

Back to the Basics: Service

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, February 13th, 2026. 15th. Good catch. It's my eyes. It's like, is that a three? No, it's a five. Oh, the three already came out. It is the 15th. Happy, uh, boxing Valentine's Day, I guess. My name's Kent Dixon. It is my joy to be the pastor here.

So as I touched on a moment ago, we're wrapping up a four-week series that we've been looking at called Back to the Basics. And through this series, we've taken a deep dive into some of the basics, some of the foundations of our faith, some of those essential concepts. And these are important elements of our discipleship journey.

Three weeks ago, we considered prayer. Then we continued by considering scripture. And last week, we talked about the importance of Carol. Excellent. Someone give that lady a gold star. So if you haven't been able to be with us so far, you can definitely check out those sermons on our website and catch up. So as you can see, this morning, as I mentioned, we're going to be talking about service, which is a really broad topic. So we're going to be looking at it more from the perspective of serving other people. So that's how we'll kind of be zeroing in on it.

And realistically, I don't know if you've thought about this series and thought, okay, why these four specific topics? We talked about it a bit last week. There's so many other things. Why confession? There's so many other topics that we could probably look at. And you're right.

[1 : 38] We could spend several months in a series like this. Because I really, it wouldn't take us long to identify more of these basic things. The important foundational concepts that we need to look at that are important to our faith journey.

So my hope is that this brief series has really given you some things to think about. I hope it's given you some encouragement along the way as well. And also some inspiration, perhaps, to explore new ideas and new concepts beyond what you may already be doing.

So a big part of my role as a pastor, I think about this almost constantly. What has God called me to do? Well, a big part of it is to keep supporting you, keep encouraging you in your faith and on your faith journey.

And I'm always seeking the Lord in how best to do that. And so out of the things that we can do in our lives, spending time with Jesus, you probably can imagine this, is among, if not the most valuable. And as we've already discussed in the series, prayer and digging into scripture are things that we need to be committed to on a daily basis.

Not just to check off some religious box, some have to thing, right? Do you guilt yourself into, oh, I didn't do this, I have to do this.

[3 : 05] Or if you've heard me say it many times, we say, I do it often, often, should, I should do this. I should not have done that. So, and I said this in my first year as a pastor here, so everybody hear me very clearly as I say this, do not should all over yourself.

I still remember I said that in a person, one of our leaders, it's right at the back of the sanctuary, I think it was probably within my first few months. Face got very red. And I thought, oh dear. And so once the clarification was made, that was good, but learning experience for me.

Do not should all over yourself. Because that sense of guilt does not come from Jesus. So really, it's only, we talk about connecting with Jesus and how important it is.

It's only by connecting with him often that we'll begin to better focus our lives on him. Better seek and follow him in every way in our lives.

And so also, that's the best way that we're going to be able to see others first. And seek to meet their needs before our own. It's when we truly become servants.

[4 : 20] It's when we make real sacrifices of our time or other resources that we may have for someone else that we're best able to express the love of Jesus to someone else.

Does that make sense? Whether they know him or not. I've told you this story before. I had a friend in university. Still friends, I think.

But I had a friend who was not a person of faith. And said to me at one point, you know, maybe you need to hear this. Maybe you won't care. But he said, I know what you believe.

And the way you treat other people and the way you act is consistent with what I understand as your belief system. And I thought, well, thank you, Lord. So I think that's important for us to recognize.

To have that focus on Christ, then we know we're best aligned with what he wants us to do. So when you think of serving others, what images come to your mind?

[5 : 23] Now, this isn't necessarily a... But get those thoughts in your head. So one obvious way is giving in support of your local church or ministry organizations, right?

You hear pastors talk about it. Giving to your church. But it's more than that. And we'll get there. And that's definitely a great way to serve other people. And serve a church community.

Because contributing financially, we know there are costs associated with doing ministry. That is the reality in the world we live in. But there are lots of other ways to serve as well.

And we're going to look at that a bit this morning. Some people may think in terms of a service project, right? You hear that phrase? Maybe something like Habitat for Humanity, right?

You give your time, your skills, your effort to make something possible that will ultimately meet tangible needs for someone who otherwise has no way of making something happen.

[6 : 19] Maybe you've been on a mission trip, like Vern and Kathy are on right now. And that just reminds me. Forgot to read you the update. Let's pause as Pastor Kent fills in a gap that he...

That was why the blank screen was at the beginning. Because that's when I was going to do that. We are on... This is from Vern. We are on our third week of our dental mission in Guatemala with Impact Ministries.

Tomorrow is actually our hump day. That's exactly halfway through our time here. Although we've had a couple of slower days, Kathy and I average about 20 patients per day, ranging in age from four to eight years of age.

Dan and Eileen take older children and more complicated cases, and they average 10 to 12 patients per day. Dan is the dentist from the Calgary area and is most helpful.

Our ministry here is needed deeply by the poor here, with very limited access to dental care. The schools here teach the gospel, and God's spirit is moving in powerful ways.

[7 : 22] It's amazing to see the school days begin with dozens of children lifting their hearts to the Lord in worship. God be praised, Vern says.

Vern and Kathy. Vern and Kathy. So there's an example, right? Vern and Kathy are on the ground, hands up to their wrists, in people's mouths, the mouths of children, taking care of their teeth, right? And that's another possible avenue for service, right? Going somewhere to meet a need that can't be met otherwise. So many of the people in our church serve and engage their gifts in amazing and humbling ways.

When I stand up here, even this morning, and look at the people in our congregation, I know all the things that you do. Not everyone else knows all the things that you do, but I do.

God knows. God knows. God knows. So for a relatively small church family, this isn't even all of us, right? We recognize that. Such a significant percentage of our people serve humbly, willingly, and sacrificially.

[8 : 34] So in case you're wondering, that high level of service and volunteerism that we experience in our church, not that common.

I'm sure you've heard of the 80-20 rule. It's actually called the Pareto principle, P-A-R-E-T-O. And I didn't know that, but I do.

And maybe you didn't know that, and now you do. It states that roughly 80% of outcomes or results come from 20% of causes or inputs or efforts.

So it's a very broad principle that can be applied and is applied to lots of different areas. But often we hear that applied to suggest that 80% of the work is probably done by 20% of the people.

I've heard that. I see some nodding. Maybe you've heard that. Maybe you've even been one of the frustrated few who is in a situation where you are part of an engaged minority.

[9 : 35] Friends, that is not the case here at Bramarr. I've never seen anything even to suggest 20% of the people are doing 80% of the work.

In my experience, 100% of the serving and volunteering of our church is done by almost 100% of the people. Do you recognize that?

Not common. And now I only say almost. You probably said, oh, wait a minute. That's, he seems to be unkind. But the reality is, though, for some of us, right, we have limitations.

We have age limitations. We have health limitations. So maybe we may not be able to serve in all the ways that we would like to. All the ways, the practical ways that we might like to. But I sidetrack a bit there.

The reality is that we could very likely, if we think about it this morning, identify hundreds of different ways to serve other people. And so while that might be inspirational, right, it might give you a checklist, that's not our focus this morning.

[10:43] So today I want us to spend our time looking at the biblical heart behind serving other people. And we're going to look at the motivation behind the action.

I believe that that may be probably more helpful for us this morning than a to-do list of ideas for serving. I hope so, anyway. What would Jesus do?

Show of hands. How many of you remember WWJD bracelets or maybe even wore one? Hands up high. Hands up high. Yeah.

Okay. If you have no idea what I'm talking about, hold on. Just bear with me. So believe it or not, this wasn't just a 90s thing.

That phrase actually goes back hundreds of years from the research that I did. It was even prominent in sermons by the great preacher Charles Spurgeon. Maybe you've heard of Spurgeon.

[11:42] So this isn't a new concept. But let's consider the bracelets again for a bit. What's the origin of these little things? The bracelets began as a grassroots movement in the 1990s from a youth group in Holland, Michigan.

The youth pastor at the time was trying to figure out a simple way for her students to remember the phrase. And little did she know, I think God knew, that these bracelets and this phrase would become a worldwide phenomenon.

That it would spark a generation of people and beyond to actually consider what would Jesus do. It's not just a catchy or kitschy phrase.

It's a really important concept. One that can and should directly shape how we serve other people. So let's consider the words of Matthew 20 verse 28.

Go ahead and turn there if you want and I will read it for us. Matthew 20 verse 28. So this comes just after the mother of James and John, Jesus' apostles, sought to have her sons elevated to places of importance.

[12:59] Does that ring a bell? Jesus is speaking here. Matthew 20 verse 28. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

So it's not a sentence fragment but there's a bit of a preamble before Jesus says, clarifies right at that point. Just as the Son of Man.

So Jesus was making it clear in that moment to his followers. It should still be clear to us today. Jesus did not come to be served but to serve other people.

Jesus came to trade his life. Literally. His energy. His time. Literally everything he had. So that others like you and I could have life.

And ultimately for anyone who believes and follows him. Eternal life. Wonder how often we forget that maybe.

[14:04] As we follow Jesus and learn to live more and more like he did. We really are called to give anything and everything.

Including our lives if necessary. Just as Jesus did. And why? So that others might experience life in him.

It's not about us. It's not about us. It's not about us. I often think some of you have heard me go on this little, not a rant, but I feel this very strongly. I think we forgot the go part.

Can you relate to that? I think often we think of salvation as a personal thing. So Jesus, and we hear the language, right?

Jesus saved me. I have a relationship with Jesus. And that is critical. It is a critical piece for sure. But what did Jesus ask us to do?

[15:01] Sit? And wait for him to come back? It's one word, two letters. What did he ask us to do? Go.

And make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Maybe you think to yourself, ah, that sounds like pastor work to me.

Or I'm not gifted in that area. It's another sermon down the road. Our relationship with Jesus is critical. It is important.

It is fundamental to who we are and who he's called us to be. But it's also important that we point others to him in the way we live. So do you come to this concept of giving our lives whatever is necessary with some yeah buts?

Some hesitations? Some questions maybe? Some considerations? Maybe you even come to it with some loopholes. Is that possible or fair?

[16:06] Ideas for how you might get around having to really follow or sacrifice to the extent that Jesus has called us to do. I mean, come on, Lord.

Do I really have to be able to serve anybody? Ugh. Jesus knows humanity all too well, my friends. And I'm quite sure he has anticipated many objections.

Not just from his apostles, but also from you and me. Maybe you're thinking, well, what about people I don't like? I can exclude them probably, right?

People who are mean to me? Oh, Lord. Surely I don't have to serve them. The beginning of Matthew 5, 44, Jesus says, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Ouch. Okay, well, what about my neighbors? I mean, I barely know them. I wave at them as I leave my house in the morning. What about people that I come across that I don't even know?

[17:15] I mean, I'm not obligated there, am I? Okay. Friends, Jesus would probably have you read the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10.

Okay, what about my daily life outside the church, right? I can serve people here. That's easy. So what if I'm having a really bad day? How about that? I'm having a really bad day.

My circumstances are bad. What if I'm barely getting by myself? I can't even begin to think about what I need to do for someone else.

I don't have to do it then, do I? Maybe you can remember what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, 9. You can go ahead and turn there if you like, and I'll read it for us.

2 Corinthians 12, 9. Paul says when he's facing his own difficult circumstances, you probably know this, Paul shared, but he said to me, Jesus to Paul, my grace is sufficient for you.

[18:18] For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, Paul says, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Paul says there that he'll boast even more in his weakness. Doesn't sound like a prideful person, right?

The reason for that, the reason he would boast about his weakness, is because then it gives the glory to Jesus. Paul is stepping out of the way to give glory to Jesus, to point people back to him. So in our weakness, when our lives are submitted and our will is submitted to Jesus, friends, he is more than capable of working in and through us for his glory.

Even in our weakness and brokenness, we can be confident that God can use whatever we have to offer, no matter how small we may perceive that to be.

[19:29] Loaves and fishes, anyone? The truth is, even if you can send a text message, you're able to send someone an encouraging note.

We have lots of amazing tools available to us to connect and to care. The Apostle Paul communicates an important message in 2 Corinthians 9, so we're still in 2 Corinthians.

Flip back a little bit. 2 Corinthians 9, 6 to 15. A little bigger chunk. You know this passage, so I will read it for us. Remember this.

Remember this. Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written, they have freely scattered their gifts to the poor.

[20:42] Their righteousness endures forever. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed, and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

You will be enriched in every way, so that you can be generous on every occasion. And through us, your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying

the needs of the Lord's people, but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have provided, you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ. And for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

And in their prayers for you, their hearts will go out to you because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.

Now, you may be thinking in your mind, wait a minute, Pastor Kent. This passage is about money. It's about financial generosity.

[21 : 52] So Paul was specifically speaking about money and financial resources in this passage. No question. I'm not suddenly suggesting that we make this conversation all about money.

As I started this morning, it's a critical piece. It's an option and a way for you to serve. But this is not all about money. So I think the hardened message from Paul here can also apply to serving others. Because this idea of sowing and reaping, you hear it there, right? It's a godly principle that can apply, I believe, to other areas of our lives. As we know, you've heard me say this before.

Do you remember me telling you, I grew up in a super small church. I still vividly remember. I can picture the stage in the sanctuary. I can picture my position on the stage even.

I was pretty little. And I had to say, God loves a cheerful giver. That was my line. That was my assignment in this little pageant. I delivered it, terrified, in this kind of manner.

[23 : 02] God loves a cheerful giver. Everybody laughed. Now, you know me as someone with a sense of humor now.

However, at the time, mortifying. But anyway, that phrase, God loves a cheerful giver, always makes me smile. So we know that about God, right?

He loves people who are cheerfully giving, who are cheerfully serving, cheerfully answering a call. So someone who responds to God's call in that way with a joyful heart and a recognition that God has provided and he will provide again.

We can also have full confidence, this I want you to hear, that God will not ask us to do something only to deny us the practical, the spiritual, the emotional resources that he knows we will need to accomplish the task.

Our God is a faithful God. Friends, that's the economy of the kingdom. When we trust in God to provide for our needs, when we focus on being generous rather than accumulating, needs will always be met.

[24 : 28] I know 100% of you have a story about thinking, okay, Lord, I'm just going to do what you're asking me to do. I don't got this. Did he show up? I'm an adventurer 100% of the time.

Maybe not how you expected him to show up, but I bet you he did. When we focus on that, God will show up, I promise you, in the most amazing and unexpected ways.

And even when you don't feel like you personally are or have enough, God works through you when you offer yourself as a living sacrifice into his service and ultimately for his glory.

So, honest question, what would Jesus do in serving others? He would, he did, offer himself for others.

He gave himself in every way imaginable to do the work that his father sent him to do. And we're called to follow that example.

[25 : 44] Do you ever have a sense that you were made for more than what this life seems to be? I hope so. Do you ever feel like this mediocre, difficult life, maybe this life that you even daydream, escaping from in some way, is not all there is?

We know that in our heads, but do you feel it in your heart sometimes? Hey, what if this feeling were real? Maybe it's not something that you're just imagining.

Maybe that, that cry of your heart is a sense that something has been planted deep inside of you by the divine creator of the universe.

You don't exist just by chance. you're not here this morning by accident. Ephesians 2 verse 10 says, for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God, hear this, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

It's right there in black and white. Maybe you have different colored text than I do, but probably black and white. You and I have been created in Christ to do good work.

[27 : 13] That's who we are, our identity, and that's our calling. It's not just a random work of our own choosing, but it's work that God prepared in advance for us to do.

Friends, you're created for, I'm created for more than this mediocre life. You're created for good works, not just to do nice things for people. You're created for divine works that God predetermined. Kingdom works. There's so much of this kingdom life that we'll experience best, I think, in serving other people. When you're resonating with the will of God, I'm sure you all have stories about that too. Doesn't that feel amazing? Not always easy, not always terror-free, I can personally attest sometimes. So let me say it this way. You weren't saved by good works. You were saved to do good works. [28 : 24] So I'm being clear here. It's not the works that we are doing that somehow guarantee our salvation, right? I'm not a works-based pastor.

We were saved, though, by the sacrifice of Jesus, who was willing to do anything and everything for you, for me, to do things that God has in mind for us to do.

Just as an aside, try to have that thought in your mind when you're out in the world. God, what do you have for me to do today? Yeah, I've got stuff that I have to do.

I have responsibilities. I have things that I have to do. But Lord, what do you have in mind for me to do today? Show me. Guide my steps in the direction you want me to take.

I want to hear those stories. So this would be a point in a sermon on service where I would encourage people to get involved, right?

[29 : 29] This is where pastors go, oh, here's the call to action. To encourage people to engage their skills and gifts, to serve in some way or another in their church, right? We've got this great program that you should be involved in.

Guilt, guilt, guilt, guilt. But as I said earlier, and I want to come back to this because it's important to me. It's always on my heart. This flock, this group of followers of Jesus have a heart, pause, have a heart for service and caring for other people unlike I've ever seen before in my life.

It's part of our DNA here at Braemar. Pure and simple. So be encouraged by this. My friends, thank you for serving others, however you do that, whether it's here or somewhere else in your life.

Thank you for giving back from the bounty of blessings that God has given you. Continue to seek and to serve.

Man, we have covered a lot of ground in the past few weeks. So again, I hope and pray that you feel encouraged, that you feel energized again in some of the foundations of our faith.

[30 : 49] I hope you'll find regular time to pray and read the word every day or every week. If you need a devotional app on your phone, I have an amazing one that I just started using myself and I'm happy to, it's free.

I pray that you'll feel confident and empowered in confessing your sins and praying with other believers. You don't have to be ashamed. You're forgiven.

You're free. And so finally, I hope that you'll find a meaningful place to serve others. Whether, as I said, it's here at church or other places that I know lots of you serve.

My hope as well is that in serving others, you'll experience God's love and fellowship that we have as believers, that we have as followers of Jesus, that you'll experience that in new and deeper ways.

Are you tired? This life of faith is a marathon, not a sprint. You don't have to do it all at once. And I hope you know that.

[31 : 58] Following Jesus really is a daily decision to draw close to God. That's the best place to start. Seek His will over our own.

That's what it's about. By His grace, God also gives us the power to do those things, to follow. Right? If what I just said made you feel like bricks had dropped on your shoulders, it's not about you.

It's not about what you can muster to do. It's about just submitting and God has got you. We don't have to muster the energy and focus on our own.

That's not what this is about. Ask Him to give you the strength to pray. Ask Him to give you the focus to read His word and find what lies there for you, the truth that is there for you.

The strength to confess your sin. Right? It's not easy, but as I said when we talked about confession, you're not hiding anything from Him by not talking to Him about it because He already knows.

[33 : 06] His forgiveness is already given. Just be honest with Him about it. And look for ways to serve people. Even if you're just interacting with someone out in your daily life, going for groceries,

someone struggling and needs a hand.

That's a service. That's a way to be Christ to someone else. It's about putting other people's needs before our own. So hear this.

You don't have to do everything all at once. I'm not looking to burden you. Start small and build.

That's it. Just make sure you start somewhere today. Amen.