



June and July Sermon Series: Messy Church

Sermon #3: Messy Convictions

Getting the Nod:

There's a church in Santa Fe, New Mexico that has a very unique view of itself and its people. There's a sign that hangs over the only door into the sanctuary that says: SERVANT'S ENTRANCE. There isn't any way in or out of that church except through the servant's door.

A Servanthood Object Lesson of the Garden Hose and the sprinkler: I have a garden hose with a sprayer. With this nozzle I am in control, dictating how, when, and to what plant I choose to serve first. With my nifty sprayer, I can even stop the water altogether when I feel like it. **In a similar way, I can serve Jesus this way.** Dictating the "flow of Christ's love" to others can depend on my mood, the health of my career, and even how much sleep I got the night before. This kind of service to Jesus can be controlled by me... it is all too often a self-righteous, self-gratifying act.

In contrast, there is another kind of hose known as a soaker hose that waters the ground completely indiscriminately. There are dozens of holes that lets the water out... with no shut off switch. Life-giving water spreads all over the place, whether we like it or not!

To serve like a soaker hose means that we pour out Christ's love from every pore of our church, not just at convenient times or dictated by the worthiness of the recipients. If God has "turned on the living water" in our lives... filling us with his life-giving springs, why would any of us want to hold back this same living water from anyone else?

Transition: God wants us to be a soaker church... using every available pore to saturate the world with Christ's love!!! The more we serve... the less we fight.

Connecting Us:

Illustration of Fishing by Max Lucado: When I was in high school, our family used to fish every year during spring break. One year my brother and my mom couldn't go, so my dad let me invite a friend. We could feel the sun warming our bodies as we floated in the boat. We could feel the yank of the rod and hear the spin of the reel as we wrestled the white bass into the boat. And we could smell the fish frying in an open skillet over an open fire. We could hardly wait. Days passed like cold molasses. Finally, spring break arrived. We loaded our camper and set out for the lake.

We arrived late at night, unfolded the camper, and went to bed – dreaming of tomorrow's day in the sun. But during the night, an unseasonably strong northern wind blew in. There was no way we could fish in that. The next morning it wasn't the wind that made the door hard to open, it was the ice! It was a long day. It was a long, cold night.

When we awoke the next morning to the sound of sleet slapping the canvas, we didn't even pretend to be cheerful. We were flat-out grumpy. The next day was even colder. Finally, "We're going home!" were my father's first words... and no one objected. **I learned a hard lesson that week. Not about fishing, but about people. When those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight.**

When energy intended to be used outside is used inside, the result is explosive. Instead of casting nets, we cast stones. Instead of extending helping hands, we point accusing fingers. Instead of

being fishers of the lost, we become critics of the saved. Rather than helping the hurting, we hurt the helpers.

That's what was going on in the Corinthian Church! Fights... contentions... arguments... debates. One sure thing about church fights... when we don't fish... we fight. **The Corinthian Church had lost their original purpose and had traded their VISION for DIVISION! They had chosen RESENTMENT over REWARD. They had forgotten their CALLING and their church started FALLING.**

Transition: With all the troubles that Paul was experiencing with this stubborn and problematic group of people... his answer was to make them servants. Look at Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:19...

God's Take on 1st Corinthians:

NKJV | 1 Co 9:19-25 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; 20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; 22 to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. 24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Paul was saying that he made himself a servant for several reasons:

- That he could win more people to Christ.
- To win the hearts of all kinds of people by learning to understand them (Jews; Law-Worshippers; Freedom Worshippers; the weaker)
- To join other believers in serving people.
- **To gain a reward... an imperishable crown.**

As true believers in Jesus, we all like to consider the ultimate rewards that come with following Jesus. In fact, the Bible refers to rewards that come with crowns. There are several crowns mentioned in scripture but let me narrow the list to five. **The Five Crowns of Reward. Every disciple wants to receive these crowns...**

The 5 Crowns of Reward:

1. Crown of Life

- **Given to those who long to win over temptation.** NLT | Jas 1:12 God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.
- **Given to those who long to see past present sufferings.** NLT | Re 2:10 Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.

2. Crown of Righteousness

- **Given to those found faithful when Jesus returns.** NLT | 2 Timothy 4:8 *And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.*

3. Crown of Glory

- **Given to those who remain faithful to the end of their lives.** NLT | 1 Pe 5:4 *And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.* (Well done thy good and faithful servant!!!)

4. Crown of Rejoicing

- **Given to those who celebrate the people reached by our lives.** NKJV | 1 Th 2:19 *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*
- **For those we serve and who make it to heaven.** NLT | Php 4:1 *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.*
- **But the last crown is one mentioned in our text...**

5. Imperishable Crown (1 Cor. 9:25)

- **This crown is mentioned in the context of being a servant for Christ.** 25 *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

Transition: Paul is trying to fix this very confused and chaotic church that has lost its way by dedicating themselves to the Lord through being a servant.

Illustration of the Unknown Hero of Mt. Everest: In 1953 Sir Edmund Hillary climbed to the summit of Mount Everest, the first man ever to do that. It was considered an impossible task by many. It was a stellar accomplishment. But, let's not forget the real hero on that climb... the man who climbed with him: **Tenzig Norgay**. Nobody ever hears his name. Yet on the way back down the mountain, Hillary fell and was almost died. He would have been lost without Tenzig Norgay, who literally pulled him back up by his cable and saved his life. Edmund Hillary lived to tell a great story because of the help of an unknown man. **When someone asked Norgay why he didn't brag about it, he said, "We mountain climbers help each other." It's about helping others... and each other.**

Our Response:

Paul was trying to get this church to refocus and to recommit winning the imperishable crown. Paul knew that true servanthood stems from the crucified life, which seeks to give out, rather than to receive. Living a life of victory and success is not by accident. It requires diligence and effort! Gaining the imperishable crown requires a unity of the church toward serving. *IN this chapter, Paul gives us five components to winning the imperishable crown...*

Paul Gives Us Five Components to Winning the Imperishable Crown:

1. A Cause to Remember (1 Cor. 9:12)

- The cause is the gospel. At times Paul forsook what was rightfully his. Sometimes, for the gospel's sake, he made adjustments. He never compromised principle but willingly gave up things of little importance. **Like Paul, we should make whatever sacrifices are necessary for the sake of the gospel.** What are you willing to do for the sake of the gospel?
- NLT | 1 Co 9:12 *If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ.*

2. A Course to Run (9:18 / Heb. 12:1)

- **There is a spiritual race.** Athletic contests were just as prevalent in Paul's day as they are in our day. Paul likens the Christian life to a race.
- **In an athletic race all runners run but only one receives the prize.** In the Christian life we all must run our own race (not against others) individually.
- **Paul's course was to preach.** NLT | 1 Co 9:18 *What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.*
- **God has set up a race before all of us... individually.** NLT | Heb 12:1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.*

3. A Condition to Reach (9:25 / Gal. 5:23)

- *25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*
- "Temperate" = abstinence from all that would hinder. It is self-control under the control of the Holy Spirit.
- NLT | Ga 5:22-23 *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

4. A Crown to Receive (9:25)

- A reward awaits those who run well. This is an eternal reward given by the Lord himself.

5. A Caution on Which to Reflect (9:26-27)

- NLT | 1 Co 9:26-27 *So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 27 I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.*
- **"Disqualified". "Becoming a castaway".** The word means disapproved or disqualified from the race. It means for us to not lose our present influence or testimony and the loss of future reward.
- In other words, we are not to run haphazardly like a shadow boxer but run with a purpose.

Transition: Let me share an interesting story...

Closing:

Illustration Learning How to Be a Servant

In the past decade, the number of American households worth \$10 million or more has quadrupled and the newly rich want help managing their large homes and busy lifestyles. Apparently, servants are needed to accomplish this great task. So, there is a training institute called **the “International Institute for Household Management”** in Denver, Colorado, that is trying to meet the need of preparing servants. With household managers earning \$60,000 to \$120,000 a year, applications are at an all-time high, but **servanthood is not easy to learn.**

Those enrolled in the rigorous eight-week, \$7,200 course devote themselves to mastering the more mundane aspects of running a large household: dealing with trades and outside vendors, managing household staff, learning table manners, and taking cooking classes. Instruction is given regarding setting a formal dinner table and ironing table linens, so they are perfectly crisp and wrinkle free.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of servanthood, however, is the element of personal self-denial. A consulting beautician at the school recently told an attractive young female student to trim her long blond hair, lose the showy earrings, and lay off the red lip-liner. **It seemed that her good looks were drawing attention away from her employers.**

The institute teaches this principle: Servants are not to draw attention to themselves; their only goal is to meet the needs of others.

Paul would agree with this principle. God’s people are to be servants who only have one goal... to draw attention to their Savior and to help others. That’s our task. It was also Jesus’ life.

Final Question: Are we most like a sprayers... or soakers?