

## **“Necessary Traumas – Service”** {Outline}

**Isaiah 53:3-12; John 13:12-20**

February 11, 2024

### Necessary Traumas Recap

- Over the past several weeks, I've advanced the idea that growing up comes with a series of what I've called "Necessary Traumas."
- What I mean by that is that development, actual growth, it requires a measure of pain.
  - o It doesn't necessarily HAVE to, we've talked about that
    - Touch the Burner/Don't touch the burner
  - o But I think most people, at heart, are burner touchers
- So, it stands to reason that, merely by living life, you're going to get funneled into these deep awarenesses that you really need to successfully navigate life.
- My premise is this – Growing up in the Christian Way is going to lead you to these moments.
  - o Moments of deep learning.
  - o They may be, in fact they will be, painful.
  - o But you will emerge from them changed, and changed for the better.
- So, what've we talked about.
  - o Well, I told you about my Underoos experience
    - I learned to learn that sometimes, when I want to blame others, I need to realize that the problem is actually me.
  - o Then I told you about Ms. Barksdale, how she made me go back to first grade to work on my writing?
    - I used that to show us how, even once you're in the Christian faith, you can get sloppy and undisciplined pretty quick.
  - o Last week, I told you about a difficult lesson I had to learn about forgiveness, namely, that you actually have to do it to bless both your community and yourself.
- This week, I want to talk about what I should've called, "The Scandal of Service."
  - o What do I mean by that? Well, have you just taken in the air of the world right now?
  - o People today are seduced by this idea of passive income
    - What's that?
    - Simply put, it's money that you spend to create largely "work free income"
      - One basic method would be to accumulate dividend stocks, that's passive income
      - Owning rental units, that's passive income
    - And believe me, there's no problem with this. Well, maybe a few but that's a story for another day.
  - o But we need to recognize something. There may be PASSIVE INCOME in the world, but there should NEVER BE PASSIVE CHRISTIANITY.
- Simply stated, the Christian walk is one populated with SERVICE TO OTHERS.
- So let me tell you a story...

### Duke Divinity School Story

- As many of you know, I went to Duke Divinity.
- It sounds majorly expensive and it can be.
- Thankfully though, there's tons of work-study money and, get this, it's provided largely by churches.
- When I got to Duke though, I couldn't work at a church in paid Duke network one because I was driving home to Charlotte to be with my wife on the weekend.
- I ended up working with this social justice group called "The Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham."
  - o They were some well-meaning folks but they were terribly disorganized.
    - Add me to the mix, things didn't get much better right?

- Well, anyway, I'd worked in the service industry for years by this point and was looking forward to doing some MENTAL WORK.
- Being on these committees, well, it was actually quite cushy work.
  - o You talk, you think, you don't really get much done but you still manage to go home and think pretty highly of yourself.
- Long story short, we were coming up on the biggest conference the group did all year.
  - o I was looking forward to being a speaker, a leader, one of the eggheads, right?
    - Until they group figured out that nobody had actually BOOKED A CATERER
- We were 3 days out with 200 people coming.
  - o Guess what the Coalition for a Non-Violent Durham knew?
  - o I used to be a caterer
- Man, was I bummed.
  - o 200 people is no joke – it's a lot of work and I knew I was going to have to do all of the advance work and most of the actual prep work myself.
  - o I was BUMMED
    - It seemed to me at the time a real DEMOTION.
    - Like, anybody can cook, right? What the Coalition for a NONVIOLENT Durham needed was my precious mind.
- But I did the job
- Here's what I discovered
  - o I connected with more people
  - o The feelings of satisfaction were much deeper and much more long lasting.
- Now let's think a little more about Jesus.

#### Jesus the Servant

- We read a passage this morning from Isaiah.
- Called the Suffering Servant section, the book of Isaiah prophetically TELLS US ABOUT JESUS AHEAD OF TIME.
  - o That's pretty cool, isn't it? God told us about Jesus long before He came so that, when He did COME the faithful would recognize Him.
- But the language is stark
  - o This Man of God is to be a servant and a suffering one at that?
    - IS there any other kind, I wonder?
      - Really, probably not. All service requires you to sacrifice a personal good in exchange for a shared one.
        - o I take my time that I could use for myself and instead dedicate my thought and effort to doing something that ultimately benefits someone else than it does myself.
          - In a nutshell, that's service.
- And what does the Bible tell us about Jesus?
  - o That at his core, at a foundational level, He was and IS a SERVANT!
- Now wow, that's an easy thing to say but I want you to just take a moment and think about what that MEANS.
  - o Cause here's what the Bible tells us about Jesus ON TOP OF THE FACT that He was a Savior and a Servant. Listen to this reading from Colossians.
    - **Colossians 1:15-20** – *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and*

*through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”*

- Let me work that through with you a bit.
  - Here, in Colossians, we hear that Jesus is the co-creator of the whole deal
    - Makes sense right, trinity and all that.
  - But what does that mean about the universe?
    - That it was created by a Creature of Infinite power, wisdom and authority who is IN THE FULLNESS OF HIS BEING A SERVANT
- Boom, that's the special sauce when it comes to this deal.
  - The foundational awareness that the reality we live in was created as a GIFT IN ORDER TO BLESS US.
- Wow – Mind blowing.
  - Think about how that reverses things.
  - You begin to understand EXACTLY WHAT JESUS SAID when he told us this
    - **John 14:27** – *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”*
    - Jesus makes us realize something
- Wired into CREATION ITSELF is the aim of giving instead of taking
  - Really, sometime today, allow that awareness to deeply penetrate your mind before the Chiefs play the Niners.
    - Notice something about the EARTH – it GIVES US THINGS
      - In a rudimentary way that we need to be careful in our understanding of, creation is a gift which reflects the heart of our creator – it gives, it serves.
- Now realize this, wired into you is the same effect.
  - Genesis 1 and all that – you are made in the image of your creator who was, is and always shall be, a servant.
- Now, look at your life?
- ARE YOU MAXIMALLY IN A POSITION TO SERVE OTHERS?

#### The Christian Life

- Now here's where some people come in and say, okay, then let's leave all this worship and WORD stuff behind and just go serve.
  - Okay, I agree. Let's do that.
- What are we going to encounter?
  - Well, I can tell you.
  - Remember that old axiom – no good deed goes unpunished? Well, I think we can all concede its' truth in a way.
  - Well, go out and do a bunch of good deeds and, guess what, you're going to get burned out, bitter unless you're taking care of yourself.
- STORY HERE – YOU NEED BOTH/
- You see, in order to be a servant, you need to be continually and ongoingly reminded of something
  - God's LOVE
  - God's PRESENCE
  - God's POWER
    - These things, brought forward only by deepening your understanding of the WORD
- Now you start to see where a whole lot of churches GO WRONG
  - Some wrap you up in theological systems where you get to thinking, hey, if I understand this stuff and believe what these people believe I'm a Christian.

- Others just launch people out into service, barely telling them the story of Jesus and expect it to turn out well.

### The Christian Life

- Is a life of service to others paired with the ongoing study of the Word, buttressed by corporate worship and fellowship.
  - Notice – WHAT WE ARE DOING HERE AND RIGHT NOW?
    - It's only the support.
    - It necessarily ASSUMES the others.
- Transcendence
  - That's what we offer, some would insert the word, SELL here and I wouldn't argue too much, to be honest about it.
  - Basically, people come to church because they want to get closer to God.
    - Why – we're created in His image. This is a natural phenomenon.
    - And, guess what, when the fullness of the Christian WAY is encountered and lived, we score 100 percent.
      - You want to get closer to God? TO really feel His presence, to really know that you're not alone in the world?
        - OF COURSE YOU DO. EVERYONE DOES. IT's a primal drive.
- And, if we're honest in the Church, we're going to have to tell you, to deliver that? YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO WORK.
  - There is NO PASSIVE Christianity.
    - Read the Word, study, meditate on it daily
    - Make serving others the primary drive of your entire life
  - I promise, you WILL ACHIEVE the transcendence that you so desperately seek.
- Some churches though, well, they strive to deliver this all in one, one-hour worship service
  - They do it with flashy lights, deliberate engineered spaces designed to mesmerize people
  - They do it with high-energy, sentimental music, designed to foster corporate evanescence
  - They do it with catchy sermons carefully crafted using known social psychological techniques that border on psychological manipulation, often using teams of writers
  - The idea is to kind of rig the playing field to deliver just a brief taste of that transcendence.
    - AND THEY PROFIT, MASSIVELY, often putting their relatives and friends to work in a cash-cow business.
  - We wonder why nobody comes?
    - We don't use the right tricks, honestly.

### Real Transcendence

- Found in study and service
- Lyle