

As Unto the Lord

by J.R. Miller

Serving the Lord is not just a privilege for a few, but a way of life that encompasses all aspects of our daily tasks and relationships.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "Service to God", "Everyday Faithfulness"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that serving the Lord encompasses all aspects of life, not just religious activities. He argues that mundane tasks, when performed with a heart dedicated to Christ, can be transformed into acts of worship. The sermon highlights the importance of doing our work well, being faithful in our duties, and serving others in everyday moments. Miller encourages believers to view their lives as continuous service to God, where even suffering can be a form of service if approached with the right attitude. Ultimately, the motive behind our actions is what makes them pleasing to Christ, as true service stems from a heart devoted to Him.

Transcript

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:22

A great deal is said in the Scriptures, about serving the Lord. But how are we to serve him? What kind of work comes under the head of service? There are wrong impressions regarding this. People suppose that they are serving the Lord when they engage in specifically religious exercises. After his day's work, a man goes to a prayer-meeting. He regards that as serving--but does not think of calling his long day's secular work by the same sweet designation. A woman visits a sick neighbor in the afternoon, reads a few passages and bows in prayer at her bedside. She feels as she turns away, that the Lord accepts that as service--but she does not dare to think of her long morning's work at home in burdensome household duties or among her children, mending, patching, teaching, comforting--as of the same sacred character.

And yet it is possible for us to do the simplest, most mundane of these things, in such a way as to render acceptable service to the Lord. The question, then, arises, How are we to perform these common secular duties--so as to make them pleasing to Christ as ministries to him?

First of all, our lives must be truly consecrated to Christ. If they are not, the most magnificent services will not be accepted.

Then, the work we do--must be the work to which he calls us at the time. Something else than our present duty, though requiring more toil and appearing more splendid--will not be pleasing while present duty is left unperformed. A missionary journey to Joppa, will not be accepted as a substitute for a similar visit to Nineveh. Prayer will not be a sweet savor, if at the moment there is a human need crying for help unheeded. Running to church meetings and attending prayer meetings will not win the smile of approval, while home-duties are neglected.

Then, the work we do must itself be pure and good work in a lawful and proper calling. No formal consecration, can make any wrong-doing pleasing to the Master.

Then, again, we must do our work well. Work that we slight or do dishonestly, is not acceptable service. This phase of Christian duty is sometimes overlooked. Those who would not utter a false word or commit a dishonest act--will yet perform their work carelessly or imperfectly. The principles of religion apply just as well to the carpenter's trade, or to the tailor's, or to the housekeeper's work--as to the business of the banker or the merchant. It is just as really dishonest to sew up a seam that will rip, or to put inferior material or bad workmanship into a building--as it is to use a short yardstick or light weights or to adulterate coffee or sugar. God is not pleased with any work--unless it is the very best that we can render.

The old cathedral-builders understood this, when they finished every smallest detail of their stupendous fabrics as conscientiously as the most massive parts. The gilded spires, far away in the clouds, which no human eye could ever inspect, were made with as much care as the the carvings on the great doors, which all would see. They slighted nothing, because it was not to be exposed to human gaze. They wrought for the great Master's eye.

"Why do you carve so carefully--the tresses of that statue's head?" asked one of an ancient sculptor as he wrought with marvelous pains on the back part of the figure. "The statue will stand high up in its niche, with its back to the wall, and no one will see it." "Ah! God will see it!" was the sublime answer. So must we work--if we would render pleasing service to the Lord. The builder must build as conscientiously in the parts that are to be covered from sight--as in those that will be most conspicuous. The dressmaker must sew as faithfully the hidden seams--as the most showy. I do not believe that we can ever serve Christ acceptably, by any kind of shams or deceptions.

If we do our secular work thus, it will be acceptable to the Lord as service rendered to him. It may be impossible with each separate act, to have the conscious feeling, "I do this for Christ." As far as possible, we should cultivate the habit of this minute serving. It will give a wondrous inspiration to our lives, and will change even drudgery into service as holy as angels' ministries. It is possible to learn to do even this. But if the great underlying motive of all our life--is to serve and honor Christ and bless the world, the whole includes all its parts. And thus the dreariest paths of duty--will become bright ways of joy; the commonest drudgeries of life--will become clothed in garments of beauty, and all routine-work, in home and field, in shop and office, in school and study--will appear sacred and holy because done for the Master.

But amid these common secular duties, come countless opportunities of serving in another sense--by active ministries to others. This is always pleasing to Christ; indeed, he puts himself behind everyone who needs help or comfort, and accepts all deeds of benevolence and true charity--as done to himself. And there is not an hour of our waking existence, that does not bring us in contact with other lives that need something which we have to give. We are not to wait for opportunities to do great things--not to keep watching for some splendid thing which by its conspicuous importance may win for us the applause of

men--but are to do always, moment by moment, the thing that comes to our hand. It may be to speak a cheering word to one who is disheartened; to join in a child's play; to mend a broken toy; to send a few flowers made more fragrant by your love, into a sick-room; or to write a letter of condolence or sympathy. It is the thing, small or great, which our hand finds at the moment to do.

Or our part in serving, may often be to wait. There are times when we can do nothing more. The voice which has been accustomed to say, "Go and labor," is heard saying, "Lie still and wait." Then quiet, submissive, un murmuring patience--pleases Christ just as well as ever did the most intense activities in other days.

Or it may be in suffering that we are called to serve. There come occasions in the life of each one of us--when the best thing for us is darkness and pain--when we can do most for the cause of Christ by suffering for his sake. In such cases the secret of service lies in joyful resignation, asking, "What would God have this sorrow do for me? What is its mission? What its great design? What golden fruit lies hidden in its husk? How shall it nurse my virtue, nerve my will, chasten my passions, purify my love, and make me in some goodly sense--like him who bore the cross of sorrow while he lived, and hung and bled upon it when he died, and now in glory wears the victor's crown?"

Into a prisoner's cell, for a half an hour each day--came a few rays of sunlight. He found a nail and a stone on his floor, and with these rude implements cut and chiseled day after day during the few moments when the light lay upon the wall, until in the stone he had cut the image of the Christ upon his cross. Just so, in the dark days of sorrow that come to us--we may serve Christ by seeking to sculpture his sweet beauty, not in cold stone--but on the warm, living walls of our own hearts!

Thus we see that serving the Lord is not the privilege and pleasure of a few rare hours alone--but embraces the whole wide range of life and work, and takes in all our relationships to home, to friends, to humanity, to business, to pleasure. If the heart is right--our whole life becomes one unbroken series of services rendered to the Lord.

The vital point in this whole matter--is the motive that underlies it all. It is possible to live a very laborious life filled with intense activities--and yet never, from youth to old age, do one deed that Christ accepts as service. It is possible even to live a life of what is called religious service, full of what are regarded as sacred duties--and yet never in one thing truly serve Christ. The heart may never have been given to him at all. Or the motives may have been wrong. That which makes any act distinctively a Christian act--is that it is done in the name of Christ--and to please him.

The moralist does right things--but without any reference to Christ, not confessing him or loving him. The Christian does the same things--but does them because the Master wants him to do them. As one has beautifully said, "What we can do for God is little or nothing--but we must do our little nothings for his glory." This is the motive that, filling our hearts, makes even common drudgery divine--because it is done for Christ. It may be but to sweep a room, or rock an infant to sleep, or teach a ragged child, or mend a rent, or plane a board; but if it is done as unto the Lord, it will be owned and accepted. But it may be the grandest of works--the founding of an asylum, the building of a cathedral or a whole life of eloquence or display; but if it is not done for Christ, it all counts for nothing.

There is no life in the world, so sweet as that of one who truly serves Christ. It is always easy to toil for one we love. And when the heart is full of love for the Master--it throws a wondrous warmth and tenderness about all duty. Things that would be very austere or repulsive merely as duties, become very easy when

done for him.

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