

Service

by Sadhu Sundar Singh

The sermon emphasizes the importance of service, love, and self-sacrifice in our spiritual lives and encourages us to be faithful and courageous in our service to God and others.

Scripture: Isaiah 58:10, Matthew 5:16, Luke 21:2, John 15:13, 1 Corinthians 1:26, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 2 Timothy 4:7

Topics: "Sacrificial Service", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Sadhu Sundar Singh preaches about the true meaning of service, emphasizing that service is the natural offering prompted by love and the activity of the spiritual life. He explains that in serving God and others, believers receive help from God as they use the faculties and powers He has endowed them with. Through various parables and examples, he highlights the importance of sacrificial service, readiness to give up one's life for others, and the need to use God-given gifts and talents to bring light and blessings to those in darkness and despair.

Transcript

SECTION I

The Disciple,--Master, what is the real meaning of service? Is it that we serve the Creator and then His creatures for His sake? Is the help of man, who is after all but a mere worm, of any value to God in caring for His great family, or does God stand in need of the help of man in protecting or preserving any of His creatures?

The Master,--1. Service means the activity of the spiritual life and is the natural offering prompted by love. God, who is Love, is ever active in the care of His creation, and His desire is that His creatures and especially man, whom He formed in His own image and likeness, should never be idle. In the care and preservation of His creatures God needs the help of none, for He created them in such a way that without His help they could not continue to exist, and He it is who has provided all that is required to satisfy their desires. In true service of others there is this great advantage that it helps him who serves--just as it happened to you in Tibet. When you were in fear of death on account of the bitter cold, you saw one lying buried in the snow and at the point of death, you went to him and lifting him on to your shoulders carried him forward, and the efforts you made produced heat in your body which also passed into his, and both he and you were saved, so that in rescuing him you saved your own life. This is the true end of service. No one can live alone and deprived of the help of others. Should anyone receive help from another, and be unwilling to return such assistance as he can, such an ungrateful fellow would have no right to expect any

help from any one at all.

2. Until a man brings into the service of God and man faculties and powers with which God has endowed him, he will not receive from God the help He alone can bestow. As soon as man does his part God will complete it. For instance, the removal of the stone from the grave of Lazarus was man's work, and it was not necessary for God to put forth His power to do that; but when the people had rolled away the stone, then God, that is Myself, did that which was beyond the power and skill of man, for I gave life to the dead. Even after that there was work for man to do in releasing Lazarus from the grave-clothes that he might be perfectly free (John xi.39,41,44).

So with regard to those who are dead in sin. It is the work of My disciples to roll away the gravestones of hindrance and difficulty, but to bestow life is My work. Often, too, some who have received spiritual life still remain in bondage to their old bad habits and evil associations, and it is the duty of My children to lead them into perfect freedom; and to render this great service they should ever be alert in heart and soul.

3. A certain king on his deathbed spoke to a faithful servant of his as follows: "It has been my custom when setting out on a journey to send you before me to announce me and make preparations for my reception. I am going to the land of the dead. Go, therefore, and inform them that I am about to join them." At first the honest servant did not understand what his lord meant, but as soon as he saw that his meaning was that he should die and thus precede him to the land of the dead, the faithful fellow, without a moment's hesitation or doubt, plunged a sword into his heart, and thus entered the country of the dead, there to await his lord. Thus it is the duty of those who serve Me, who am the Lord of Life and the King of kings (Acts iii.15; Rev. xix.16), to carry the gospel of salvation to those who are dead in sin, and to be ready even to give their lives for Me, who came to earth for their salvation and will come yet once more (Rev. ii.10).

4. A rebellious son once left his father's house and joined a band of robbers and became in time as bold and ruthless as the rest. The father called his servants and ordered them to go to his son and tell him that if he would repent and return home all would be forgiven, and he would receive him into his home. But the servants, in dread of the wild country and fierce robbers, refused to go. Then the elder brother of the young man, who loved him as his father did, set off to carry the message of forgiveness. But soon after he had entered the jungle a band of robbers set upon him and mortally wounded him. The younger brother was one of the band, and when he recognized his elder brother he was filled with grief and remorse. The elder brother managed to give the message of forgiveness and then, saying that the purpose of his life was fulfilled and love's duty done, he gave up the ghost. This sacrifice of the elder brother made so deep an impression on the rebellious youth that he went back in penitence to his father and from that day forward lived a new life. Is it not right, therefore, that My sons should be prepared to sacrifice their lives in order to bring the message of mercy to those of their brethren who have gone astray and are ruined in sin, just as I also gave My life for the salvation of all?

5. My children are like salt in the world (Matt. v.13). If the salt crystals are not dissolved they cannot transmit their flavour. So with My children. If they are not melted in the fire of love and the Holy Spirit, and made into a living sacrifice, they will not be able to bring a single soul that spiritual and heavenly life by which they may be saved. They will be no better than Lot's wife who became a pillar of salt (Gen. xix.26). But just as for your sakes I was melted in Gethesemane (Luke xxii.44), and on the cross gave up My life that I might save the lives of men, for life must be paid for with life, so you also are called upon to give up your lives and thus bring the savour of spiritual life to others and deliver them from death.

6. A certain murderer, instead of being hanged, was sent into battle, and there he fought for his king and country with such dauntless courage that although he was severely wounded he came back a conqueror. After the victory he was brought into the court again to be sentenced. The king, seeing on his body the marks of his wounds, cancelled the sentence of death, and not only forgave his crime, but also highly rewarded him and raised him to a post of honour. So those who on My side fight in the Holy War against Satan with courage and boldness that they may save their brethren and sisters, shall not only receive from Me the forgiveness of their sins, but in the kingdom of God I will bestow on them a crown and a kingdom (James v.20; Rev. iii.21).

7. As the pipe that is used to convey clean water is itself kept clean by the water which passes through it, so those, who through the Holy Spirit carry the Water of Life to others, are themselves purified and become heirs to the kingdom of God .

8. The best way for the believer to be fitted for the reception of the Holy Spirit and for service is to be obedient to the heavenly voice and immediately, as far as ability goes, to begin to serve. As to become a good swimmer it is useless to receive instruction unless one enters the water and strikes out for oneself, and only by constantly practising, first in shallow water and then in deep, can one become an adept in the art, so, in order to learn how to save the souls of those who are sinking in the dark waters of sin, the best way is to enter the only real and practical school of divinity, which is union with Myself (Acts iv.13).

9. There are some who are kept back from serving by the thought of their lack of ability, and do not remember that My strength gives power in weakness (2 Cor. xii.9). They are like invalids who, though they have recovered from their disease and are taking nourishing food, yet remain weak because they do no work and take no proper exercise. What such believers need is that they should put their trust in Me and set out to save sinners from destruction.

SECTION II

1. Love is the touchstone by which the reality of truth is perceived, and by it shall all men know that ye are My disciples (John xiii.35). I also make use of the sword of justice, so that at first sight some are inclined to think that, like Solomon, I intend to finish My work without mercy (1 Kings iii.16-28), but My object, like his, is to apply the touchstone of love which will bring out the truth, and show that you are the children of that God of Love who gave His life to save yours. You ought therefore to abide in that love and serve one another, and even give your lives to serve others, as I also gave My life for you. Then as I live ye shall live also (John xiv.19).

2. If ye are My disciples indeed your service of love will bear much fruit (John xv.8). And if men speak evil of you and pelt you with reproaches, pray for them, and instead of reproaching them let them taste the sweet fruit of your love.

Mischievous boys, when they catch sight of sweet fruit on a tree, pelt it with stones, and the tree without a murmur drops upon them, instead of stones, its charming fruit. For the tree has no stones to throw, but what God has given it, it gives without complaining. Be not cast down by ill treatment, for the fact that men fling abuse at you is full proof that yours is a fruitful life. Though they treat you thus from envy and spite, yet by that means the glory of your heavenly Father is made manifest. Do not suppose that God hungers after glory, or that there is anything lacking in His glory that man can supply. By no means! The object of His love is to lift that mean creature man out of the sinful state into which he has fallen and bear him upwards to His heaven of glory. Thus He gives not glory to Himself but to man by cleansing and purifying

him, and in this the wonder and majesty of His love is made manifest.

3. To those who by their labours have enabled many to turn from sin and find righteousness in Me, I will grant such glory that they shall first of all shine like the stars, and then being made perfect shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The stars fade and disappear at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, but the wish of My Father is that His sons should be made perfect like Himself and shine with Him in everlasting glory, rejoicing for ever in His boundless and eternal love.

4. There are little creatures far inferior to man, like the firefly, with its flickering light, and certain small plants among the vegetation in the Himalayas, which by their faint phosphorescent radiance illuminate as far as they can the dark jungle where they live. Tiny fish also that swim in the deep waters of the ocean give forth a glimmering light which guides other fish and helps them to elude their enemies. How much more ought My children to be lights in the world (Matt. v.14) and be eager in self-sacrifice to bring into the way of truth, by means of their God-given light, those who by reason of darkness are liable to become the prey of Satan.

5. If they do not use these heaven-sent powers in the service of God and His creatures they are in danger of losing for ever those heavenly gifts. This is what has happened to certain fish that live in the deep waters of dark caves, also to some hermits in Tibet, for both have lived so long in darkness that they have entirely lost their sight. In like manner the ostrich, through not using its wings, has lost altogether the power of flight. Take heed, therefore, not to neglect whatever gifts or talents have been entrusted to you, but make use of them that you may share in the bliss and glory of your Master (Matt. xxv.14-30).

6. Sometimes when there is some great act of service to be done, I choose for My purpose those who are little esteemed in the eyes of the world, for they make no boast of their own power or wisdom, but putting their entire trust in Me, and accounting what little ability they possess as of no great value, they devote all they have and are to My work for men (1 Cor. i.26-30). For instance, when I fed in the wilderness five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, you will remember that I did not perform this miracle by the agency of My disciples, for they were full of doubt and perplexity and wished to send the multitude away hungry (John vi.9). My servant on that occasion was a little lad whom I had cured of the palsy. Filled with a desire to hear My words he determined to follow Me. His poor mother wrapped up in his clothes some barley cakes and dried fish, enough for two or three days journey, so when inquiry was made for food for the multitude this faithful little lad at once brought all that he had and laid it at the disciples feet. Though there were wealthy people there who had with them much better food, such as wheaten cakes, they were not prepared to give them up; so it was from the barley cakes of this boy, My namesake, that by My blessing the multitude was fed with the choicest food.

7. There are many who are so wanting in gratitude that whatever blessings are bestowed upon them, even to the extent of miracles being performed for their benefit, they still remain dissatisfied and ungrateful. Such people can never be used for the service and blessing of others, but are like the man whom I healed after he had suffered for thirty-eight years from an incurable disease, for instead of being grateful and believing on Me he did not even trouble to remember My name (John v.12-13). From such people the world can hope for no blessing; it comes only from those who, like the poor widow, are ready to give up all they have, even all their living (Luke xxi.2-4).

8. For true service and the performance of duty My servants must be ready to offer even life itself--like that faithful soldier who remained at his post in the bitter cold and falling snow till he froze to death, and like a

statue still kept his place, though the others of the watch went off to warm themselves at the fire. When the king came and saw him standing fixed and faithful still in death, he took off his crown and placed it for a space upon his head, saying: "Such a faithful soldier and servant is worthy of the honour and glory of my diadem. Would that he had lived, for then I would have made him the head of my kingdom!" Such must my faithful servants be in the service to which I have appointed them, and to those who finish their work with like faith and courage I will grant a fadeless crown of eternal kingship (2 Tim. iv.4, 5-8).

9. Many there are who have wasted the precious time given to them for My service, but even now there is an opportunity for them to rouse themselves and make the best use of the time that remains to them. They are like a hunter who, while wandering in the jungle, picked up some pretty stones on the bank of a stream. Unaware of their value he used them one by one in his sling to shoot at the birds seated on the trees near the river, and so one by one they fell into the water and were lost. With one still in his hand he returned to the city, and as he passed along the bazaar a jeweller caught sight of it, and told the silly fellow that it was a valuable diamond for which he could get thousands of rupees. When he heard this he began to bewail himself and say, "Woe is me! I didn't know their value, and have been using many of these diamonds to shoot at birds by the riverside, and they have fallen into the river and are lost, otherwise I should have been a millionaire. Still I have saved this one, and that is something gained." Every day is like a precious diamond, and though many priceless days have been wasted in the pursuit of fleeting pleasures, and are for ever sunk in the depths of the past, you should awake to the value of what remains, and bringing it into the best possible use gather for yourself spiritual riches. Use it in My service, who have given to you life and all its priceless blessings, and by using them to save others from sin and death you will obtain an everlasting and heavenly reward.

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