row, there was a very nice girl, a soprano.

One Sunday morning, I came into church and we began singing the first hymn. And during the first hymn, I always looked round to see who was there, to see who wasn't there. And that day, I saw a gap in the first row.

And I said to myself, now, where's Audrey today? And I looked round the church and lo and behold, would you believe it? She was over there, sitting with a boy. And I thought to myself, that's interesting. The next Sunday, when I came into the pulpit, I didn't bother to look there.

I just looked straight there. Oh yes, there she was. And they were hand in hand that day.

And it wasn't long before they came to me and told me about their engagement. But you know, the thing that intrigued me was this. Before they really sort of got sort of involved, but after the service was over, they would stand round and talk to all their friends, you know, just chat away.

But once they fell in love, I tell you, after the benediction, you couldn't see them for dust. And they both went down that road hand in hand, lost to the world. Sometimes I would go along the road and pass them in my little car.

And I saw them just, you know, well, you know, don't you? Of course you do. Of course you do. I know you do.

Well, be honest about it. Of course you do. You see, the hallmark of being in love was a desire to be in each other's company.

Intimacy. Where is Jesus in your love life? Do you love him? Do you love to be with him and talk with him? I wonder. If any man loved more than me, he is not worthy of me.

And the test of love is sacrifice. That's why there's a cross in the heart of God and cross in the centre of history. Sacrifice.

How much do you love him? He must be first in your love life. And look, whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. What funny ideas people have about bearing a cross.

A fellow came to me and said one day, he said to me, he said, Pastor, he said, I have an awful temper. I suppose that's my cross. So I said to him, no, bless your heart.

It's not your cross. It's your wife's cross. She's got to live with it.

Poor soul. What a rationalising of sin to say a man's temper is his cross. It's not his cross.

It's his sin. What is a man's cross? If any man would come after me, let him deny himself. Let him leave himself behind and take up his cross and follow me.

Not so long ago, I was flying from Nairobi across to Uganda and through Congo and right into Central African Republic on a missionary aviation fellowship plane, one engine Cessna. The pilot of that plane was a South African. His name, Gordon Marshall.

He was flying for South African Airways and being paid, being paid 15,000 pounds a year. Top-ranked pilot. He packed it all in.

He left himself behind. And now he flies a one-engine Cessna at a maximum speed of 140 miles an hour for a missionary aviation fellowship. The greatest service organisation that missionaries know.

Everywhere in the world you find a mayor doing a tremendous job, 62 planes. In addition to the Wickliffe operation of jars. Tremendous service organisation.

But listen, every place we stopped, that pilot began to witness to Christ in the national language of the people. And when we got to our home in Central Africa, he went to bed early and he got his Bible out and he knelt and prayed. And in the early morning, he was up first and spent time with the word and with God and then went out to service his engine and get his plane ready for the next flight.

He had left himself behind. If any man, whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, can it be my disciple? Oh, I'm not suggesting that you are to go to Central Africa or any other country, but I am asking you in the name of heaven, what does it cost you to be a Christian? Not in terms of cash, but in terms of leading yourself, not loving your own life. Many people's greatest ambition is to make money and retire and have a boat and a car and a television and everything.

I think one of the most materialistically minded countries I've been in, in Australia. Forgive me for saying that, but I've been pretty well everywhere and I've noticed here a real grasping of material things. And drink, drink, drink, drink, and gambling, it's as bad as Britain.

And that's saying something. Britain is the worst gambling country in the world. Between Christmas and New Year, in a population of only 50 million people, 600 million pounds spent on drink.

Drink and gambling have got that nation, that little island country, absolutely by the short hair. They're simply wrecking themselves with it. And I see in this land a love of the same thing, and a carelessness to the things of God.

And Christians who just flirt with God and flirt with church, and simply regard it as a spare time occupation, are doing the job of the devil in the work. It's a good thing to protest against old cult of Qatar. Mighty good thing to protest about it.

But listen, what about launching a positive protest against Christian negativeness, and Christian difference and Christian carelessness, and launching out for God and abandoning your life to Jesus Christ. I'm telling you that nothing we need so much as a headlong revolution on the part of every child of God, in total commitment. If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, leave himself behind, take up his cross and follow me.

That would mean instead of occupying and sitting on the premises, every Sunday we get out where the action is. We get among people, we're witnessing to them, we're speaking to them, we're confronting them with the claims of the Lord Jesus, and we're active, vital Christians seven days a week, missionaries in Adelaide. If any man would bear his cross, whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

And that simply tells me, and I'm sorry but it's true, that once I become a Christian, I have signed off. I have no rights except the right to do the will of God. No rights at all.

My right is to do God's will and see it practiced and put into action every day. And then I form the members, a member of a counter-revolutionary protest movement, inspired and directed by the Holy Spirit, which can sweep through this generation and move it toward God. Do you think the average church today is equal to that? Do you mean to tell me the average Christian is interested? No, no, no, no.

If we only can sing in the choir or teach in a Sunday school class or be a member of a church, that's all that matters. It isn't. It isn't.

That's the devil has told us that. Everybody who names the name of Jesus has got to be on fire for God in days like these. Anything less won't survive.

Take up my cross, hold not my life dear to myself, and follow the Lord. That's how Jesus came. And as the Father sent the Son, so send I you.

One more thing. Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple. Does that mean to say that I've got to give up whatever I've got in my bank account and let the whole thing go? No, it doesn't.

But it'll be part of it. May I just tell you this? As a pastor at Moody Church in Chicago, we had 92 missionaries on the field whom we supported fully, personal support and fellow support. It was a tremendous thing to raise that budget every year, something like \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Oh, but you say Americans are wealthy, plenty of money. Yeah, perhaps they have, some of them. But I'm telling you that an American Christian puts us all to shame for their sacrificial giving.

Every year we had a missionary rally, missionary needs were put to the church, and then we took faith promises, which simply means any member of the church who wished to do so could sign a little promise that they will give to missions overseas so much during the next year. No one held them to it, but they made the promise. And I collected these faith promises, this was my privilege, and I thumbed them through one day and I noticed a girl whom I knew had promised to give \$2,000 in that year.

And I looked at this and I thought, well, she can't do that. She's got a fairly good job as a secretary, but I'll guarantee that's 50% of her salary. How's she going to live? And I made one or two discreet inquiries, and you know what I found? That that girl had offered, as a night operator on a telephone exchange, three nights a week in order to pay this missionary promise.

So during the week she worked six days and three nights in order to pay this missionary support. Oh yes, he that forsaketh not all that he hath. I'm not saying, I'm not saying that if you are to be a disciple of Christ you're going to be broke, but I am saying that when you become a disciple of Jesus, are you listening, 10% of what you earn is your minimum.

It belongs to the Lord, your time. And if this country and Christians in it gave 10%, what a tremendous upsurge there'd be in missionary giving. If you don't give 10%, you're robbing God of what is his due, and one day we have to give an account for that.

But it means much more than money. He that forsaketh all that he hath. That means not only that I have no rival to Jesus in my love life, not only that, not merely, not merely that I have no rival to Christ in my love life, not merely that I have no right except the right to do the will of God, but also I must have no reservation to my commitment.

Could I just take you as I close to Thailand, where I was on the mission field with the OMF, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, a little while ago, speaking to, I suppose, about 150 missionaries gathered together for the annual conference, and as I was speaking each night, all the lights in the building had been turned off because of mosquitoes, except one, and that one was concentrated on my Bible. So immediately, all the mosquitoes, exactly, came to the one place where there was light, and I tell you, I've been hot here this week, but I'm cool compared with that, and mosquitoes have always looked upon me as a filling station, and that night I was bitten to death, and I was so hot, oh, but I could see in that light, I could just see the face of a lady missionary who was sitting in a wheelchair with her Bible open, drinking in every word that was being said, and I noticed that after every meeting, she was carried out by her fellow missionaries, and when the mission meeting began, she was carried in, and after one of the evening services, I said to Dr. Oswald Sanders, I said, tell me, Oswald, what's the story of that girl? Oh, he said, that's quite something. He said, oh, it said it must be about 15 years ago, as a young girl, she came out, she was a nurse from Scotland, and she came out into the mission field, and she hadn't been with us more than a year before she got polio.

And she was flat on her back, and helpless.

We kept her for a year or two, three years, in fact, but she got no better, so we had a field council meeting, and we thought, well, the only thing to do is to send her home, we can't have anything alternative, so she went, and about two years later, we had a letter from her, and she said, you know, I'm no better, I still can't move any muscle, but my hands haven't been affected, and I can type a typewriter, please take me back, I'm sure God wants me in Thailand, I'm sure I oughtn't to stay in Scotland, please, please send me back, bring me back, and he said, you know, we couldn't refuse her, we couldn't say no, so we had her back, and ever since, she's been doing a secretary's job in the hospital at Manoram, relieving other missionaries of this necessary work, ah, but he said, I'll tell

you something more, whenever we missionaries have our problems, personality clashes, everybody goes to her, for the something she has gained by the marks that God has put upon her in this polio, that somehow gets out of her, in blessing to others, no reservation to her commitment, he that forsaketh not all that he hath, and in her case, it was her health, she gave it for Jesus, I say, have you got any marks, got any wounds that Jesus can see, have you forsaken anything, have you given up your girlfriend, maybe, your boyfriend, because they weren't called as you have been, what's it cost you, the unseen marks of the cross, henceforth, said Paul, let no man trouble me, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, where are your marks, what has he touched, what does it cost, he that

forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple, and that just means he's given up all his rights to the sovereign will and purpose of God, well, are you a missionary, I'm not making the terms hard, they're in the Bible, I wish I could water them down, but I can't, a watered down Christianity has landed us in the hopeless mess we are today, not for me to water it down, it's to give you what's and these are the terms that Jesus laid down for operation survival in 20 centuries, and we're dying because these terms are not fulfilled, what does it cost you, oh, you say, I don't feel called, really, how very convenient, do you feel exempt, are you quite sure you're exempt, you don't feel called, what do you expect God to do, get you by the scruff of the hair and shove you out somewhere,

doesn't do that, how does a call come, it comes as you listen tonight to a sense of inner burning conviction in your heart that you ought to be involved and get moving, and God may keep you in Adelaide, that's fine, okay, that's his business, but he may send you to South America, Africa, Japan, the Far East, anywhere,

have you ever said to him, Lord, in the light of the fact that 90% of Christian work is done among 10% of the world's population, Lord, I'm going unless you stop me, that's the line that all of us should take, are we satisfied that the circumstances in which God has placed us justify us remaining at home, in the light of the shortness of the time, in the light of the tremendous task, in the light of heaven and hell, you don't believe in hell, very convenient, I wish I

didn't, I wish I didn't, how long is it since you knew a church, you heard a sermon on hell, you don't believe in it, a very dear friend of mine, an Anglican clergyman in England said one day at a meeting, something I've never forgotten, I once used to ask God to show me, he said, what it means for somebody to be eternally lost, I never had that prayer answered, because he said, if God had showed me, I'd have gone out of my mind, out of my mind, and John Wesley said, I'd go up and down England on a nail studded road, on my hands and knees, if only it could save a soul from hell, if there's going to be a new heaven, a new earth, wherein dwells only righteousness, there's going to be a hell where sin is punished, and if a man refuses to forsake that for which God judges him, he becomes

involved in the judgment, therefore again I say, it isn't a question of have you an exemption, but one day when you stand before Christ at the judgment seat, he'll say to you, what about your life, and you reply to him, Lord, I'm sorry, but I was too busy, too busy, too busy to be related to eternity, Lord, I hadn't the time, it's not your time I want, it's your surrender, oh Lord, I hadn't the money, it's not your money I want, it's your love, it's you to be available to me always, every time, anywhere, it's you I want, and every time the second hand of my watch has ticked, tonight as I've been speaking to you, every time I put my hand on that desk and do that, two people die, go out into eternity, thousands in an hour, and we can go out of a church and couldn't care less, and turn on

the TV in the late night show and hang the whole thing, what does it matter, that may be strong, but it's true, let it penetrate your soul, young people, and stop playing the fool and begin getting enrolled and involved for the greatest cause on all earth until you get to heaven, the cause of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Sovereign and Master.

Choose you this day whom you will serve, make your choice, oh yes, you can go out of those doors if you want to, say not for me, not for me, all right, all right, you can do that, nothing that I can say can stop you, and God won't stop you, but one day God will meet you and have a reckoning with you about it, or you can go out to these doors saying, Lord Jesus, I choose, you'll be my master, I'm ready to go anywhere, but you call me in the greatest cause, this side of heaven.

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