

HUNGER 2 of 3: RISE UP AND SERVE

Scripture used: [John 5:1-8 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

We confront the international act of terrorism in which 50 Muslim worshipers were killed in New Zealand (in a city named Christchurch!), reminding us that evil and darkness are real. Yet Dr. King said that only when it is dark enough can we see the stars. Today more than ever, Jesus depends on us to rise up and be the light in a dark world. Here's where it is important to be "hungry." In our last series, we saw how humility was not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less (and thinking of others more). Humility positions our hearts to be sensitive to God, and hunger moves us to action and to do something for others. The bottom line is that we are called to love God and love others, and the most practical expression of love is service. When we serve, we put our love into action.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Service, and the relationships that come from it, are central to our nature as Jesus followers. Various texts such as [Revelation 7:14-15](#), [Isaiah 53:4-6](#), and [Psalm 23:4-5](#), reinforce the point that God serves us as a guide, a comforter and healer, and one who provides a "feast" for the soul. [Mark 10:43-45](#) declares that the Son of Man Himself came to serve and not to be served. Serving is the way we love, without regard to classification, label, rank, or affinity. It is our way to get into meaningful relationships with people who are different. The best illustration of this is the parable of the Good Samaritan ([Luke 10:25-28](#)) where the "despised" Samaritan crosses ethnic and religious lines to show humility, compassion, and extravagant generosity toward a stranger.
- 2) When he was Senior Pastor of a church in the Roxbury area of Boston, Pastor Hurmon was deeply involved in interfaith dialogue and activism. He was initially skeptical as he feared he would have to water down his Christian faith to "fit in." On the contrary, he ensured that he was able to participate fully as a Jesus-follower, and leaders of other faiths were able to participate in a way that was true to their convictions. In this way, he was able to demonstrate to others what it meant to be an authentic Jesus-follower, and they were all able to grow in knowledge and respect of each other's faiths.
- 3) An attack on one faith community is an attack on all faith communities, because it normalizes violence as a valid response to those who are different. If we are concerned about persecution of Christians, we should stand up against religious persecution of all forms. In this instance, we proudly stand with our Muslim neighbors (as we stood with our Jewish neighbors last fall when the Tree of Life synagogue was similarly attacked), loving and serving them as we would want others to support us if we faced the same kind of persecution.
- 4) Serving transforms us & those we serve. If we apply our talents, time, and resources to help others, we will find peace and joy. The New Zealand killer is deeply sick, as hate has taken him on the road to death. Yet we pray for deliverance and redemption for those on that road, and we should guard against hate in our own hearts. Jesus asks the sick man: "Would you like to get well?", i.e., "How hungry are you for healing?" Jesus is not interested in our excuses. He tells the sick man to "pick up his mat", the symbol of how he has become comfortable in his brokenness, and now he is called to let his transformation become his testimony.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Are you comfortable with people who are different from you, ethnically, socio-economically, politically, and in faith? How proactive are you reaching out, building bridges, offering to serve and help?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Discuss the [Parable of the Good Samaritan](#) from the perspective of love and service to those who are different from us. What is most difficult for us to live this out? What are the obstacles for us to live a life of serving others? Share examples of when you have received joy and a deeper sense of God's presence in your life as you have served.
- 3) **DO** - Prayerfully consider making space in your schedule to serve. Can you serve at Easter and help NBCC express God's love to our neighbors? Is there an opportunity to express your sympathy this week to a Muslim neighbor? Ask God for help to "rise up and serve!"