



Sunday, July 4, 2021

WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

A Story About Serving

Most adults who attend church events like lectureships and seminars are happy to do so. That's why what I heard from a middle-aged man walking with what I can only assume was his elderly father surprised me at one such event. I said, "How are you today," only to be told rather grimly by the middle-aged man, "Well, we're here." Clearly it had been a hard morning for him.

Later, as I took my boys to the bathroom during an intermission, the door to one of the stalls opened, and the elderly gentlemen I had seen earlier began his slow walk out. However, as I looked in the stall and watched him walk, two things became clear. First, he had missed the toilet when he used it. Second, with each step he took, he left a trail of further evidence of what had happened.

Christianity teaches us to "serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). I can't say what my inclination would have been in such a situation prior to the time I came to know Jesus, but because of Jesus' teachings I found myself along with another Christian man kicking into gear, cleaning what we could, and getting a seat so the man could sit down and allow us to clean his shoe.

For much of this time, the elderly man's companion, whom again I assume to be a son or at the very least a caregiver, was nowhere to be seen. When he finally did come in, he saw what had happened. Rather than make any comment to myself or the other Christian who was helping, he said rather curtly to the elderly man, "Oh, do I need to get you a change of clothes?" He didn't even step in to help as I worked the shoe back on the man's foot and tied the laces.

Christianity also teaches us to think "no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5) and, when we are tempted to judge others, to judge ourselves instead (Matthew 7:1-5). I saw in that man, and still do, a caricature of myself. No, I have not failed to step in when such an obvious need has presented itself with those closest to me. However, there have been plenty of times when I've resented moments where I've been called to serve those closest to me as well as times where I've stood by and watched others do more for my loved ones than I was doing. I felt ashamed.

I hesitated to tell this story, but I tell it in the hope that you will give any glory for any good you see in me or the other Christian who assisted that elderly man that day to the God who serves us all and who teaches us all to serve. I also tell it in the hope that you will learn with me how easy it is to fail to serve those whom we know and who depend on us. There's glory to be given to God in this too. We totally depend on Jesus, and He knows us better than anyone does. And yet, somehow, He chose not only to die for us (Romans 5:8) with joy in His heart (Hebrews 12:1-2) but also to continue to intercede for us in heaven (Hebrews 7:25). "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:5).

