

This Is God's House; We Are His Family: You've Got Chores to Do!

A sermon based on 1 Peter 4:10-11

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I don't know about you, but for me, growing up, Saturday morning were awesome! Waking up early to watch some cartoons (back when they were good), load up on sugar, and then just go, empty every toy bin in the play room, leave my dishes sitting on the kitchen table, add to the sea of clothes on the floor trying to find my favorite t-shirt, tracking mud in as I was in and out without bothering to take my shoes off. It was great.

I don't know about you, but for me, growing up, Saturday afternoons were not so awesome. Once Mom and Dad got up and going, play time was over, at least for a while. There was house work that needed to get done. If Mom couldn't wade through the 6 inches of clothes and toys covering our entire bedroom floor, it was probably time for the room to get picked up. If we couldn't learn to put our dishes in the dishwasher, well then, we could wash and dry the dishes that couldn't go into the dishwasher. There was trash to be taken out, a dog to be fed and picked up after. "But Mom, my favorite show is going to be on!" And every time it was, "Not until you get your chores done."

Sound familiar? But you know what eventually happens. You grow up. You get this crazy notion that being organized is actually a good thing. Some of you enjoy cleaning a house and making it look spotless. There's a great sense of pride then chores get done, albeit still sometimes with a little bit of hesitancy or griping.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, God's house is no different. We've got work to do here, too. In this house, and in this family, we've got chores to do.

I'm guessing it wouldn't take long for you to form a list of chores that get done here. Certainly, a lot of them fall into the maintenance category: cleaning the church weekly, mowing the lawn, changing light bulbs, shoveling the snow (not that we're ready for that quite yet). We have work days when we can tackle projects that fix or improve our property and campus. All of them...important, just like they would be at your house.

But it doesn't stop there. What makes this family and this house different from your physical family is that our list of chores includes ministry. Yes, my "chores" as pastor include preaching and teaching and counseling and making visits, but am I the only one with the responsibility to do ministry work here?

Let's see what Peter says, "Each one should use whatever gift he (or she) has received, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." Notice he doesn't limit this work to just pastors, but to each one...of you. But what is Peter saying to each one of us here? Let's break down the verse.

"Each one," of course, refers to every single one of us.

"Whatever gift" means 1) it's a gift...something we don't deserve but God has freely given to us simply because he loves us, and 2) whatever gift means any gift or talent or ability God's given, no matter how important or seemingly insignificant it may be.

Peter writes that we should use those gifts to "serve others." Last week, we talked about humility, thinking more of others and less of yourself. Serving others is precisely that, humbly giving of yourself in

order to attend to the needs of others, in this family, to the needs of people inside and outside of the church.

He says we should do it faithfully, yes that we're devoted to using these gifts to serve, but also, doesn't it speak to the motivation? I have faith in Jesus, I'm thankful for him saving me, thus I naturally want to serve him, and one way I do that is by using my gifts.

There's "administering God's grace" – that's using our gifts. That word "administer" really gets to the heart of Peter's point. Literally, that word in the Greek means "house manager." Something we often talk about here is church ownership, how do we make this our own church? Yes, this is God's house, but he has placed you and me in the position of manager. That doesn't mean that we just focus on maintaining this house and the grounds. That certainly is important. But even more, we are managers of the entire mission and ministry of God's house, of God's family, of God's grace...every one of us.

And finally, Peter talks about the grace of God being administered in "various forms." There is no set guidelines that these specific avenues are the only ways that you can serve. Every person has different gifts. Every person has a different place in this family where they can serve. Every person has a different chore to do.

Of course, you notice I've been rather vague on what exactly these different chores are. That's because if you can think of it, it's a probably a way you can serve the Lord and his family here. Singing in the choir, yes. Ushering, yes. Being a part of the women's group, yes. Attending and participating in Bible class, yes. Collecting donations for the less fortunate in our community, yes. I could go on and on. The opportunities are endless.

The point is, there is something here for every one of you. Every one of you has got chores here to do.

CHORES?!?! Bleh, right? The question is: what's your approach to these chores? Are you the child, who begrudgingly does them, or the adult, who actually somewhat enjoys them? What's your attitude about them?

Friends, this all falls under the area of stewardship. Oh, I know, stewardship is one of those taboo words. People often get frustrated in churches when the topic of stewardship is brought up because they tend to think, "All the church wants is my money because they're always talking about, 'if only we had more money, we could do..." Obviously, money is a part of stewardship. You'd be surprised at how often Jesus and Scripture talks about that area. But really, first, we want your souls. The Holy Spirit is the one who works the change in your heart to want to give to the Lord and the ministry of his church. But here, we're not even talking about money. We want your time. We want your talents. We want your eagerness to serve, to get things done.

But chores...bleh, right? "Why can't they just be happy that I'm at worship on a regular basis? Shouldn't that be enough?" What are your thoughts on that mindset?

Or, "Don't they know I'm already involved in this, this, and this. Don't they get that my time is precious, and I can't go spending it all doing work for church." So, the solution is to spend none of it serving the Lord here? What are your thoughts on that mindset?

Or, how about this one: "Ok, ok, I'll help out with this, like this outreach event but only so they'll stop bothering me." Really does sound like a chore, then, doesn't it?

It's unfortunate, isn't it, when that becomes our attitude towards church work and ministry work, when we're less than eager. Here's an example. Last year, we got the chance to dream about what this congregation could be and where we could be headed, and what we could be doing. We started working on a five-year vision. The ministry teams, the leadership team were all asking the same question, "What could we, as a family of believers here, be doing for our ministries if we all work together?"

We were excited. We put the plans together, presented it to the congregation, and it seemed the reaction was, "Sure, looks fine, let's put it through." When only a handful of people are enthusiastic and ready to get to work, but end up doing all the work, those aggressive but doable plans fall to the wayside, don't they?

Chores, bleh, right? We all have our reasons why we may not be getting involved as much as we could be. Some of them may seem valid. Truthfully, most of them are probably selfish. I think Jesus' parable of the talents in our gospel for today hits the nail on the head. Remember what the king called his servant who wasted the talent (there referring to money, but so easy to see the connection to our physical talents)? Remember what the king said to him? "You wicked and lazy servant."

Is that what we look like to God? He's gone and given us an abundance of gifts, talents, abilities, to use, inside and outside of this house and his family. And if we just toss them aside, what does that say about our gratefulness to God? Or even just the fact that we might refer to work here as being chores, what does that say about our attitudes towards God's gracious gifts?

Faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms? I'll be honest. That's not always me. That's not always you. And it's sin. And it deserves to be punished.

And thankfully, that's where Dad steps in. That's where God's grace steps in. And God's grace centers around one person...our brother, Jesus. Now there's someone who had a chore to do. A world, an entire history full of sin and sinners, and he had to save them all.

We could understand if Jesus would've complained about this unfair work. "But Dad, I'm already perfect. I'm already in heaven. Why should I go to earth and live for these people when they're not always concerned about living for you?" Or, "Not only that, but I have to suffer and die for being innocent? Dying for sinners on a cross? That sure seems like a lot of work for people who definitely don't deserve it."

Yeah, Jesus would have had every right to protest coming and dying. He didn't. Because coming to this world...living the perfect life...dying on the cross...rising from the dead...it wasn't a chore. It was love. "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins," the Bible tells us.

Yeah, the Son of Man had to "suffer many things and be killed," but Jesus didn't mind. It was for you. Brother Jesus came and faithfully administered God's grace. Brother Jesus came and faithfully carried out the biggest favor any father has ever asked of any son, to save us. And we see in Scripture, there was no hesitation. There were no second thoughts. There was love.

And it's the love, through his perfect life, his innocent death, and his victorious resurrection that has wiped away every complaint, every excuse, every inaction you and I are guilty of in this house, in this family...in this life. That's love. That's God's grace.

And it's that grace that has this an amazing effect on us. It changes our hearts, changes our attitudes, even when it comes to stewardship and using our gifts and abilities. It changes how we look at the chores here. It changes how we even talk about chores here. Now, maybe you're like me and hate the sound of chores. It just sounds so negative, but it really isn't. There is work, ministry work, that God has given us to do.

But as we faithfully administer God's grace, that work, in its various forms, our mindset is not, "I have to do this. I should do this." No, motivated by the grace of God, it's "I want to do this. I get to do this. I will do this." Then it's not a chore. Not at all. Then doing "house work" here is an opportunity to show my thanks for God's unconditional love. It's a pleasure to serve my Father who gave up everything for me. That's not a chore. That's an act of love.

And ultimately, it glorifies God. God is praised when we serve, just as Peter writes in our last verse. When we're doing church work, we're not looking for praise. We don't need that pat on the back or the word of thanks. The praise goes to God. Whether it's cleaning toilets, knocking on prospects' doors, visiting delinquents, praying for your pastor or fellow members, whatever gift it is, Jesus tells us what our attitude is, "You, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

There's chores to do in God's house and in his family. Nah, not really. Yes, there is work, but it's not burden. It's our pleasure. It's our praise to our loving Father. And by his grace, we'll faithfully administer his grace, to his praise and to his glory. Amen.