

Not to Be Ministered Unto

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of ministering to others, regardless of their character or treatment, and encourages a selfless and servant attitude, just as Jesus Christ demonstrated.

Scripture: Matthew 20:28, Luke 6:32

Topics: "Love for Others", "Christian Service"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the call for Christians to minister to all, including those who may be unworthy or unkind, reflecting on Jesus' example of serving others without regard for their character. He challenges the notion of self-centeredness, urging believers to adopt a perspective that values every human life and seeks to serve rather than be served. Miller illustrates that true Christian love transcends personal feelings and requires us to act with compassion towards everyone, regardless of their treatment of us. By seeing others through the lens of Christ's love, we can overcome obstacles to serving even the most difficult individuals. Ultimately, he calls for a radical shift in how we view our purpose in life, from seeking to be served to actively serving others.

Transcript

There are many people who want to be useful, who want to live to help others--who find insuperable obstacles in the way. There are some to whom they find it quite easy to minister--to those of lovely character, to those who are their friends and who readily reciprocate any favors shown to them. But it will not do to confine the outgoings of their helpfulness and ministry, to such small classes as these. Even sinners do good to those that do good to them, and give to those of whom they hope to receive again. The Christian is to do more. He is even to do good to those who hate him. He is to minister to any who need his ministry, despite their character, or their treatment of him. Even toward unworthy and disagreeable people--he is to maintain that love that never fails.

But how can I help one whom I cannot respect? How can I be useful to one who treats me only with insults and slights?

There is a way of relating ourselves to all men about us, which solves all these difficulties and makes it easy for us to do good to anyone. So long as we think of ourselves and of what is due to us from others--it will be impossible for us to minister to very many people. But where true Christian love reigns in the heart, the center of life falls no longer inside the narrow circle of SELF.

Those who study carefully our Lord's life--will be struck with his wonderful reverence for human life. He looked upon no one with disdain or contempt. The meanest fragment of humanity that crept into his presence--trampled, torn, stained, defiled--was yet sacred in his eyes. He never despised any human being. And, further, he stood before men, not as a king, demanding attention, reverence, service--but as one who wished to serve, to help, to lift up. He said he had not come to be ministered unto--but to minister.

He never thought of what was due from men to him, but always of what he could do for them, how he could serve them. How could it be otherwise, since he came to earth solely to save men, and since his heart was so full of love for them? Whenever a human being stood before him, he saw one in whose heart were sorrows which needed sympathy, or one bruised by sin needing healing and restoration. Thus he was easily able to serve all. The more repulsive the life that stood before him--the more deeply, in one sense, did it appeal to his love, because it needed his help all the more on account of its repulsiveness.

We shall be prepared to seek the good of others in the largest, truest way--only when we have learned to look upon human lives as our Lord did. There was not a poor ruined creature that came into his presence in whom he did not see, under all the wasting of sin, something worthy of his love. There was not one whom he thought it a degradation to serve. When the disciples were quarreling as to which one should take the servant's place and wash the feet of the others--he quietly arose and performed the humble service. He was never more conscious of his exalted glory, than he was that hour, and yet there was no reluctance in his heart. The question of their immeasurable inferiority to him--never rose in his mind. He never thought for a moment that these men were not worthy to have such menial service performed for them--by such hands as his. He saw in them something which made it no degradation, even for his divinity to serve them. When we have learned to look upon human lives as he did--it will be no painful task to minister, at whatever cost, to the lowliest and most unworthy about us.

We are willing enough to serve those whom we honor. But we are apt to hold our lives as too sacred to be spent or sacrificed for the sake of those whom we regard as beneath ourselves.

A tender and delicate woman leaves her lovely, sheltered home, and finds her way into the fever-wards of the city hospital, or into the gloomy cells of a prison--to try to help the suffering or the criminals she finds there. A cultured girl turns away from comfort and luxury, from circles of loving friends, and from social honors and triumphs, and plunges into the heart of a heathen land--to live out her beautiful and golden life in toiling for savages. A godly young man turns away from applause and ease, and gives himself to the rescue of the squalid classes in a great city. On all hands people say, " These lives are too precious for such work. They are too refined, too beautiful, too delicate, too valuable, to be sacrificed in such service." But if there was nothing in that most precious, that divine life of the Lord Jesus that was too good to be poured out in serving such as those for whom he gave his life, shall we say that any human life is so sacred, so valuable, that it may not find fitting employment in serving the poorest, the most ignorant, the most squalid men and women to be found in prison, in jungle, in hospital, in dreary tenement or wretched garret?

When we learn to measure others, not by their rank and station, but by their immortality, by the possibilities that lie in the most ruined life, it will be no longer humiliating for us to do even the humblest service for the least of God's creatures. Then there will be nothing in us that will seem too rich or too sacred, to be poured out for the sake even of the most despised. We may honor ourselves and may be conscious of all the power and dignity of our lives as God's children, and yet not think ourselves too good to minister to the smallest and the least.

There is no other attitude in which we can stand to those about us, in which we can fulfill the law of Christian love, which requires us to do good to all men. We must not think of ourselves as deserving attention from others. We are not in this world to be made much of, to be waited upon and served. The moment we begin to relate ourselves in this way to others--we cease to be largely helpful, or helpful at all in the Christian sense. We measure every one then, by his ability and willingness to serve us. We rate others as they are, in our estimation, agreeable or disagreeable. Repulsiveness repels us, because we think of it only in its effect upon our own feelings and tastes.

We love pleasant people only, are kind only to those that are kind to us, and serve only those whom we regard as honorable and worthy. Rude treatment from others, shuts our hearts toward them. In a word, we do nothing from unselfish motives, and seek always our own gain. This may make us very pleasant and agreeable in the small circle of our personal friends, and even in business and social life--but it is infinitely removed from the spirit and practice of true Christian love and service.

We are to regard ourselves as the servants of others, for Jesus' sake. We are to put ourselves before men as our Master did, not asking what benefit or help we can get from them--but what we can do for them. It will be seen at a glance, that if we look upon others in this unselfish way--our hearts yearning to do them good, the whole aspect of the world will be changed. We are not here to receive and to gather, but to give and to scatter; not to be served and treated generously, but to serve regardless of men's character or their treatment of us. This invests every human life with a wondrous sacredness. It brings down our pride, and keeps it under our feet. It changes scorn to compassion. It softens our tones and takes from us our haughty, dictatorial spirit. Instead of being repelled by men's moral repulsiveness, our pity is stirred and our hearts go out in deep, loving longing to heal and to bless them. Instead of being offended by men's rudeness and unkindness, we bear patiently with their faults, hoping to do them good. Nothing that they may do to us--turns our love to hate. We continue to seek their interest, despite their slights, insults and cruelties. We are glad to spend and be spent for others, even though the more abundantly we love them--the less they love us.

With this spirit it is no longer hard to do good to the most disagreeable people, to help the most unworthy. It is easy, then, to love our enemies in the only way it is possible for us to love them. We cannot love them as we do our friends. We cannot approve their faults or commend their immoralities or make black white. We cannot make ourselves think their characters beautiful, when they are full of repulsiveness; or their conduct right, when it is manifestly wrong. Love plays no such tricks with our moral perceptions. It does not hoodwink us or make us color-blind. It does not make us tolerant of sin, or indifferent to men's blemishes. Christ never lowered, by so much as a hair's breadth, the perfect standard of holiness by which he measured all men and all life. Nor must we.

We are ever to keep living in our souls--the pure and unspotted ideal. We are not to look upon any sin leniently or apologetically, and yet we are to love the sinner, to pity him and have compassion upon him; and instead of turning away from him in horror and self-righteous pride--we are to seek by every means to lift him up and save him. Under all the ruin of his sin--is the shattered beauty of the divine image which the gentle fingers of love may repair and restore.

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