

## **Gospel Service**

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1 Peter 4:7-11

Good Morning! Today we are finishing our series called “All-in” where we have been talking about the topic of Discipleship. We started this series a couple of weeks ago by defining Discipleship. We said that there are three parts to being a Disciple or follower of Jesus.

- The first part is to Become a Disciple, to make a clear decision about Jesus and declare that decision through baptism.
- The second part is Be a Disciple, follow Jesus with your heart your head and your hands.
- The third part is to Make a Disciple, to share Jesus with others.

So that’s how we defined Discipleship. Then we introduced this (the Pathway Slide), which is what we call our Discipleship Pathway. These are the elements or stations that we are going to use to develop Disciples for Christ here at Perry Creek: Worship, Small Groups, Service, and for those who need it, Starting Point. We mentioned Starting Point the first week. That’s a step that is not necessarily for everyone That’s our class for people who are curious about Christianity or are starting a relationship with God or are returning to their Faith. We’ll talk more about Starting Point when we get ready to start a new class. That’s our Discipleship Pathway We pointed out that there’s a place in this pathway to develop all those parts of the definition of a Disciple. Everything you need to be a healthy disciple is found in this pathway.

We introduced that definition and that pathway a couple of weeks ago. Then last week, we started going through this pathway step by step. Last week, we talked about the two stations on this pathway where we gather on a regular basis, and that is Worship and Small Groups

Now today, what I want to talk to you about is “Service,” that station at the bottom of the pathway, specifically about what I would call Gospel Service! We want you “all in” on this pathway. We want you to experience everything God has for you as a Disciple here at Perry Creek. One of the things God has for you as a Disciple is service! We want everyone to know the joy of serving God. We believe that your Discipleship is not complete without it!

You can know lots and lots of things about God and have your theology straight. You can come to church every Sunday and even Small Group and have a relationship with God through prayer. But until you are serving somewhere, either through Missions or your Small Group or maybe here at the school or in some other capacity, it doesn’t have to be through the Church at Perry Creek but until you are serving somewhere, your discipleship is not complete. It’s not healthy. You weren’t just meant to receive. You were meant to give. You were meant to serve. Today I want to talk about Service, and I want to do it by looking at a passage that I love, one of my favorite passages on Service. Peter was a letter written to be circulated amongst several churches. In the letter, Peter addresses all kinds of things but as he moves toward the close of his letter Peter reminds his readers of the need to serve others. Today as we look at this passage what we’re going to see is very simple. We’ll see four aspects of Gospel Service, four

ways that the gospel impacts the way we serve others. My prayer for us today is really just a couple of things: (1) I want every one of us here at Perry Creek to be serving in some way, and (2) As we serve, I want us not just to be doing service but gospel service. So let's read from 1 Peter 4. Today we are going to be zooming in on verses 9-11, but we'll read the whole paragraph of 1 Peter 4:7-11. God's word says this:

*The culmination of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

- 1 Peter 4:7-11

So as we jump into our sermon today, you might be asking "John, what is this Gospel Service you speak of?" Why do you call it Gospel Service? How is it different from normal, garden variety service? I am going to suggest that there is a big, big difference between these two! The passage gives us four characteristics of this Gospel Service. In reality, we could say the passage gives us one main concept of Gospel Service and then three results, but four aspects. Let's look at these four aspects, and I think you'll understand what I'm saying. So we'll start with the main concept of Gospel service, and it's this:

## 1. Gospel Service Comes From God's Provision

There are a millions ways that you could serve here at Perry Creek. OK, maybe not a million, but a lot. You could serve with us here on Sunday Morning. This may surprise you, but it takes a LOT of people to pull off a Sunday Morning service here at Perry Creek. In fact, John Maiden and I were adding it up the other day and how many teams, not people, but teams of people do you think we have to have to execute a Sunday Morning service? Eleven, everyone from service planning to media to setup to the band to children's ministry to First Impressions Team - 11 Teams! Let me tell you, you could serve here on a Sunday Morning!

You could serve here at River Bend. We have lots of opportunities with All Pro Dads, with teacher encouragement, with Fall Festival, lots of places to serve here! You could serve in an outreach event. At the end of October, we'll be doing our Halloween Outreach. You may want to set up a Perry Creek table in your neighborhood or at the 5401, and there are other outreach activities.

Or you could serve on a Missions Activity. As you heard, we have a team in Virginia right now. Or you could go to Oak City Care Point or Mexico or Honduras. There are tons of places to serve here at Perry Creek!

But with all of them, our goal is not just for you to do service. Our goal is gospel service. When I say Gospel Service, I mean, yes, service that advances the gospel that makes the gospel known. But even more than that, I mean service that comes out of the gospel. Service that is an expression of what God has done for us in the gospel!

Let me show you what I mean. To do this, I'm going to need a little bit of help. I'm going to ask the Okam kids, Chinomso and Ifyeani, to join me here. I could have just done this with slides, but I just thought it would be better if I had some helpers, and the Okam kids normally fall asleep while I'm preaching. Just kidding! Here's what I want you to do. Which of you is more responsible? Chinomso, I want you to be Works, so hold this arrow and that represents our works, our good deeds, our Service to God. Ifyeani, you get to be Grace! So hold this big circle.

So you're Grace and you are Service. Now most people and most religions, in fact I think all religions, see the relationship between Grace and Service in this way: works on my right. In other words, I do my good works, my service, because that's what gets me into God's grace. In other words, my service gets me God's approval. It gets me in good books with God in makes my life work. Because as I do this, I'm kind of obligating God to be nice to me! I mean I may need God's help, but the more service I do the deeper into God's grace I go. The more he loves me. So I do this to get into this.

That's the way most people and most religions look at it. If you're Muslim do the five pillars, and you're good with God. If you're Buddhist, not that you believe in God but you walk the eight-fold path. If you're Jewish, you keep the Law. That's the way most people look at it. In

fact, you may have grown up with that kind of view of your good deeds in a Christian Church. Say your "Hail Mary's." Go to church. Avoid mortal sins, and you're good!

You do this to get into this: OK, that is 100% opposed to the gospel. That mindset is counter to what the New Testament teaches. Because what does the New Testament teach? Jesus did it for me. Jesus did it.

Remember last week when we looked at that passage from Hebrews how did the passage start? "Because of what Jesus did. Because of what Jesus did." See, the gospel teaches me this. If I have placed my trust in Christ, I am already in God's good graces because of what Jesus did. Jesus has already obeyed God. I'm never going to be more obedient than Jesus! He has already made a perfect sacrifice for sin, and God has exchanged Jesus' status for mine. The Bible says "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin so that we (you, me, Ifyeani) might be made the righteousness of God in him."

So that, listen, I cannot get any more into God's grace than I already am. There's nothing you can do to make God love you more. If you have trusted in Jesus, you're already there! If you look in the very center of God's love and grace, here's what you'll see. Ifyeani, no you'll see you! Through Jesus you are already there!

So there's NO POINT in you serving to get into God's Grace. You don't get into this circle through works. You only get into that circle one way, and that is by trusting in Jesus. Some people would say "Oh OK. I know what happens to work then! If you don't need good works/service to get into the circle, they're just going to go away right? Because there's no reason for them, right?"

WRONG!!! Service doesn't go away. What happens to it? It does this (Move arrow to left). It comes out of God's Grace! We're not working to earn God's favor. We're working out of his favor! We're working out of Grace, and we're working out of God's resources! We are taking his Grace: His forgiveness, not ours. His love, not ours. His skills, not ours. His money, not ours. We are sharing that with others. That is exactly what this passage says again and again. Look at what Peter says:

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides.*

- 1 Peter 4:10-11

Let me ask you some questions about what Peter says here. What are we using to serve others? A gift that we have received. What are we administering giving to other people? God's Grace. Whose words do we speak? God's. Whose strength do we serve with? God's. Do you see what Peter is saying? We're not serving to get into God's grace. We are serving out of God's grace!

But listen, that's the gospel mindset. That's the difference between Service and Gospel Service. We are serving out of God's riches, out of his Grace, his resources. We want every good deed, every bit of service, really everything that we do for God to come out of the grace that's the gospel mindset.

We point this out almost every week when we take up our offering. We encourage you to give generously. We encourage you to regularly give a portion of your income, like 10%. That's a lot! But why do we say we do that? Not out of guilt, not out of shame (I don't have any idea who gives what around here), not out of trying to get into good books with God as Kelley regularly points out, that's NOT why we give! So why do we give? Out of gratitude! Out of faith! We give to say this came from God's grace. It all belongs to him, and he's got more. We can trust him to give us what we need. So we're not giving to earn God's favor we're giving out of God's favor.

What goes for money, goes for everything we do. It's out of the gospel! We forgive others not out of our goodness or because of their goodness. We forgive because of God's goodness. We are sharing his forgiveness with others. The passage says when we speak, when we do "I believe in Jesus because," when we counsel and encourage one another and pray with one another, it's not our words as though it's generated by our cleverness. It's not our good advice rather we seek to share God's words. The words given to us by his Spirit. That's what we're trying to share. If we're going to work, we with the strength that God provides. That's my prayer for our team in Virginia that God will give them strength. There are times in Mexico when I don't have the strength on my own to do what needs to be done. We pray for God's strength.

The point is it's his resources, his grace, we serve out of, not ours. That's what I mean when I say "Gospel Service." That's the way we want every person here at Perry Creek to serve out of God's Grace, out of gratitude out of his resources. So (1) Gospel service comes from God's provision. Now the passage goes on to show us three other aspects of gospel service and these are really results of the fact that Gospel Service comes from God's provision. So, Gospel service comes from God's provision number two:

## 2. Gospel Service Is Joyful Service

God wants his people to serve joyfully! Did you know that? In the Old Testament, God told Israel to serve him joyfully! In the New Testament, in the book of Colossians, it says “Whatever you do in word or deed do in Jesus’ name with a thankful heart” 2 Corinthians says “God loves a cheerful giver” Everything we do for God should be done joyfully.

We see this in our passage. It tells us to serve joyfully. Well it kind of does, in a backwards way. Look at what Peter says:

*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

*- 1 Peter 4:9*

I find this verse a little bit humorous because, if you think about it, hospitality is like the opposite of grumbling. When you say someone is hospitable, you mean they have an ability to make their guests happy, to put them at ease, to be welcoming cheerful hosts. Grumbling is kind of like the opposite of that. But we can do it, can’t we? We can serve people in a non-joyful way!

Maybe you heard about the Pastor who went over to a church-member’s house for dinner and when it came time to bless the food the mother turned to nine year old boy and said “Timmy, why don’t you say the blessing?” And the kid said “Aw, Mom I don’t know how to pray.” The mom who was embarrassed said “Of course, you do just say that prayer that you hear mommy pray whenever we have company for dinner.” He said “Are you sure?” She said “Yeah.” He said “Dear Lord, why did I invite all these stupid people over to my house?”

We can grumble, can’t we? It’s not just with hospitality. We can get grumbly with any service we do, grumbly about our setting up every week or about our Small Group, grumbly about coordinating with the school. I can get grumbly about the sermon. It can be with anything. Peter’s telling us NOT to do that. The last thing a person wants is to be served by someone who resents serving them! We should serve joyfully.

So how do we do that? How do we serve gladly joyfully? Well I’m sure that there are other factors pointed out in other passages, but in this passage, Peter points to one factor again and again. To help you see what that factor is, I’m going to need Chinomso to come and assist me again. Chinomso, do you know what’s going on? All you know is that your mom threw you under the bus and volunteered you for this and that you were supposed to bring some of your money that you’ve saved up in small unmarked bills, right? So this is your money, right? Did you have to do anything crazy to earn it?

OK, well here’s what I want you to do: I want you to give some of it away: Now on a scale of one-to-one how much fun was that? Was it joyful? OK, we’re done. Just kidding! Now let’s try something else. Here’s some of my money. Try giving that away. I just have a simple question. Which is more fun? Giving away your stuff or giving away my stuff? I can tell you I had a lot

more fun when you were giving away your stuff, not mine. Now just so you know God provides here is your money back plus a little interest! Now what is the point I'm making here and what does Chinomso's money have to do with Joyful Gospel Service? Just this: It's easier to be joyful when you're giving someone else's resources away! It's so much easier when it's someone else's stuff! It's easier to serve when you're not serving out of your own resources. Here's the thing: God doesn't call us to do that. He never calls us to serve him just out of our own resources. That's why Gospel Service is joyful service. We are serving out of God's resources. That's what Peter says in this passage:

*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. So be joyful*

*Then what's the very next thing he says? he explains how we are going to exercise hospitality without grumbling*

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, --it's not our stuff It's not however much of your own stuff you want to give away it's whatever gift we have received to serve others faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

*It's the gift we have received that we are sharing then he gives us a couple of examples:*

*If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.*

*That doesn't mean that you are speaking by direct inspiration or ex-Cathedra or anything it just means that you share with them what God shares with you.*

*- 1 Peter 4:7-11*

You share God's resources and that takes the pressure off. There are times when I will work hard on a sermon, and then go over it with Kelley. I'm not happy with it. It doesn't flow the way I want, or I don't think it's funny enough. I start to stress about it. You know what she almost always asks me when that happens? Is that the sermon God gave you? Then that's what you give them. You don't have to stress and worry. Share with them what God shared with you.

Then he says: If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides. Again, he's saying share God's resources with them. OK now listen: That's generous gospel serving. Because of the gospel, we believe that we serve a generous God who has all the time, all the money, all the strength, all the resources that we need to do what he calls us to do. Because of the gospel, we believe he's going to share those with us. We are in his good graces. Think about it. He's already given the life of his Son for us. Why would he hold back on the little stuff? We serve out of his resources and that makes us joyful.

Let me say one more thing before I move on. There is just joy in serving. Last year was a heavy year of service for our church, but I loved it! I've never been part of a church that really served the community, but I love it! There were a lot of times last year when I was going "I don't have time to do this. I don't have time to go to River Bend and serve, or I don't have time to do this outreach or to go to Mexico. But you know what God always provided, and he provided joy! I was never sorry I did it! Because when you're serving, you get your eyes off yourself and you are reminded that you serve a purpose in God's Kingdom. You get to see God provide and work,

and all those things bring real joy. I hope you know the joy of serving! So (1) Gospel Service comes from God's provision, and (2) Gospel service is joyful service

### 3. Gospel Service Is Excellent Service

I'm not going to go into a lot of detail here, but let me say it's just true. When you serve out of God's riches, it just makes you want to serve with excellence!

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.*

- Colossians 3:23

I love the way the Message translates that verse. It says Don't just do the minimum. That will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God. We should do excellent work. Peter hints at that in our passage:

*If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.*

- 1 Peter 4:11

Now, Peter's not saying there that we speak by direct inspiration, but he is saying this: We should take that job of speaking, of teaching, of counseling seriously. It's worth paying attention to. It's worth doing with excellence. Then he goes on to say: If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. He's saying we should take our work seriously and we should do the kind of work that brings praise. Gospel service is excellent service. We want to be excellent in what we do.

So many of you do that so well! Thank you! I'm tempted to name names, but I know I would unintentionally leave people out so let me just say "Thank you" for doing your job with excellence! Thank you for caring for paying attention to detail for saying "Just good enough isn't good enough." Thank you for your excellence.

When Kelley and I were talking to Principle Major a few months ago, he specifically thanked Perry Creek for the excellence of what we do. He said "Word has gotten around, and now when they have a school event, the parents ask 'Is the church doing it?'" because they know we will do it with excellence!

I don't say that to be all "Rah! Rah! Perry Creek!" I say that because I think it matters, and I think that pleases God. It is a reflection of God's generosity in the gospel. We serve the same Father, who when the Prodigal Son came home didn't just say "Yeah, I guess you can come into the house" he said "Put the best robe on him put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And make a feast!" God is so generous with us he doesn't do the minimum. So we want to be generous with other people. We want the gospel to move us to excellence. Gospel service is excellent service.

So Gospel Service (1) Comes from God's provision, (2) It is joyful service, and (3) It's excellent service. Now lastly:

#### 4. Gospel Service Glorifies God

Look at the end of verse 11. Here's how Peter ends his instruction on service:

*If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

- 1 Peter 4:11

So think about what Peter has said in this passage. We are to administer GOD's grace. We are to speak the words of GOD. We are to serve with the strength GOD provides. Why? Why do we do that? One reason: To make much of Jesus. So that in all things, God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

This, again, is why Gospel Service is so important here at Perry Creek. See if I serve out of my own strength, my own wisdom, my own resources, then it makes much of me! Right? It encourages people to say "Look how generous John is. Look how devoted John is. Look how clever John is." By the way, no one ever says that! But if I serve with God's resources, if I serve with his strength, with his words, with his love, with his joy, with his excellence, then I'll keep pointing back to him. I'll keep making much of him.

If that happens, our Discipleship Pathway will come full circle. We will go all the way from becoming disciples to being disciples to making disciples. Because if we serve making much of Jesus, people will want to know about Jesus and we'll get the chance to tell them. That will glorify God. Let me close today by asking two simple questions:

The first is just this: Are you serving here at Perry Creek? Let me encourage you to do that. It's part of your discipleship. If you need a place to serve, talk to your Small Group leader or talk to John Maiden or to Kelley or to me we'll find a place!

Secondly, if you're serving, is it Gospel service? Does it come from his provision? Is it joyful? Is it excellent? Does it glorify him?

Let's all serve.