

Beautiful People #3 “Serving the Church” – 1 Peter 4:10-11

V11b “If anyone serves they should do so with the strength God provides”.

- We’re in wk 3 of our sermon series on what the Bible teaches about the church
 - (with an all age service and a thanksgiving also in the mix),
- We’ve thought about
 - **Being the church.**
 - Starting in the Psalms we saw we are the bride of Christ.
 - Whatever our marital status, he loves us, the church is a miracle of different people united together in Jesus.
 - **Growing the church.**
 - Starting with Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John’s gospel.
 - We saw that if we are one: loving each other and being united, the world will actually be pointed to our message about Jesus and they’ll want to know more.
 - Today we think about **Serving the Church.**
 - With 2 verses from 1 Peter.
 - It’s actually good timing as it’s the Sunday we ask people to let us know when they can serve as we prepare the next rota for the various tasks needed on a Sunday to keep the show on the road.
- But we all know that it’s so easy to serve in the wrong way,
 - Either to do it in a way that we get noticed by others at church
 - Or to leave all the serving to other people
 - Or to get resentful because we feel others aren’t pulling their weight
- These are just some of the pitfalls that we discussed in our lifegroup last week, and you may have thought of others.
 - Well I hope that these 2 verses from Peter’s first letter are hugely helpful.
 - 3 points.

1) SERVE WITH GOD’S GIFTS

V10 “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms”.

- Straightaway we are reminded that serving isn’t primarily about us!
 - The verse is about God and about others.
- Stay tuned as we look at various parts of v10.
- Peter, like Paul in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is speaking about **gifts**.
 - And a gift, by definition is something that doesn’t originate with you.
 - Can you play the piano?
 - Can you drive a car?
 - Are you able to give generously to the church or Christian causes?
 - Are you blessed with the ability to lead a Bible study?

- Or with the ability to talk to lots of different kinds of people?
 - Are you good with spreadsheets or social media?
 - Has God made it easier for you than many to share the gospel boldly?
 - Do you find that God has sometimes given you just the right words to say to comfort or help somebody?
- They are gifts from God.
 - The word **grace** (undeserved kindness) is also in the verse.
- Don't take credit for any of these.
- Wow. Well with that in mind...I look around the church and I see how the Lord has blessed us abundantly with gifts.
 - Praise God! *To him be the glory great things he has done!*
- The Bible has around 4 lists of gifts in the New Testament, but they are all slightly different suggesting there's loads of different gifts.
- But v10 reminds us they are God's gifts.
 - Just like God has all the money in the world,
 - But he's put some of it in your bank account!
 - He's put gifts into your body and personality.
- We are to be **stewards**- that's the word in v10.
 - Use what you've been given to help others.
- And they are for the sake **of others**.
 - Why do you think God has put money in your account?
 - To pay for food, yes,
 - To replace your dishwasher, yes
 - To save for the kids yes
 - But also to bless others.
 - Why has God given you the gift of understanding technology?
 - So you can build a website yes!
 - So you can do your online shop, yes!
 - But also to bless others!
 - To help a granny or grandad in church who's struggling with it
 - To run the PA desk so that Brenda who can't get out can watch!
 - To help relaunch our Facebook account.
 - Next, We all have gifts- notice the "**Each of you**" at the start of the sentence. At the reformation, the church rediscovered the so called priesthood of all believers. Ministry wasn't limited to priests in churches or monks in monasteries, but every believer was part of the royal priesthood, and everyone was able to minister to others with the gifts they have been given.

- And they are all different, look at the “**various forms**” at the end of the sentence. Could be translated variegated or multifaceted, even multicoloured.
 - Emma was a women and children’s worker in a church in Australia.
 - One woman introduced herself said, I can’t lead a Bible study or help with kids work but if you need a spreadsheet, I’m your woman! Different gifts that God has given each of us.

- So **SERVE WITH GOD’S GIFTS.**

- Maybe you are not sure what your gifts are.
 - Why not ask someone who’s close to you to help you.
 - Why not just get out there and start serving, and meeting needs around you, and you’ll find out what gifts you have.

 - We actually have a **gifts survey** (there’s a few copies on the way out and I’ll put it in the weekly news) if that would help.
 - But a gift isn’t a right.

- Vaughan Roberts my old pastor, has written a book called “True Worship” and there’s a chapter on gifts.

- ▲ And he imagines a church where there are tons of people with the gift of the bassoon.
 - These people are really proud.
 - And they can all play the bassoon beautifully
 - They almost give off the aura that if you are really a keen Christian you should play the bassoon too.
 - And they insist that because they have been given the gift of the bassoon they have the right to use it.
 - So there’s chaos, 50 people playing the bassoon at the same time.
 - (My dad actually plays the bassoon)
 - But the solution isn’t “my gift is my right so I’ll use it”.
 - Rather, “how can I
 - as the person God has made me
 - with the gifts he has given me
 - serve the people around me to build them up”.

- So here’s the application, and you’ll see that all the applications this morning are little prayers.
- 🔄 **ASK GOD HOW YOU CAN SERVE OTHERS.**
 - Why not talk to God.
 - Lord I love you, I want to serve you, please open the right doors.

- And then perhaps talk to one of us, one of the elders when you hand in your commitment form, or Charis on the door, or me or Beth
 - Ask what the needs are.
 - Keep an eye out for things as they arise on the prayer meeting sheet or on Whatsapp, and think about how you can serve.
 - It may be a very informal way, dropping a meal to a family in need.
 - Visiting someone from your lifegroup.
- Joining the welcome team.
- But before you fill in the rota form why not start with a prayer.

Well, that already **relieves some of the burden** of serving when we see that we are to serve with God's gifts. But nevertheless "serve" as a verb still sounds heavy.

Well look at the next verse.

~~First there's a reference to **Word gifts**. Not necessarily just preaching and teaching (though I'm grateful that our preachers recognise they are not making up the message but teaching what God has said in the Bible), but potentially it includes every time that someone shares Bible truth with someone else in a group or individually. Well we have to remember that we are to speak God's words – we are to stay true to the Bible in our counselling, our advice, or even just the chit chat we have after lifegroup. And what a joy that is that we have a speaking God who has told us what to say.~~

But he goes onto talk about where the energy comes from...

2) SERVE WITH GOD'S STRENGTH.

- *V11 "if anyone serves they should do so with the strength God provides"*
 - Isn't that a relief?
- God will provide the help, the strength, the energy! WE may get...
 - Butterflies as we do our first little bit of teaching in GSMA,
 - Nervousness as we get an email from Charis asking if we can do the prayers in church.
 - Feelings of exhaustion at all the planning that needs to happen for GenR8's Easter Assemblies or a Christian summer camp.
- The Strength GOD PROVIDES!
- The word is a really interesting one.
 - It actually refers originally to someone who would pay the bill for a choir.
 - I didn't realise until one of my daughter's latin homework this week, that in Roman times you didn't necessarily pay when you went into the theatre, but a rich benefactor would pay the bill to gain prestige or honour the gods.
 - So someone would supply the needs or furnish the bill, by paying for a chorus of singers or actors.

- Same word in 2 Cor 9:10 when speaking of giving... *“Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness”.*
- Wonderful. We don’t need to do things in our own strength, relying on human motivation, human energy, human resources.
 - God will provide the energy, God will provide the people.
- We’ve seen this in recent days.
 - Our kids and youth work has been quite stretched.
 - We’ve been praying for new workers for the harvest field- at CCHY and at FEED- our teenage outreach to kids in the town.
 - And wonderfully God has provided.
- So how are you serving in church?
- We are SO grateful to everyone who gives so much of their time and energy to CCH to make things happen.
 - Our council
 - Our kids work
 - On a Sunday
 - The hospitality that goes on behind the scenes
 - The prayer support
 - Just building relationships with people and loving them.
- It is truly remarkable. Thank you! You are a servant hearted church.
- But how do we know whether we are doing the right amount?
Here’s the application
- ➡ ASK FOR WISDOM TO SAY YES/NO!
- I’ve found a phrase in Christopher Ash’s little book “zeal without burnout” very helpful.
 - He talks about “sustainable sacrifice”.
 - Ministry is Cross shaped.
 - It’s how love works. We see a need, it will be costly to us to love someone else, but we gladly **pay** that sacrifice for the sake of the **benefits** it will bring to others.
 - Jesus did that on the cross.

- We are to walk in his footsteps.
- But we aren't actually serving others if we throw ourselves in with such energy that we burn out and quit half way through.
- Sacrifice but SUSTAINABLE Sacrifice.
 - We look to God for the energy we need, but that brings wisdom in terms of yes, stretching ourselves.
- Perhaps some of us need to say YES more.
 - There's more we could do.
 - Perhaps we are newer to the church
 - and we just have assumed that refreshments or the tech desk happens every Sunday.
 - Perhaps we've been here for a while,
 - but we're slightly on consumer mode (what can I get)
 - rather than service mode (what can I give).
 - Is there more you can do?
 - As you fill in your membership form and give it to one of the elders, could you have a conversation about where you could serve?
- But perhaps some of us need to say NO more.
 - When we started our church we had a lot of singles and young marrieds. But now a lot of them have young kids
 - Some of our senior folk are getting older
 - Some have non-Christian family
 - It's OK to say no!
 - I recently said no to being involved with a role at AMiE.
 - I find it difficult.
 - Someone said "every time you say no, you are making your yeses of a better quality".
 - We mustn't be lazy, and shirk the cross that Jesus calls us to.
 - But probably our danger is more the other way.
 - And we aren't serving others if we have to give up a ministry half way through because we've jumped into it too quickly.
- And so there's a constant wisdom call for each of us as individuals / households,
 - But also as how we do things as a church.
 - We are constantly walking a tightrope
 - between good works that we can see God laying before us to reach more people in Huntingdon.
 - Yet thinking through the cost, can we pull this off- as Jesus said, if you are going to build a tower, you need to first sit down and think

through how much it is going to cost (Luke 14:28).

- We'll need God's wisdom in the coming year for what the Lord is calling us to in the next season of our church, and we're not clear, we're praying, but we'll talk more about that at the Annual Church Meeting.

Recap 1. Recap 2.

But I wonder if the last area also helps with all this.

It focuses on the big aim and motivation behind it all...

V11... *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? Amen.*

3) SERVE TO GOD'S GLORY

- *One life will soon be passed, only what's done for Christ will last.*
- We don't help at church so that we can piggyback our glory onto Jesus' glory
 - Oh isn't he a great guitar player
 - Oh isn't she brilliant with the kids
 - Isn't he a dynamic speaker.
- We do it for Christ.
 - *One life will soon be passed only what's done for Christ will last.*
- Do you remember that embarrassing conversation Jesus had with his disciples:
 - They were arguing about who was the greatest.
 - Jesus said "*anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all*" (Luke 9:35)
 - And then he took a little child, hardly the key to fame and fortune and importance and he said "*Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.*"
- So serve to God's glory.
- Do it for Jesus. The audience of one!
- I see a lot of the service that happens in our church, and I am so thankful.
- But it's just the tip of the iceberg.
 - I don't see you cutting out fruit of the Spirit late at night in preparation for a kids session.
 - I don't see hours of labour to overhaul the safeguarding document or on the church budget.

- I don't see you praying behind the scenes for each member of your lifegroup.
- But Jesus does!
 - Don't do it for me, or for your own glory, do it for Jesus!
- ➔ Application: **ASK FOR THE SPIRIT'S HELP TO LOVE OTHERS.**
- A couple of years ago we had this gentleman join us for a church away day (it was in the days before we had church weekends).
 - John Hindley.
 - And he's written a great book called *Serving without sinking*.
- And he did 2 talks on ***"The church that cares- "how to grow a church culture that is truly Christ-centred and practically loving when life at work and church is so busy."***
 - I listened to those talks again this week while I was driving. Hugely helpful. They are still on the website.
 - And he tells a story of a time when a bunch of them went to help a lady in church to move house. And it was quite late when it started, he was tired, he didn't want to go. They weren't going to finish until the small hours.
 - Initially he felt good about himself for going to serve someone at church, but then he realised that he wasn't loving her. He was going out of obligation and duty, not out of love.
 - And he realised was sinning. Though he was doing the "right" thing, he wasn't loving God or loving his neighbour. And then he realised it was impossible.
 - He couldn't do it out of love, unless God worked a miracle of the Holy Spirit in his heart. Actually that was very liberating, and so he prayed. He said "Lord I'm sinning, and I can't repent of this sin, I need you to fill me with your Spirit so that I might love my sister in Christ". And by the time he arrived, he wanted to be there, and the Spirit had put love for her in his heart, and he joyfully got on with serving her wholeheartedly.
- We as a church are encouraging everyone to fill in one of these commitment forms, and commitment is a dirty word in today's world.
 - Few people commit to relationships, to promises in business and government, to roles in community, there's very little stickability.

- And as you look at all the tickboxes on the page, it can be a bit overwhelming. Giving, serving, praying.
- But we can commit to love Jesus and love one another and love Huntingdon because God has given us the Holy Spirit, and he will work in us the miracle of
 - serving with HIS gifts
 - in HIS strength
 - and for HIS Glory.
- **Let's pray for that!**