# **Love Thy Neighbor - Devotion for June 6th 2023**

Pastor Carl Van Vliet

Revelation 19:6–8

 Hello all you Love Thy Neighbor servants. My name is Carl Van Vliet and I Pastor Corinth Baptist Church. I have long had a heart for serving in the community so I love that the Love thy Neighbor Dent County campaign is putting feet to their faith in serving the community.

But let me ask you today, how does our service today equate to the Gospel? Today in our society we see countless non profit organizations who have arms that serve in communities that that are neutral or even antithetical to the mission of the church and the Gospel. Many for profit corporations even have a community service day’s where employees are encouraged to donate a Saturday to serve those in need in their communities. And hear me today this is not an antagonistic question but rather a hypothetical one on which we should all ponder. What is and should be out motivation and goal in our service to our communities? That motivation and goal must be the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the communities we serve in. And what then is the distinctive, what is the differentiator between our service to our community and any other non profit or company that also serves the community? And further still, how then does motivation and goal translate into the praxis of the people of God?

I am glad you asked these questions with me, for we find the answer to that question in part in the book of Revelation chapter 19:

[Revelation 19:6b-8](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Re19.6b-8) “… “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

You may be asking yourself right now, How does a passage about the return of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb pertain to acts of service?

Because we must as believers live in view of our blessed hope in the second coming of Christ when we shall be gathered to Him for eternity. This present season of waiting for the Lords return that we are in is not devoid of a purpose. And there is a picture here of the condition of the church that He will be coming for. The church will look like something, when Christ comes for His bride.

You see I believe that the differentiator between what you are doing today and what every other organization does is this picture we see right here in [Revelation 19](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Re19.5):

• A bride who has made herself ready. This is intimacy with God where through a lifestyle of worship, prayer and the Word of God the church has come to holiness.

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• A Body who has made the wedding gown - the fine linen of the righteous deeds of the saints, bright and pure. What are the righteous acts of the saints? What you are doing today, among many other things we do to take the Gospel to our communities through service.

You see I believe that it is the time for the Church, the People of God together to experience a **confluence** of intimacy and holiness with a lifestyle of service

**Definition of** ***confluence - “***the flowing together of two or more streams”

A confluence or the two streams:

One stream - Holiness unto God, where the people of God, His Bride has made herself ready through intimacy. Intimacy relationally with God, because worship, prayer and immersion in the Word of God **lead to** Holiness. [Ephesians 5](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Eph5) gives us the picture of this in verses 26 and 27: “that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”** That Christ would wash us clean as we draw near to Him.

The Second stream - Righteous acts of the saints, where His people, *You*, the Saints of God follow the teachings of Christ and the Word of God to serve those around us. Scripture tells us in several places that we must be **tangible** to meet the needs of people. [1 John 3:17](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.1Jn3.17) is one of my favorites that speaks to this succinctly: “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

You could say it this way:

**“The Gospel goes forth to our community, riding in the vehicle of the righteous acts of the saints - meeting the needs of people, and it is fueled by Holiness that comes from intimacy with the Father through Prayer, Worship and the Word. It’s not one or the other. It has to be both.”**

The Church, The People of God today can no longer sit in one paradigm or the other - Serve or Sit - Pray, worship and be in the Word - OR - Serve the community. We simply cannot be a one or the other people, we must be both. It is that picture of the bride that Christ is returning to receive, one who is made holy through intimacy and one who is clothed clean and bright in the wedding gown formed of the righteous acts of the saints.

This brothers and sisters is the differentiator. This is the fulfillment of [Matthew 22:37-39](https://ref.ly/logosref/BibleNKJV.Mt22.37-39) Which I believe Pastor Seth shared with you yesterday: “And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

What better picture can we see of the fulfillment of Christ command in this passage than to look towards His return and see His bride having Loved God with all our hearts, see in the intimacy which leads to holiness, and seeing His bride clothed in fine linen clean and bright from loving our neighbor as ourselves.

This makes what we do different from what the world does in our service. I pray today you will be both challenged to a deeper intimacy with God that leads to holiness and also be encouraged in knowing that what you do today is part of what will clothe Christ’s bride, His church, when He comes again.