

**Sermon Series: “Intentional Disciples—Purposeful Ministry”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—4/2/2006**

**Title:** “Cross-eyed service”

**Text:** **Philippians 2: 1-8**

**Intro.:illus.:** *picture of cross-eyed person—did your parents say, “Don’t cross your eyes, they may get stuck that way?”*  
(**Print 2: 5**)

**Theme:** What would happen if our spiritual eye sight truly got stuck on cross-eyed and we began to look at our life’s relationships and encounters through the same eyes with which Jesus sees them?

**Coming out of our world we need a vision adjustment in our serving (Print Phil 2: 3-4)**

- Rejecting résumé stuffer service (*selfishness — aggressive competition*)
  1. None of us would ever want to be accused of this but how often don’t we serve with a “what’s in it for me” attitude
  2. Doing some service to “*show another*” or to “*prove a point*”
  3. **Ills.: Hitting the wrong target**
- Service that is not beneath being a servant (*vain conceit*)
  1. Is there some service to another that is beneath you? (*inconveniences you, disgusts you, endangers you*)
  2. Having an expendable ego – taking no offense for a slight for the greater good that is being done
  3. **Ills.: Pumping water in the Philippines — the sweat much doing little**
- Service that is not done with self in mind (*in humility highly valuing others above yourself*)
  1. Judgment and condescension ruin the service because it is not about the act you do for the other but the other
  2. The person you serve is a creation of God and it is someone for whom Jesus died, even if they don’t look like it

**Service begins at the cross of Jesus and must be seen through His cross**

- God pleasing service is not defined by the act but by the attitude of the heart
  1. “*Have this attitude which was also in Christ Jesus*” (5) – “think this way!”
  2. Don’t look at what you have done for God or others but what God has done through you for others
- Cross-eyed service is intentionally pouring yourself out for another
  1. Even though you should not have to do so (**Print and read vs. 6**)
    - a. Jesus did not give up his glory and his life because he had to but because he wanted to do so
    - b. It is what Jesus meant when he said, “*If you want to follow me, you must deny yourself.*” (Mark 8:34)
  2. Paul says that Jesus was “poured out” (**Print and read vs. 7**)
    - a. Paul also says, “*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come.*” 2Tim4:6
    - b. What keeps you from being poured out for something or someone who needs it, and there is nothing in it for you?
- Service is not about *what you look like* but is about *who you are*
  1. Paul describes Jesus’ service in character rather than performance terms (**Print and read vs. 7**)
    - a. **He took the form** – suffering the humiliation of the lowest of human existence to understand and save us
    - b. **Ills.: Taking the humiliation of our place**
    - c. **He became in essence a human being** – he identified with our very existence not being an alien or foreigner to it
    - d. **He donned the tent of our flesh** – willingly endure frailties of a human body (including death) to give us better
  2. It is involved in a *teachable and lead-able spirit* (**Print and read vs. 8**)
    - a. Jesus was willing to “listen” to the Father and “obey” his plan
    - b. **Ills.: Ben Franklin lesson on humility**

**Developing a Christ-servant attitude within your heart (Print and read Phil. 2: 1-2)**

- Stand alongside of others (paraclete) whom you serve because Jesus did
  1. As an *advocate, character witness* (encouragement)— defending their frail humanity in their greatest need
  2. *Cheering them on* (comfort) in the race home — make it your goal not to let them get knocked off course
- Climb inside the other’s shoes and walk because Jesus did
  1. Paul uses a very earthy term to describe the intimacy of service – *Splankna* — intestinal feeling (*tenderness*)
  2. That requires getting to know the one you are serving by investing time in their life
- Adopt a joined-at-the-soul attitude of service because Jesus did (*symphony of the soul*)
  1. One-minded (like-minded)— letting nothing settle in your thoughts to pollute or diminish your service
  2. One-hearted (same love) — “*you shall love your neighbor as you would love yourself*” Matt. 22: 39

### **Hitting the wrong target costly**

Matt Emmons had the gold medal in sight. He was one shot away from claiming victory in the 2004 Olympic 50-meter three-position rifle event. He didn't even need a bull's-eye to win. His final shot merely needed to be on target. Normally, the shot he made would have received a score of 8.1, more than enough for a gold medal. But in what was described as "an extremely rare mistake in elite competition," Emmons fired at the wrong target. Standing in lane two, he fired at the target in lane three. His score for a good shot at the wrong target??0. Instead of a medal, Emmons ended up in eighth place. It doesn't matter how accurate you are if you are aiming at the wrong goal. *Alan Price, Chatsworth, Georgia; source: David Mordkoff, "American Emmons Misses Out on Gold by Firing at Wrong Target," www.Spo*

### **Taking the humiliation of the other's place**

The story is told of a certain 9-year-old who is sitting at his desk in school when all of a sudden there is a puddle between his feet, and the front of his pants are wet. He thinks his heart is going to stop, because he knows when the boys find out, he'll never hear the end of it. And when the girls find out, they'll never speak to him again as long as he lives. The boy puts his head down and prays this prayer: "Dear God, this is an emergency! I need help now! Five minutes from now I'm dead meat." He looks up from his prayer, and here comes the teacher with a look in her eyes that says he's been discovered. As the teacher is coming to snatch him up, a classmate named Susie is carrying a goldfish bowl filled with water. She stumbles and dumps the goldfish bowl in his lap. He pretends to be angry but prays, "Thank you, Jesus! I'm born again!" Now, rather than being the object of ridicule, this kid is the object of sympathy. The teacher rushes him downstairs and gives him gym shorts to put on while his pants dry out. When he comes back to class, all the kids are on their hands and knees cleaning up around his desk. This sympathy is wonderful! But as life would have it, the ridicule that should have been his has been transferred to Susie. She tries to help, but they tell her to get out: "You've done enough, you klutz!" As the day progresses, the sympathy gets better and better, and the ridicule gets worse and worse. Finally, at the end of the day, they are waiting at the bus stop. The boy walks over to Susie and whispers, "Susie, you did that on purpose, didn't you?" Susie whispers back, "I wet my pants once too." **As told in a sermon by Dr. Robert Tuttle, Jr.; submitted by Ron Watts, Cape Girardeau, Missouri**

### **Ben Franklin's Lesson on Humility**

Benjamin Franklin vividly remembered a visit he made as a young man to see the Puritan preacher Cotton Mather and the life lesson learned. Franklin recalled: He was showing me out of the house, and there was a very low beam near the doorway. I was still talking when Mather began shouting, "Stoop! Stoop!" I didn't understand what he meant and banged my head on the beam. "You're young," he said, "and have the world before you. Stoop as you go through it, and you will avoid many hard thumps." That advice has been very useful to me. I avoided many misfortunes by not carrying my head too high in pride. **"Benjamin Franklin," PBS (November 2002); submitted by Terry Horvath, Winter Springs, Florida**

### **Philip. 2:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup>then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

<sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

<sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! [NIV]