

December 16, 2001

Abundant life

John 10:10 *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* (Overflowing life, superior, surpassing, more excellent.)

The first Sunday we were in Brazil, we went to Bettie's sister's church, Central Baptist Church in Anapolis. The pastor was out of town on a mission trip to Peru (he assured the people that he was taking a lot of pictures, I might add), so he had a Brazilian man from New Tribes Missions speaking that morning.

The message was one of the best messages I have heard, even though Becky had to translate it for me. (Brazil was my first experience of speaking through a translator. I have to write out my messages, so I mailed the message to him, and he had it in front of him.)

Brazil seems to be a country made up of a cast system. They have a poverty level — those who have nothing at all. Then they have a middle class — I would consider the middle class anyone who has the money to hire the poverty class as laborers. And then they have an upper class — these people look down their noses at all others. They own the hospitals and the other places of importance. The doctors and lawyers might be considered upper middle class.

About everyone who has anything has a maid and a yard keeper. These people work for very minimum pay. The system seems to be made in order to keep the poor poor, because the poor are a source of very cheap labor, maybe \$100 per month for full time workers.

In addition, any money that might be set aside by the government to help improve the conditions of the poor is lost in some scandal or another.

Because labor is so cheap, anyone with any money at all has the tendency to hire everything done. Therefore, manual labor is considered a poor man's job. The danger of hiring all menial tasks done is that the children of the middle class have little or no work ethic. And by work, I mean manual labor, such as yard work or house work. They grow up having someone else do those things. Why work when you can hire it so cheaply?

Obviously, a result is that there is a real tendency to look down on the poor, and manual labor and service is connected with poverty. Only if you don't have money do you work and serve others.

Thus, it took some courage for this speaker to preach about the attitude required of Christians — that is, **an attitude of service**. The message was strong, and one that spoke to the very heart of the Brazilian culture. It was about as politically incorrect as anything could be, even in the church.

If I had the message on tape or in printed form, I would give it to you point for point, but I don't. But I will give it this morning the best I can from what I can remember.

In John 10:10, Jesus promises his people **abundant life**. This is given in contrast to what the world offers, 10a.

Matthew 20:20-28

The way to **abundant life** is quite the opposite of what the world thinks.

The world says the good life is made up of the amount of things we possess, the amount of property we have, size of our houses or the year of our cars.

The world says the good life is made up of the amount of income we have.

The world says the good life is made up of the amount of education we have.

The world says the good life is made up of the amount of authority we have over others, the number of people we have who will answer to our wishes — that is, the more people we have serving us, the more important we are in the world's eyes.

The Word of God overturns the world's idea of the good life.
The Word of God overturns our own natural idea of the good life.

The Lord Jesus Christ created and owns all things, yet He identified the **abundant life** with service to others.

If anyone had **abundant life**, Jesus did. Notice what He identified with **abundant life**: **John 13:1-17**, serving one another.

Washing one another's feet is not commanded here, but the **attitude** of service involved here is required of all who name the name of Christ. The world says the **abundant life** comes from having many willing to **wash our feet** — the world of God says the **abundant life** comes from having a servant's attitude of washing **other's feet**.

John 13:16, if the Creator of the universe could do the most menial task, wash the feet of 12 men, then how much more should we be willing to serve one another. If we view **servicing** beneath our station of life, we establish ourselves as treater than our Lord.

BETTIE PICKED UP A SAYING FROM HER PARENTS I WILL SERVE YOU, BUT I AM NOT YOUR SERVANT.

V. 17 *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

The **abundant life** does not come from knowing the Word of God, nor from knowing what Jesus did, nor from occasionally doing these things. It comes from **following His example** of service. Happiness comes when these commands of our Lord are heard, understood and made a part of our lives.

The Brazilian speaker that morning brought something to my mind that I **had never considered** before:

Vv. 34, 35 are at the end of John 13. In this section, we have a perfect example of a servant's attitude. After Christ gave the example, he said:

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Here we see that love and service are tied together. Love for both the Lord and for others is shown by our service.

The Lord said that if we love Him, we will serve Him. It follows, therefore, that if we love one another, we will look for opportunities to serve one another. We need to look for opportunities to be a help and a blessing to others.

Galatians 5:13 *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

Galatians 6:10 *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

One of the most important ways that we show our love for others is by serving them.

Luke 22:24-27 *24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

The world tells us that to be great, we have others serve us. In fact, if you want to be great in the kingdoms of

this world, you will have many servants.

But if we want to be great in God's kingdom, we must serve.

We **enlarge the kingdom of God on earth by serving those around** us. And yes, folks will take **advantage** of us, but we cannot let that stop us from following the Lord's command to love one another.

We astound the unsaved by having a servant's attitude.

There were **three things** that gave the Creator the freedom to serve:

John 13:3 *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;*

First, He knew that the Father had **given all things** into His hands.

Second, He knew that He was **come from God**.

Third, He knew that He was **going to God**.

Knowing these three things, He had freedom to serve those around Him.

Do we have that freedom?

First:

1 John 4:17 *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: **because as he is, so are we in this world.***

Through faith in Christ, and by faith, we understand that **as he is, so are we in this world**. Why do not we have that same power as did Christ? Lack of faith.

Did our Lord not say that if we had faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, we could say to the mountain move, and it would move?

Second:

John 20:21 *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

We have been **sent into** the world by Christ the same as He was sent into the world by the Father. Thus, we have the same commission by the Father as did Christ.

Third:

John 14:3 *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

This life will be over as a vapor.

With the assurance that we are as Christ in this world, that we have been sent by the Heavenly Father into the world as His ambassador, and that we will soon go to Him, we can serve one another freely, not out of fear.

If the church would take on a servant's attitude in opposition to the world's opinion of importance, we could be a light that attracts others to Christ.

You will find very few window or door screens in Brazil, and we saw very few flies or bugs during the time we were there. But if you would leave a light on at night, that light would attract some bugs, particularly mosquitoes. We are to **let our lights** so shine as to attract others. How? **With a servant's attitude.** And the darker the world around us, the more sinners will be attracted to our light.

Those of you who have lost a spouse realize how short and uncertain life is. Bettie often says that we just do not have time to waste playing games and with unproductive words and activities.

Time is valuable, and our responsibility is to advance the kingdom of God.

How do we do that?

Love others, and that love is shown by serving one another in love. It is shown by going out of our way to be a blessing to others at every opportunity.