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[45-second introductory video of high-speed, time-elased photography showing the one-hour set-up of the main room stage, chairs, video, audio, and lighting equipment at the *Fry Road Campus* of The MET.]

[Pastor Sal begins:] Don't you wish you moved that fast? That happens every single Sunday morning beginning at 6 a.m. And what you saw happens not only in the main room at Fry—that was Fry road by the way—they set that up in an hour and 15 minutes. And not only that but—

- They set up the preschool area
- ...student area
- ...children's area
- ...lobby
- Make the coffee (and)
- ...have a smile on their face

—all before worship starts at 9:30.

That's been going on now—this is the fifty-third week for that. Those folks have served well and continue to serve. In fact, if you start adding it all up, I think it's—

- Four 24-foot trailers (and)
- Two 16-foot trailers

That they have to haul all of that stuff around in—6,000 pounds of technical equipment; and it's 24 volunteers working at that. If you would like to volunteer they would love for you to help over there.

I'm going to give you a word—an update—for our ministry to Haiti. Many of you have given to that (and)—

- We've been able to purchase 116 four-man tents. So that houses over 450 people right now that normally would have been just sleeping in the streets.
- Through *The Proclaimer*[™] ministry they get to hear the Gospel in their own language [using donated solar-powered audio Bibles].
- Then through *Living Water [International]*, we are digging wells through *Living Water* and providing fresh water for the folks that are over there.

So thank you so much for your service, for giving, and for what you do because it makes a difference not only here but around the world. In fact we're talking about that this morning.

We're talking about God working through us by serving. We started with worship a couple of weeks ago—how God uses us and works through us when we worship Him. Then we talked about belonging—how God works through us and how God works in us when we're involved with other people, other believers, [who] are walking through life together. Now we're going to talk about God working through us through serving.

Really, there's a reason—the reason why we took them in that order—because that's what we say that we are about here at The MET, that—

- We want people to worship
- We want people to belong (and)
- We want people to serve

That's our strategy, the plan that God has given us, to enfold people, to help them become more and more and more like Christ.

So if you have your Bibles, turn to the book of *Galatians, chapter 5*. If you don't have one, there should be one in the pew rack in front of you. That is yours; please take that as a gift from our church. Or you can simply (just) look at the real large print on the screen that will come up there in just a moment. *Galatians, chapter 5, verse 13*:

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another [in love].

Galatians 5:13 (NLT, 2004 edition)

To kind of give you some background on what was happening and why the Apostle Paul wrote this—you have two groups of people inside of the church:

- There's a group of people [who] say: Wahoo! Jesus freed us; we can do anything we want to do anytime we want to do it—no rules at all. We're free! We're free! We're free! We're free! A lot of bad things were happening because of that.
- So there's a [second] group of them that says: No-no-no; it shouldn't be like that. We need to go back to when we were under the Law, when we were told and commanded to do these things, and you had to do it a certain way, and you had to do it at a certain time. If you didn't do it then you weren't going to be right with God.

So you had these groups that were clashing inside of the church and neither one of them [is] right. It isn't: go do anything you want to, anytime that you want to do it, and it's all about you. And it isn't: being commanded all of the time to follow certain rules or certain regulations.

So, [in] four chapters he's kind of laying down for them: this is the reason why you ought not be thinking like that. Then he says—and sums it up I believe—in these verses right here. He says: You're free but don't use your freedom for selfishness. Don't feed the ugly monster that's already inside of you. Rather, serve one another out of love. Now, what he's saying is: Because we're in Christ, I can now freely choose to serve.

I CAN FREELY CHOOSE TO SERVE

Have you've ever noticed the difference—

- When somebody asks you—tells you—to do something? (and)
- When you do it yourself?

For years we've [had] an ongoing battle at my house over trash cans. Sometimes when I would come home, the trash cans—well, a lot of times when I'd come home the trash cans would just be laying on the lawn or half-way in the driveway. Everybody else's trash cans (except for mine) were picked up.

If I were to go in the house without doing it, my wife—and rightly so—would ask me: Would you go get the trash cans? Well, when she did that, I made a big deal about getting the trash cans usually talking loud enough so the kids could hear it: I can't believe—I mean, it just—when you see the trash cans, why don't you just bring the trash cans in? Why do we have to wait till I do it?

But then there'd be some times when I would pull up—oh, the trash cans aren't in. And I would park my truck and get out; I'd take the trash cans and put them up, and get back in my truck and drive up the driveway—no big deal.

But the difference was when I was asked to—forced to—do something, I usually wasn't really happy about it. But when I chose to do—

- When I chose to meet a need that I saw (or)
- Do something that needed to be done
- I did it on my own

—it wasn't any big deal.

So what he's saying now: As a follower of Jesus, you aren't commanded to do for others; but rather, you can choose to do for others. I can freely choose. God's not measuring us any longer over our performance—by how much that we do—but He's measuring our heart attitude. Our heart attitude is always demonstrated by the service that we give toward other people.

So here's the principle—there [are] two of them:

WHEN I SEE A NEED I AM GOING TO MEET IT

I shouldn't have to be told: Look at this need and you ought to do something about that. When I see the need—I ought to—I'm going to meet the need. Like everybody responding to Haiti—why is everybody responding so well to Haiti? There's a huge need in Haiti. So people see the need and say: Hey I want to help meet that need. So we can choose when we see a need to go and meet the need.

Second thing: When something needs to be done I'm going to do it.

WHEN SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE I DO IT

When dishes pile up in the sink and you put another one in and walk away, what are you saying? You're saying someone is going to do that; I'm not going to do it. I know they need to be done, but someone else is going to do it. And who usually does it?—probably Mom finally [saying]: This is enough of that! I'm going to clean these dishes—I'm always cleaning these dishes! Why? Somebody saw it, but they chose to do nothing about it.

It's like when you see trash. When I'm walking across the street early in the morning to come over to the church and I see a piece of trash, I don't think: Well gosh (you know) I hope somebody picks that up. Well no, somebody needs to pick that—I need to pick that—I pick it up. If I see something that needs to be done I'm going to do it.

If I see a need that needs to be met I am going to meet it. I look for opportunities to serve—not because I have to—because I want to. Every time I do, and every time you do, there's this big monster inside of us called *Self*—called *Selfishness* that—

- Wants life to be all about me (and)
- For everybody to serve me (and)
- Getting things the way that I want them

- ...when I want them
- ...exactly the way that I want them

Every time we do that, we take a stab at that monster and we tell [it]: You are not going to control me; I am going to be controlled by the love of Christ.

Galatians, chapter 5, verse 14:

The whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:14 (NLT, 2004 edition)

"Love your neighbor as yourself,"—now it even says that in the Law in *Leviticus, chapter 19, verse 18*. It basically says this: Look, all of this stuff I'm writing down and telling you to do—

By the way, if you're reading through the Bible with us, when you get to *Leviticus*—if you've read some in there—it's like: Oh my gosh I'm glad there [are] other parts of the Bible, because I would quit right here. (I mean) it is everything that you didn't want to know about everything that they had to do back then. (I mean) all types of commands, they had to do it.

He said: Listen, this is why I'm wanting you to do this; because you need to love people like you love yourself. Now, it was impossible for them to [do that] until Jesus came and died and now lives inside of us. Because of that, when I serve I demonstrate the power of love.

WHEN I SERVE I DEMONSTRATE THE POWER OF LOVE

I demonstrate that I choose no longer just to love myself; but I choose to demonstrate the love that I've received in somebody else's life—

- When I see a need and I meet it (and)
- When something needs to be done and I do it

That's service.

When we do that people know how you feel about them. They know that: You must love me if you do that for me. You must love me—

- If you pick that paper up (or)
- If you bring me coffee in the morning (or)
- If you fix dinner for me (or)
- If you change my kid's poopy diapers while I sit here and am able to worship and go to a small group (or)
- If you give money so a kid can go to *Disciple Now* (or)
- All of the things that we're supposed to be doing

When I serve I demonstrate the power of love.

Now he gives a contrast; he says: Okay, that's the way things ought to be. If we choose not to serve, what happens?—*verse 15*—"If you keep on biting and devouring each other," which I don't think is literal (by the way, just in case you're wondering). "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out"—He said: Warning! Danger! Danger, Will Robinson! Danger, Will Robinson!—something bad is happening here if you continue to bite and devour

one another. Remember, they are fighting, and not serving; and it was all about them and the way that they saw things and the way they wanted things. If you keep doing that, he says, "...you will be destroyed by each other." [*Galatians 5:15 (NIV)*]

You don't have to serve. You can let the self-centered part of your life run your life, but you will be destroyed. You will be destroyed. You may be all alone one day—by yourself—because you've lived your life for yourself and by yourself. Or emotionally you can be so distanced from people because life is about you. Rather than serve you've chosen—

- To complain (or)
- Nit-pick (or)
- Not engage (or)
- Make fun of or whatever it is (or)
- Let somebody [else] do that

And you find yourself in a shrinking narrow-narrow-narrow circle that ultimately just involves you.

IF WE CHOOSE NOT TO SERVE WE WILL BE ALL BY OURSELVES

We will be [alone], because the only thing that gives you interaction with other people is serving other people. The only reason that people want to be around you would be because you do something for them—

- Say something
- Do something
- Engage them in something

—that endears them to you.

Now, you may be in a home where—

- Everybody lives for themselves (and)
- Everybody has their own kingdom
- Everybody has their own agenda
- Everybody has their own mindset

Even though there is a ton of people in that house you feel all alone even with those people.

You can feel all alone in this church. If all you do is sit and you receive and you receive and you receive you're going to feel all alone. You're not going to feel like you're a part of anything. You're not going to feel like God is using you.

Maybe you're at a job where nobody wants to do anything for anybody else, because if they did—

- They may look better than I do (or)
- They might get the promotion (or)
- They may make the big sale (or)
- The boss may recognize them

Then what's going to happen to me? Because of that the circle grows narrower and narrower and narrower and narrower.

- When I see a need I'm going to meet it
- When something needs to be done I'm going to do it

Now if we don't, three things are going to happen:

IF WE CHOOSE NOT TO SERVE...

(1) IN OUR ATTEMPT TO HAVE WHAT WE WANT, WE DON'T GET IT

That's just a principle of life. If you are not willing to serve other people, the very thing that you want and that you strive for, you're not going to get it. (And) if by chance you do, you're going to find out: I really don't want what I got at all. The second thing is—

(2) IN OUR ATTEMPT TO HAVE LIFE OUR WAY, IT DOES NOT GO OUR WAY

Have you ever noticed that? The things that you want to happen, how you want your life to go, concentrate on that and trying to make that happen; normally your life doesn't go the way you want it to go. You want happiness and you want peace and you want friends, but you're not willing to give the same things to other people; therefore it doesn't go your way.

(3) IN OUR ATTEMPT TO GET THINGS OUR WAY, WE DON'T

In our attempt to get things our way, we normally don't. That's just the way God has built life. God has built life to be interconnected, interactive, and serving one another.

The only way to break out of that cycle of selfishness is to serve—is to get beyond yourself—that's what it says in *Galatians 5:16*.

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of
the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16 (NIV)

Now, as we follow God and as you learn more about God, here's how you know that God is leading you: God will always lead you to serve people; whether it be—

- Your husband
- Your wife
- Your parents
- Your children
- In a local church
- The people that you work with
- The folks that you come in contact with

God will always be leading you to serve people. That's how you know: I'm following God. Why? Because my life isn't about me and—

- What I want (anymore and)
- How I want it to turn out (and)
- The things that I need

My life is about serving others so their life turns out the way God wants it to be for them; so they get the things that they need, and so that they have a life that's worth living. The only way you

do that is through the Spirit of God. When we serve, it deals a blow to selfishness. It breaks the control of self-centeredness. That's the only way to get out of self-centeredness.

Look, in the Bible. If you're greedy, do you know what the prescription is for greed?—give. When you're greedy, the only way you break it is when you're generous—when you give. If you're lonely, go make a friend—be a friend to somebody. If you're friends to other people, you serve other people (guess what?) you're never going to be lonely. And the only prescription and the only way out of a self-centered life is simply to serve people. And every time we do, we break the power of sin and selfishness.

When we came to Christ, here's what He's saying: He gave you authority; yes, He did. He gave you power; yes, He did. But it wasn't to use it for yourself; it was to use it to serve other people—

- Not because you're commanded to
- Not because it's just the right thing to do (and)
- Not because the Bible says it

It's because [of] the Christ inside of you—you are demonstrating the love of Christ when you love your neighbor and when you serve other people.

All right, so how much do you have to serve? You may be asking that right now. Well, what if I've served before and people hurt me; do I still have to serve? Or you don't understand, (you know) I'm—what's the [term]?—I'm resting right now; I'm getting—(you know) I'm taking some time, having some down-time right now; and when the Spirit leads me, I'm going to do that.

I'm going to tell you: The Spirit is always going to lead you to serve—always. (And) maybe you had a bad experience. So what are you going to do?—if [you say]: I've had a bad experience and people didn't receive my service. Well, you're going to follow the example of Jesus. We're all going to follow the example of Jesus in *John, chapter 13*.

Now, a little context on what's happening in *John, chapter 13*. Jesus—this is His last night. He's getting ready to go to the cross the next day. Hours from now He will be crucified. So He's gathered His friends that He has ministered to now for three years. (And) as they're having dinner, He knows who's in the room. There's a traitor there. Someone's going to betray Him. Judas is there. There's someone who's going to deny Him. His biggest fan, Peter [says]: Oh, I'll—all these, they're going to run away—not me; count on me. And everybody else is going to get afraid and they're all going to run away.

And so He has in the room (that He's getting ready to serve now) a betrayer, He's got the deniers, and He's got the cowards. But look what He does:

² The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

John 13:2-3 (NIV)

Now, just pause for a moment there. He's getting ready to die. He's getting ready to go back to His Heavenly Father. He knows what's going to happen and He's been given all power.

Now, I don't know about you, but if that were me in that room, I would be (kind of) calling down the thunder at that point in time:

- Let me tell you about what you're getting ready to do, Judas, and why I'm not going to let that happen. I'm sure not going to be betrayed by you.
- Peter, you are nothing but a loud, blow-hard braggart. And I'm going to tell you, you're not going to stand for [me].
- The rest of you cowards, you're going to run away and I'm the only—

No, He didn't do that. I would have. I would have taken all that power and said: Stop this scenario now.

But rather—He could have commanded that and that would have happened—He made a choice to use His power in a different way. [It's] the same choice that you and I have to make every single day of our life. And you know what He chose to do?—"so"—it's a big word, understanding and knowing all of what's going on:

... ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:4-5 (NIV)

And He served those people. When we serve people, we need to understand there are some people that you may be serving and loving and—

- They leave you
- They betray you
- They hurt you

That is what happened to Jesus. There'll be some people who deny you and won't stand with you when you need them. And there will be people who just flee from you like you have leprosy or something.

That's not why we serve though. We serve because—

- That's the example of Christ (and)
- That's why the power of the Spirit is inside of us (and)
- That's how we demonstrate love

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them.

John 13:12 (NIV)

(I mean) I'm sure jaws have dropped and they're looking at one another hoping that Peter might say something—get them out of this bind—because they don't understand. What in the world have You just done? You're the Teacher and the Lord and the Master. (You know) no one

washed His feet when they—they're all kind of (you know) jockeying for position and only the servant of servants is the one [who] washes the feet. And He said:

¹² ...“Do you understand what I have done for you?”... ¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so... {I’m Almighty God; you’re absolutely right about that.} ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord {Almighty God} and {your} Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13:12-15 (NIV)

You know what He did?—

- He gathered the traitors
- He gathered the deniers (and)
- He gathered the cowards (and)

He said: I want to serve you and I want to love you. And then after He served the traitors, the deniers, and the cowards, He died on the cross for the traitors, the deniers, and the cowards. He died for me and He died for you. And yet He sets this example and ministers to and serves—and puts aside His own desires—and served the traitors, the deniers, and the cowards like us.

We’ve got the power to serve, because we’re free to serve. That’s the power that we have. No one can make and command me.

- I choose to serve
- I choose to love
- I choose to give
- I choose to do the same thing that Jesus did (and)
- When I see a need, I’m going to meet it
- When something needs to be done, I am going to do it—
 - Even when I’m right and others are wrong
 - Even when I’m not recognized for it
 - Even when people reject what I want to do

I still choose to serve.

So what is that thing at home that nobody likes to do? What’s the need that needs to be met? What’s the thing that needs to be done in your home that when you do it, you demonstrate the love of Christ? And [your] service—

- May be to people who don’t appreciate it
- Maybe they don’t understand it
- Maybe they don’t even want it

What is that thing at work that you can do? What is that thing and who is that person at work that God wants you to serve? And in so doing you may not get credit—they may not like it, your boss may promote them over you—but you’re going to do what’s right.

What are the things in our church that need to be done? (I mean) think about the people that serve us every single week, every day here at our church—

- The people [who] are serving us right now by taking care of our children

- The people who serve us by teaching our children
- The people who serve us by watching over the parking lots
- The people who serve us by cleaning up our messes
- The people who serve us by calling us (and)
- ...loving on us (and)
- ...setting up stuff (and)
- ...cleaning up stuff

How long will we just be satisfied in being served and not serving?

And I'm going to tell you: There are probably some of those people who have tirelessly labored among us who are about one week away from quitting, because they feel like they're doing it all. They just feel like they're doing it all. I'm going to tell you: If you've been here for over a year and you're not serving somewhere, it's time to serve. And when you do, here's what you're going to find: When I serve I become like Jesus. And when I serve I can make an impact relationally on people.

WHEN I SERVE LIKE JESUS I MAKE AN IMPACT RELATIONALLY

Now there [are] people [who] serve in this church—right now—people are serving in this church. As we are seated in this place there are people serving all over this church, and they're making relational impact in the lives of other people.

Now, I want you to turn your attention toward the screens. (And) I want you to hear and see the story of how one person serving makes a big difference in two people's lives.

[Video testimonies of a sixth grade teacher and her student at The MET:]

[Melissa:] My name is Melissa Williams and I teach sixth grade girls here at The MET. I love the fact that I'm teaching something that I've just learned recently. I'm a new Christian, so I've been doing it for two years. I've only been a Christian for two-and-a-half years. We're kind of learning together. I just love the feeling of that.

[Alyssa:] My name's Alyssa Thomas and I'm in sixth grade and I'm in Miss Williams' class. I've actually learned a lot and it's not—it has to do with God, a lot of it does. But some of it's just more how to (like) open up to strangers and look at things in a whole different way—in God's perspective—and not in such of—the environment I grew up in, it's (like) really bad; so I can look at it in a different way now.

[Melissa:] By sitting here with 12 girls it sometimes—the things they tell me baffle me. I made so many bad decisions when I was a sixth grader. And it's funny how it makes you—I relate better, because I can actually look at them and go: I did the same thing and here's why we don't do it (you know?) Here's where Jesus wants you to come to Him (you know?) And then they're texting me going: I went to Him and I stopped. It's like—it blows me away, because it's not me—it's Jesus. But it's like—it's

just very cool that they're literally going home or going to *LifeWay* [Christian bookstore], buying a Bible, and then throwing it in my face and going: I bought a Bible—look!—and it works.

[Alyssa:] I wrote down the verse *Philippians 4:13*. I keep it in the cupboard with my Bible. They're talking about how God—(like) you can do anything if you have God by your side. (Like) the problems and issues that were big to me before, they're not that big because I have friends that'll help me. And I know I can always count on Miss Melissa or one of the kids in this class with anything, because they won't judge me. There's always going to be (like) bumps in the road and there's always going to be problems; but if you have God, you're going to get through it.

[Melissa:] The fact that I get to say that I am a leader of a group of sixth grade girls—and that I get to bring Jesus to them every Sunday and I get to share my life with them—I never thought that would be me. Because of—with my past in my sixth grade year, I was making really bad decisions and had no clue that I could ever make all those bad decisions. They're all for the good now. So it's just a rewarding feeling.

It's funny because I know we call it serving, but I really think it should be called receiving; because I feel like I receive way more than I serve. And it drives me crazy that people don't try and listen to God—really—because I know there's a lot of people that are being tugged at and they don't listen, because there's something in their world or their life, that they feel unworthy or not allowed or don't have time. And then they get home and take a nap and they wake up at 3:00, stretch, eat and they're like: What did I do today?

I am so honored that I get to be a vessel for Jesus. It's changed my life. It really has, because I never thought that someone like me would be a vessel for Jesus. So it's very cool.

[Pastor Sal resumes after the video:] Did you hear the part where she said—is Melissa in the room? I think she was in the 8:15 [a.m. service]. Did you hear the part that she said: You know I know that people feel tugged at?—consider yourself tugged at this morning.

If you want to take the first step in beating down the monster of self—if you want to win that battle, if you want to be and discover all the power that Jesus has for you—I want you to take your bulletin that I told you everybody needed to have one. Now, here's what I need to hear—all the way at the right-hand side, there's a portion to tear off—I need to hear this: [Demonstrates the desired sound of tearing off that portion of the bulletin.] Can I hear that? Can I hear that please? (Then we'll turn the air on and let you go home too.)

If you don't have a bulletin, you can go get one in a minute or you just take an envelope, put your name on it, and say: Hey, count on me. Now, on here is a very powerful box. It's the first step in beating the monster of self. Are you ready? It's on the second to the last little circle here. It says: Help me find a place to serve. Okay, shade that one in—check it—and then [write] your

name and how we get in touch with you. Then as Zach [King, *Student Pastor*] comes out in a moment, he'll take up an offering; and then you put this right inside that offering plate.

So, that's the invitation:

- I invite you to serve
- I invite you to discover the power of Christ like you've never experienced before
- I invite you to give beyond yourselves (and)
- When you see a need, meet it (and)
- When something has to be done, you can do it

Let me pray for us this morning.

Father, as we think about the many things that You constantly give us and the many ways that we are served by You, I'm humbled. God, that You would even stoop so low to see our needs and meet [them]; and then see what needs to be done in our lives and do it.

Only love—Your kind of love—can do that in my life and the lives of my friends in this room. And, God, we want to be examples of that love. We want to experience more of that. (And) so we need You to do something in our lives this morning. We need the power to say “no” to ourselves and “yes” to loving people and serving people.

And so as we check that box—as we think about what You want to do through us—I pray that You would encourage us, Lord, and would remind us You never gave up on us. You've got a purpose for us and that purpose is to be involving us in the lives of other people. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lead Pastor: Dr. Sal Sberna

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**To them God has chosen to make known among the
Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is
Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

Colossians 1:27
(*New International Version*)

Legend:

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*