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Are We Just Focused On Ourselves? by Pastor George Wright

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” – Luke 10:25-30

Why do we do the things we do? Why do we help one and ignore another? Does the question ‘why’ really matter if we’re doing good things?

These are the questions Jesus addresses when approached by a very ‘good’ man about what he should do to reach heaven.

In response, Jesus told a story. A man is robbed and left for dead on the side of the road when three individuals pass by. The first is a priest and the second a Levite, or religious law expert. The priest and Levite don’t even pause to help. They are too busy, too important doing other ‘good deeds’ to help.

Wait, really? How can two religious men who have devoted their lives to doing the right thing pass by someone in desperate need?

It’s simple.

Their good works were simply an attempt to justify themselves, a way to prove their importance and worth to God.

It’s the difference between mercy and sacrifice. Mercy is others-focused, doing for someone what they can’t do for themselves. Sacrifice is me focused, giving something up to prove my devotion. Jesus was all about mercy. He came for those who knew they needed mercy as the one who offered mercy.

To have a heart of mercy is to have a heart like Jesus, who sees the needs of others and does something about it.

The priest and Levite didn’t get it. So focused on themselves, they walked right past an opportunity to demonstrate God’s love lived out.

Good works can never earn us God’s love, but they certainly reveal it. At the root, it’s a heart issue – not what we do but why we do it.

So, why do you do the things you do? God certainly doesn’t need our good works – but our neighbor just might. The “why” behind our works is to reveal the love of God.

Adapted from a sermon by Senior Pastor George Wright, Shades Mountain Baptist Church

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Easter Volunteers Needed

Men of Shades, we are expecting big crowds this coming Sunday for Easter, and we have several volunteer places that need to be filled to help us make a great First Impression on our guests. If you have some time available to help us please contact Tommy DeRamus at tderamus@shades.org or 205-822-1670, ext 331 **today** and we'll get you set up to help on Easter Sunday. It's going to be a great day at Shades, and your help is greatly appreciated!

For more info on how to get involved with Men of Shades, visit www.shades.org/men

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