

Month #18

Here's a tough question for today: What do you have to do in order to be a "good" church member? Most people will answer that question as follows: To be a good church member, you have to attend the meetings and give your money. Some might also add that you must not ask any questions!

Sure, it's important to attend the meetings. It's vital to be present for worship on a regular basis and to receive instruction from God's Word as we fellowship with other Christians. And it's important to support the work of the Lord here at St. Paul's Lutheran Church with our finances.

But as important as these two activities are, if being present and giving are all that we consider truly important, we will have missed a third aspect.

Chuck Swindoll wrote,

Our world has become a large, impersonal, busy institution. We are alienated from each other. Although crowded, we are lonely. Distant. Pushed together, but uninvolved. No longer do most neighbors visit across the backyard fence. The well-manicured front lawn is the modern moat that keeps barbarians at bay. Hoarding and flaunting have replaced sharing and caring. It's like we are occupying common space but have no common interests, as if we're on an elevator with rules like: "No talking, smiling or eye contact allowed without written consent of the management."

Painful though it may be for us to admit it . . . we're losing touch with one another. The motivation to help, to encourage, yes, to serve our fellow-man is wanting. . . .And yet, it is these things that form the essentials of a happy and fulfilled life.

Swindoll's right, you know. And if service is necessary for humanity as a whole, how much more is it essential for Christians? Perhaps that's why the Spirit of God directed the Apostle Paul to write to the church at Galatia these simple yet powerful words: "Serve one another in love."

That service for Christ in a church like ours takes on many different facets. For some, it means painting walls in a classroom. For others, it means dealing with weeds that sprout with incredible consistency all around the property. It might mean repairing a faulty light switch, raking leaves, preparing the bread for the Lord's Supper, singing in the choir, or teaching the Word of God to others. It might even mean taking the life-changing news of the Gospel to those in prisons or juvenile detention centers or feeding the needy at a soup kitchen.

Here's what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. . . For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

That's why whatever God leads you to do is secondary. What's important is that we find some means of serving the Lord and that we do it with a "willing heart," one that responds by saying, "Yes, Lord, yes, to your will and to your way." What's important is that we realize that the "harvest field" is the Lord's who deserves all the credit and all the glory for what is accomplished.

Being here? That's important. Supporting the ministry here at St. Paul's Lutheran Church financially? That's also important. But don't stop there in your quest to be a "good" member of this fellowship. Ask God to give you a place to serve, and then be ready to respond in full obedience when your prayer is answered.