

Faith in Action

Week 13: The Joy of Serving

Sixty years ago tomorrow, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood on a makeshift podium on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and delivered his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech. One of the most powerful and important speeches in American History.

And, I only found out earlier this year that, the most famous part of his speech that day, the “I have a dream” part, wasn’t in his original script. In fact, depending on who you read, King’s speech that day kinda started off as a dud. Everyone could tell he was nervous because of the crowd and the cameras and the weight of the moment. He wasn’t the engaging communicator that had become the leader of the Civil Rights movement.

Maybe sensing something was up, Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, who was standing next to him, shouted, “Tell them about the dream, Martin!” So, he gathered himself, and he went off script. He had written a version of the “dream” speech and even used parts of it before, but in that moment, he wasn’t reading from a page, he was sharing his heart. He was passionately proclaiming the culmination of his life’s work.

And his famous words, “I have a dream...” not only echoed across the National Mall 60 years ago tomorrow; they continue to echo today.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. dedicated his life first and foremost to Jesus. His entire ministry philosophy and approach to the Civil Rights movement reflected the actions and attitude of Christ, especially in the way he was deeply rooted in serving others. The importance of serving others was seen in his life, and it came out in so many of his sermons and writings.

One of my favorite sermons of his is called *The Drum Major Instinct*. He preached it on February 4th, 1968. He said two things that I think are still so good for us today. He said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” What are you doing for others? Are you helping them? Putting their needs above your own? Are you making a difference in anyone’s life?

And then, I love this part. He said, “Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” A heart full of grace and a soul generated by love. When those two things come together, it’s an unstoppable force for good. Put another way, it can be an unstoppable force for God.

When we put our faith into action in the way we love and serve others, there’s no limit to what God will do in us and through us. But, when it comes to living out our faith, I think many of us make it more difficult than it actually is. We want to add all of this religious stuff on top of it and we make it so complicated that we think, “I can’t do this! I can’t put my faith into action.”

But, the Apostle Paul gets right to the heart of it and clears out all of the weeds for us. He says in Galatians 5:6, listen, **"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."** A heart full of grace and a soul generated by love that says, "Here I am, Lord. Use me to serve others." That's at the heart of putting our faith into action.

And today, I asked some friends to join me to talk about how they are putting their faith into action by loving others and serving them. Would you please help me welcome our panel to the stage?

Interview

1. Introduce yourself and tell us where and how you are currently serving.
2. What prompted you to start serving in that way? How did you feel going into it? Excited, nervous, unqualified, etc.
3. What do you enjoy about serving where you are? What are some challenges?
4. What is something you've learned about putting your faith into action by serving others?
5. Is there a story that captures the impact serving others has had on you or that you've had on someone else?
6. What would you say to the person who's thinking about getting off the sidelines and into the game? Maybe thinking about joining us at ServeFinder this afternoon, but they're still on the fence? Why should the step out and serve someplace?

As in all things, Jesus is our example for this. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus says this in **John 13:34 and 35...(READ)**

This new command wasn't just to be added to all the others. This was a new command that superseded all the others. It's a command to love as he loved us. And, he wants to make sure we get it, because over the course of the night, he repeats it a couple different times.

John 15:12...(READ)

John 15:17...(READ)

And that all sounds good. Love each other. But, what does it mean? How do we do it? Jesus didn't just tell us to love one another, he modeled it for us. He showed us what "faith expressing itself through love" looks like, and it's in serving. We love others by putting their needs above our own. We love others by thinking more highly of them than we do ourselves. We love others by serving them.

This is how Jesus loved us, which is why I believe, and I've said it many times before, **You are never more like Jesus than when you serve.** And all it takes to serve is a heart that's been transformed by God's grace and a soul that is generated by love.

So, how can we put this into practice? Well, I'm glad you asked! If you are looking for a place to serve, we have an event for you! **ServeFinder (graphic)!** And, listen, there aren't many times when an application to a sermon comes with a free meal and childcare, but this one does. So, if you want to get plugged into serving somewhere in our church or community, stick around. If you're not sure where you want to serve, I'm leading a little workshop during one of our breakouts and I'd love to help you get moving in the right direction!

If you're already serving somewhere, then invite someone who's not serving to join you! Go to ServeFinder with them. Take them to your ministry's breakout. Connect them somehow and get them plugged in!

We're not doing any of this because we want something from you. We want something for you. We want you to experience the joy of serving that you saw in our panel today. The joy of giving your life away for the good of someone else. The joy of following Jesus and loving others the way he loved you. By putting your faith into action and serving.