



Links Players

RELATING TO GOD 9: THOSE WHO SERVE GOD

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:40, NIV)

ONE OF THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF GOLF ETIQUETTE is to “pay it backward.” This means we rake bunkers and replace divots for the people coming behind us. We won’t land in our own footprints later today, but someone else sure might, so we smooth them over. We do all of this for people we don’t know, invisible beneficiaries.

When Jesus spoke of the ways we can see and serve others, he noted that we too are caring for an individual beneficiary—and that beneficiary is Jesus himself.

In Matthew 25, Jesus told the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. It is a daunting parable, because it concludes with Son of Man (who is Jesus) separating people eternally—the righteous to eternal life and the unrighteous to eternal punishment. The difference? Their service to him.

Now here is the harder part. The people in Jesus’ parable were unaware that they had or had not served him. “When did we interact with you?” they asked (or “When did we not?”).

Jesus’ reply was that he was behind every hungry, thirsty, and needy person that asked for help. He was behind every stranger needing a place to stay, every sick person needing care, and every prisoner needing a visit. “When you served them,” he said, “you served me. When you did not serve them, you overlooked me.” Here was the line of separation. Service to Jesus.

Now you may be thinking, as many have before you, *I thought it was all about belief. I thought it was about Christ’s righteousness given to me, not my righteousness given to him.* And the answer to your thoughts would be *yes*. But when we hold Jesus’ words alongside James’ words, capturing the full counsel of Scripture, we are reminded of this: We cannot be hearers of the word only, we must be doers. And this: “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:17).

Those who serve Jesus demonstrate that he is truly in them. We do not do this to feel better about ourselves or as a matter of altruism. We do it because Jesus’ love compels us and Jesus’ love, seen in our service, flows from us.

Opening questions Have you ever noticed others serving you on the golf course? Was it an inspiration to you to offer the same to them?

READING Mark 10:41-45; James 2:14-26; Galatians 5:13

Service and greatness (Mark 10)

What connection did Jesus make here between service and greatness? How does this line up with the world’s way of thinking about greatness? What example of his ultimate service did Jesus speak of here?

Faith and works (James 2)

In what ways are our works important? If serving others is service to Christ, how much emphasis should we place on this aspect of living out our faith?

Behind our service (Galatians 5)

What two master traits are given here as the underlying characteristics of right service? How can you serve others better today?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2020 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/S6XWtAkBBTg>