

Good Works glorify God and serve our Neighbour

In the first place, we do good works to say thank you to God for His grace to us. We join with the psalmist in declaring, *“I shall praise the LORD for His righteousness. I shall sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High”* (Psalm 7:17). As we contemplate God’s mercies to us, we declare with the hymn writer:

*Oh, that I had a thousand voices
To praise my God with thousand tongues!
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices,
Would then proclaim in grateful songs
To all, wherever I might be,
What great things God has done for me.*

(Lutheran Worship 448)

We show our love for God in a concrete way, and that is by showing love to our neighbour. As Jesus said, *“Truly, I tell you, anything you have done for one of My brothers here, even the least important of them, you have done for Me”* (Matthew 25:40). If we show a lack of love for our neighbour, we are showing a lack of love for God. As John wrote, *“If anyone has this world’s goods and sees his brother in need but shuts his heart against him, how does the love of God remain in him?... If anyone says, “I love God,” but hates his brother, he is a liar. For no one who fails to love his brother, whom he has seen, can love God, whom he has not seen.²¹ This is also the Commandment that we have from Him, that he who loves God should also love his brother”* (1 Jn 3:17; 4:20-21).

When the Lord asked Cain where his brother Abel was, Cain responded by saying, *“Am I my brother’s keeper?”* (Genesis 4:9). His statement is part of the self-centred old Adam all people have by birth. Only the love of God can melt our self-centred hearts so we follow the directive of Paul, *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty conceit but in humility regard others as being better than you are! ⁴ Each of you should look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others!”* (Philippians 2:3-4). In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus tells us that our neighbour is anyone in need of our help (Luke 10:25-37).

God’s love for us moves us, in love for Him, to put our lives into the service of our neighbour. Greatness in God’s kingdom is measured in terms of service to others. Jesus said to His disciples who were arguing over who was greatest among them, *“However, it is not like that among you, but whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all! ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:43-45). Paul wrote, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of faith!”* (Galatians 6:10).

There are many ways we can show our love for God by showing love to our neighbour. We can obey our parents and superiors and hold them in love and esteem. We can help and be a friend to our neighbour in every bodily need. We can help our neighbour improve and protect his property and business. We can speak well of our neighbour, defend him, and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way. We can help our neighbour keep what he has. Above all, we can share with our neighbour the good news that Jesus is the Saviour from sin. There is no greater work than to bring to others the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ!