

“NOBODY NOTICED”
Colossians 3:22-25

By Pastor Yau
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INTRODUCTION:

1) Something we've heard many times: Many of us have heard this saying: “House chores are things we do well every day, but nobody notices them until you stop doing them.” We may learn many good lessons from this saying, but one thing stands out: You may have done so many things well for a long time, but no one noticed or expressed appreciation until you didn't do them at all, or not to the expectation of others; then frustrations or criticism come from all directions. This is true at home, in school, at work and even at the church. Most people neglect to see all the good things you have done day in and day out and they never care to show you the courtesy of appreciation. But they will jump on you fast when you stop doing something or you don't do it to their satisfaction. They will accuse you of being lazy, uncommitted, selfish, having no love for God and people. Human nature inclines to spot negative things and easily issues criticism so unchristian, unfair and many times untrue.

2) Something we've seen many times: Statistics tell us that 80% of service work and financial support in an average church is done or contributed by 20% of the people in that church. Here are some common thoughts and excuses: Church belongs to all the people, so it isn't my responsibility to serve or give. Church is a place of volunteerism, so let those who want to do it, do it. Serving and giving to church never ends until the day we go to see the Lord, and that is a commitment too long for many people. On top of this, there

isn't any reward in serving and giving to church: no prestige, no material benefit and no authority in serving and giving.

Even so, history shows us there were countless millions of faithful Christians who did so much, served so much, gave so much to the Lord and his churches to keep them going and growing. They did all this not for themselves but for God and his people. They volunteered, sacrificed, endured, and many times no one noticed or showed appreciation. We may ask, “Why”?

THEY KNEW WHOM THEY SERVED:

1) Recognizing the purpose of life: Many people dedicate their lives to their objects of pursuit: a career, a business, a job, as most ordinary people do. Others dedicate their lives to political ideology or religion. On one side we see many Muslims dedicate their lives to the belief in a caliphate, that someday their extreme form of religion will conquer and dominate the world. They are so dedicated even to sacrifice their lives. On the other hand, many Christians also give their lives and all the potential of personal pursuit to go to mission work, like Paul. After he was called to bring the gospel message of salvation and had done so much to fulfill his commitment, Paul said these words about the purpose of his life: “For none of us lives for himself alone and none of us dies for himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.” (Romans 14:7-8) As we try hard to rally each other to reach out, to witness, to deepen our spiritual lives and to make disciples as a church, one question we need to ask ourselves is, “Are we really serious about all these

things”? If we are not committed to believe that we all live or die for the Lord, if we and most of the body of believers live our lives for personal purposes other than the purpose of the Lord, how can we expect the church to grow both in number and quality? Until we accept the concept of biblical Christian living, we just don't have the correct direction or the energy to accomplish what we always want to accomplish.

2) Recognizing the Lordship of Christ: In the short passage of 3:17-24, “the Lord” is mentioned seven times. “The Lord” is the center of Christian living both in service and giving. When Christ the Lord paid the price with his life to save us from our sins and eternal condemnation, we received a new purpose in our lives, and that is “the Lord.” In our lifetime, we all serve something or someone: a country through military or government jobs, a company through employment, an organization through a position of some kind, and we serve those in our family with all our heart, mind, energy and love. While all these are honorable services, none of them can compare to our service to the Lord because he died for us on the cross and he has given us eternal life, to be with him forever at the end of our lives or the end of the world. None of our other services in this world can bring us anything once we go to heaven to be with God. No service in this world may bring us eternal value and rewards like our service to the Lord. We'll talk more about this later.

THEY HAD THE PROPER ATTITUDE:

1) This is how worldly people do service: “Slaves, obey your earthly master in everything, not with external service as those who merely please men.” (3:22a) There are two vivid

descriptions in this verse of the attitude of service from worldly servants.

a) With external service: “External,” *ophthalmo-douliais* in Greek, is a compound word from *ophthalmos*, the eye, and *douliais*, service, better rendered “eye service” or “show to the eye.” Those who do service for the purpose of making it a show for the eyes of their master or superior, do not serve with their heart, with internal honesty. Many people in the world today serve or work with this kind of attitude, dutiful and reluctant, not from their heart but just to show to the eyes of their supervisor.

b) For pleasing the superior: “Pleasing men” is a good translation of *anthropa*, from which we have anthropology, man, and *reskoi*, to please. This kind of work attitude isn't what the Lord wants to see in us, his servants. We see many people who only work hard when their supervisor is watching, not to discharge their duties faithfully, honestly and diligently even when no one is watching. No wonder there are always conflicts of interest between the employers and the employees.

2) This is how Christians should do service: “But with sincerity of the heart and reverence of the Lord.” (3:22b) Here are two kinds of attitude Christians should have when we do service to our true master, the Lord.

a) Serve with sincerity: “Sincerity,” *aploteti*, means singleness, single-minded or wholeheartedly. The Lord demands that we do our jobs, be it for an earthly master or for the Lord, with all our heart, mind, sincerity and honesty. This is especially necessary when it comes to our service to the Lord and his church.

b) Serve with reverence: Reverence, *phoboumenoi*, to revere, to be in utmost respect, to be very careful. This is the kind of attitude God expects of us when we serve him and his church. God doesn't want us to be afraid of him, but he loves to see us revere him as God, the Father. When we do things for God, we need to do it with that kind of seriousness, with the highest respect for God, because he deserves all our reverence and respect. In this kind of attitude, we certainly will do our utmost, our best for him.

THE POWER AND REWARD OF SERVICE: (3:23-24)

1) The source of power is the heart: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.” (3:23a) “Heart,” *psuches*, soul, the root of the word psychology, is the deepest power of a man, his mind, heart and soul. Greek philosophers separated the essence of a person into two parts: the body, *sarkos*, including emotion and physical activities, and the higher part, *psyche*, the soul or mind that commands or dictates what the body may do. The Bible commands us to love and serve our God with all our heart, our mind, our soul and strength; these make up all the parts of a person, both the body and soul. We all know the force of the mind, heart and soul. We also know what kind of results we may achieve if we put all our heart and soul into doing something. This is the power of our service to the Lord and his church. Paul told us that as soldiers of the Lord, we are not supposed to be tangled up with things of the world so we may do our utmost to please our commander, the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 2:4) When we have the will, we always can find the way to serve him.

2) The reward is God's inheritance: “Since you know that you

will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” (3:24) “Reward,” *antapodosin*, means to repay, to compensate, to reward someone for things he did. Most of us did not receive a reward for what we have done for the Lord in this world. That's why God put here his promise to reward in heaven those who volunteer themselves to serve him, because rewards in heaven are eternal while rewards on earth are temporary. The Lord knows what you have sacrificed in serving him, and he promises to pay you heavenly rewards.

The kind of reward God will give us is his inheritance, *kleronomias* in Greek. It comes from *kleros*, allot or assign, and *nemomai*, an heir. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we become an heir of God, co-heirs with Jesus the firstborn of God. God has assigned to each one of us his inheritance to all of us as his heirs. Can anyone imagine what and how much God may own and the share each one of us may inherit from him? That is the kind of reward God promised to each one of us. A glimpse of God's reward to his faithful servants may be seen in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:21-23.

IT'S TIME TO PICK OUR CHOICES:

1) Words of appreciation to the faithful: Let me make a few comments here on the wholehearted service rendered to our church by so many faithful brothers and sisters in the past many years, at least service I witnessed in the past 24 years since I came to this church in 1993. For most of those years, we had only one paid staff in our church doing pastoral work. Everything else in this church, from Bible teaching, ministry

planning, organizing, clerical, bookkeeping, music, kitchen, groundskeeper, cleaning, babysitting, youth, children and many others, these were all done by many volunteers, week in and week out. This doesn't just save the church tens of thousands of dollars; it also promotes the spirit of giving, love and dedication to the Lord and his church. For all these, I want to give thanks to the Lord and all the God-loving people of this church. These are the people Paul talked about, serving with their heart, not to please man, but unto the Lord, even if no one noticed what they had done. Without these people, we wouldn't have our church as it is today.

2) Words of encouragement to the reluctant: On the other hand, there are people, I mean Christians, who don't understand the privilege and the reward of serving God and giving to his church. These people will make all kinds of excuses not to serve, even in things they have the ability or gift to do. They don't understand the danger of their attitude and the tremendous reward they forfeit because of their timid or reluctant attitude. Giving to and serving God in his church is never a losing business. God promised much reward to those who are faithful. Testimony after testimony we have heard from the faithful about God's blessing on them, their families, children, their lives, their strong faith and the joy in giving and serving. This is not prosperity theology; it is about the faithful Lord who will see what you have done and pour his blessing on you and those dear to you. What we have done here on earth today, God records in heaven, and he will reward us with much more than what we have given: He