

# “God Is Not Unrighteous to Forget”

By Chris Ulrich

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Thank you, you may be seated. So, Malcolm just asked, “How many is ready to go home?” And, I don't know if you heard me, but I was like, “Yes!” he said, “How many is ready to go home?” and I said, “Yes!” then he said, “How many is ready to worship?” and I was like, “Yes!” Basically, what he meant was, continuing on. And, I've got the message, so, the irony to that is, “Yeah, sure, let's go!” I was talking about home. (pointing upward) That home. And, I don't know how many of you have noticed today, how—okay, let's just put it bluntly, it's a pretty lousy day for a spring day, right? How many noticed that? I did. Okay. We wondered, “Well, what happened to spring?” It's forty degrees out, it's raining, but just, just be optimistic, because it's going to be pretty nice here in a couple of days. But, I thought about that as I was coming here, driving through the rain, and I thought, “You know what? What a beautiful day for the Lord to come again.” That's a song we used to sing many years ago, many times, and I always appreciated that.

So, there's a TV show that used to air on the Discovery channel, for about a decade, it featured a guy that did a variety of tasks like cleaning out septic tanks, working in the oil fields, or the refineries, cleaning up zoos, and the animals in the zoos, and it was based on actual professions that exist. And, the depiction was just to kind of show that not everybody works in an office job. That's not a criticism, that's just a fact. That's the society that we have. It was never about being critical of anyone else, it was just merely showing the unseemly side of industry. So, the show was aptly titled, “Dirty Jobs.” does anybody remember that show?

I'm going to ask Mike Alford, if he could come up. He's going to read from the Book of Matthew, chapter six. So, if you have your Bibles, you could turn with us to the book of Matthew, chapter six, verses one through six. And, when Mike's done reading, I'm going to ask if you could lead in a word of prayer for the sermon.

**Matthew 6:1-6** *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And, when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

**Mike:** Lord Jesus, we just praise your Holy name, Lord God. We come before you with open arms, open hearts, Lord God, we just want to be your sons and your daughters. Lord God. And, we want to hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” at the end of this life, Lord God. And, we want to help others that we know, that we love, and that we care for, people that we meet on the street, people that we've known for years, Lord God, and family members, Lord, we want to be used by You to reach those that, if it can be done, Lord God, they might be here, they might hear, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” also, Lord God. And, we just pray for the service this morning, that you would anoint and bless brother Chris, Lord God, as he delivers the message that you've put on his heart, Lord God, and help us to receive what you

have for us, that we could help our lives, and help others. In Your name, the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Thank you Mike. So, I don't do this real often, but for the sake of this term, it's not a very common term that's spoken in the language, nowadays, but I thought it would be helpful to give a short biblical concordance, along with the dictionary, definition of the word alms. So, the concordance, this is the actual definition out of the concordance: alms, it means: Mercy, pity, as exhibited in giving charity, to exercise towards the poor or donations. The dictionary is pretty similar: something, such as food or money, given freely to the poor. So, we're going to highlight the importance of actually doing alms, but we're not going to stop there, because this is going to be a tie-in to "Dirty Jobs." And, the reason for that is because the first part of the sermon today is titled, "Dirty Jobs." "Dirty Work," I'm sorry, "Dirty Work."

## Part 1: Dirty Work

But, this is in reference to the work that we do as Christian's that, it doesn't get a lot of fanfare, doesn't get a lot of—it's not seen much, but without these things, without these aspects as a function of our church, our church wouldn't exist. So, I put together a list of six categories that are areas of ministry that I believe God laid on my heart, that have nothing to do with talent, but everything to do with our heart, and willingness. But, I want to make reference to John chapter eleven, verse two. That's our theme verse for the month, and it simply reads:

**John 11:2** *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*

So, we heard that shared last week, Parrish preached on that. And, we think about how, when he mentioned that, the value of that ointment that she used was about a year's worth of wages. So, it wasn't something that was cheap, off-the-shelf, or out of a bubble gum machine; it was something that there was some effort made in getting it. But, then, you also look at the aspect of it from what she actually did, the physical aspect of she took her hair, which is the glory of a woman, which is what the Bible talks about (1 Corinthians 11:15), and she washed a man's feet, with that ointment. Now, I would venture to say that's not glamorous, that's not walking the runway on Fifth Avenue, or one of these things where it's like, "Oh, yeah, look at this dress; look at these beautiful dresses and outfits," this is something that I would consider, this is dirty work. So, this list, that I'm going to share with you, here, in a moment, it's an absolute—it's not a complete, and it's not all to do with just alms, but, it's based on the definitions given earlier, because some of these things will be noticed by others. So, in other words, alms is something that we do in private. Some of these things I'm about to share are some things that are going to be a little bit more publicly seen, but it's not a matter of tooting our own horn, or trying to get seen as a result of them. But, they all have to do with giving, and I want to highlight again, they have nothing to do with talent. So, I also want to share that Pete, last night, he puts together some of the notes for our messages, and, right on my calendar, right on my desk, right next to where I do my work, I have, on Friday nights, prior to the Sunday sermon that I have, "E-mail Pete Shepherd with the notes to the sermon." So, I went through the entire day yesterday, and really didn't think anything of it, and I'm watching the basketball and hockey game last night for a little while—I had already prepared the message—so, I put together everything, and, out of the blue, I get this text, I'm sorry I got an E-mail, which comes to my phone, fortunately, and it's Pete, asking me, "Well, where are the notes, and where is the sermon title?" And, I was like, "Oh, my God, you've got to be kidding." So at this point, this is about 9 o'clock, 9:30 at night, so, I've got to say, I appreciate that, Pete, and, I would say that's another thing, you do stuff, like, you do things like this that would kind of be considered dirty work. It's behind the scenes, it's not

always seen by everybody, it's not always noticed or given recognition. So, I want to share these things, and, Pete, if you've got that list that I emailed you, so, the first one is gift of helps. And, we've heard this expression, "Help someone across the street." And, we can help in any way, shape, or form, it's not a difficult task, doesn't mean it has to be something where you've got a degree, or where you've got an apprenticeship in some kind of skill. Having the gift of helps could be as simple as like I just said, just helping somebody cross the street. That's probably one of the most common expressions we've heard.

The second one is visitations. All it takes is a willingness to go.

The third one is evangelism. We can all invite somebody to a gathering, study, a worship service, or any kind of function.

The fourth one is tithes and offerings. I would venture to say that every single one of us in this room has had some amount of income, however small or great, at some point in their life. Otherwise, I would say, you know, somebody that doesn't, I'd have to really question that. Because you have to look at it from the standpoint, okay, from the first job you ever had, we talked about that a couple of months ago, what was the very first job? And, again, this is something that doesn't require, necessarily, a talent, but it does require an effort.

The fifth thing is hospitality. God gives us the power to be friendly, we can all practice that. The Bible talks about he that hath friends must show himself friendly (Proverbs 18:24). So what is something that takes an effort on our behalf.

And, prayer is the last one. Anybody can pray. And, even though it's the easiest one on this list, it's the hardest one to actually do. Because, sometimes we think, "Oh, well, I'll get to it eventually." "Well, I'll do it some other time, or wait till I get to a large group," or whatever the case might be. But, the prayer ties the purpose of everything else together. And, I'm going to have to say, Rebecca, I appreciate the things that you shared, because you were hitting on a lot of these things, as far as, in regards to serving others, or, as far as, whether it's visitation, or whether it's being, participating in whatever the activity is, whatever the reason that we're doing what we're doing, because the goal is to ultimately see souls saved. We've heard that shared for many years in our ministry. Get saved, stay saved, see other souls saved. I would say that that's not our church creed, but I would say it's a close second. So, having said all that, I'll have to admit that doing things like, doing these things isn't always easy, and it's not always fun. And, I would have to say that we're in agreement with that. That, doing these particular tasks, whether it's evangelism, whether it's tithes and offerings, whether it's helping out, it's not always easy, it's not always convenient, it's not always fun, but who here is heard the expression, "They were willing to get their hands dirty," or "They weren't willing to get their hands dirty?" Okay, so, if you haven't heard that, it's kind of metaphorical, meaning it doesn't always literally mean that. But, I'll say this, I'll just share something: yesterday, so, we've had a lot of rain, the grass is green as you could possibly get, so that's good. So, I'm going to be out of town, here, for the next week, so I thought, now is a good time to mow the lawn. So, mow the lawn, trim the edges, you know, so, hose down some of the building, clean up a little bit. But, by the time I was done my hands were green. I mean, they were literally green, from, you know, all the grass, and cleaning out the bottom of the mower. So, it's one of those things, that had nothing to do with doing it for God, it just had to do with, that's a task that, do I have to—now, I'm going to tie that into our message, here, I sort of like doing the lawn, I don't always like it, sometimes I feel like I get a little sick of doing it, but, that has to do with anything in life. There are tasks that we do, that aren't always fun, or enjoyable, but, I'm going to share this: that it's not as though in this life, we never have fun. There's many times in our life that we have good, clean, wholesome fun. But, my analogy, now, is that people that do the dirty jobs, as we talked about earlier, and, if you ever did see that show, you really have a good idea of what I'm talking about, it's always about finishing a task. Because, while you're going through the midst of it, it's not always that enjoyable. But, it's just a matter of knowing, Well, it's got to get done." And, whether it could be while I'm getting paid for it, or I'm helping somebody else out, or I have to do it, whatever the

case might be, it is just a matter of understanding that these are the kind of things that, they're grunt work, they're dirty work, so, what are we thinking about when we decide we're going to help somebody or not help them? What goes through our minds when we're thinking, we're going to go visit somebody, it could be the hospital, it could be another place, it could be fellowship, or we decide, "No, I'm not going to do it." What's going through our mind when God lays it on our heart to pray, or to invite somebody out to for coffee or for a meal, and we just think, "Nah, I'm not going to do it. I don't really feel like doing it." I'd sum up this entire notion of these endeavors as dirty work. And, I know I've included on this list more than just giving to the poor. But, again, it's all about, we're talking about things that are not convenient, they're not always easy, and not always what we want to do, but we can't forget what the result of this is. The result is that God will reward us openly. So, what does that look like? It could be a stronger anointing. It could be a blessing on the job. It could be a blessing that you've made connections, or you've suddenly had more favor with somebody that you didn't expect to. It could look a million different ways. But, I guarantee you, it's always going to be positive. Because, if God's Word says that He's going to reward us openly, it's not going to be like a punch in the gut. It's not going to be something like a slap in the face; it's going to be something where it's going to keep us going in the faith, it's going to make us stronger. And, God rewards us for those things that we do secretly or privately, because it's never about drawing attention to ourselves, but giving glory to God.

So, our General Pastor, Pastor Paine, for those of you who don't know, he's our head pastor in our headquarters in Norfolk Virginia. He shared a story, this was probably twenty years ago, and he talked about how there was a lady from our church that had been in the hospital, and I don't remember all the details, as to exactly why, but, he was sharing that—he was a pastor at the time, so, maybe this was late 80's, early 90's, or somewhere around that time frame, maybe a little later, but, he basically said he went to visit this lady every single day that she was in the hospital, and not to brag about it, or not to draw attention to himself but just for the sake of sharing the rest of the story. In fact, if she had never said anything afterwards, I bet that he probably would have never said anything. Because, it's a matter of, it's not something that you just publicly vocalize and you've got to tell everybody about it. So, anyway, what happened was, when she got out of the hospital, she made it clear to him that absolutely nobody in the church visited her, at all, her entire time in the hospital. So, now, this is Pastor Paine sharing this story, and he was saying, "I was taken aback a little bit by it," because, then I kind of wondered, "Well, I remember going there to actually visit you." Now, he didn't say that immediately, but, the more she was insistent about it, that, "I just can't understand what kind of church this is, that nobody in our church would visit, whatsoever!" so, after a while, he felt, "I couldn't hold back anymore," and he said, "I remember coming there every single day of the week. I remember coming there the entire time you were in there." And, so, you know what she said? She said, "Well, you know what? You're the pastor. That's your job. You're supposed to do that. It doesn't mean as much when you come, because I'm expecting people in the congregation to come." Now, I would say there was some degree of validity to what she said; I don't agree with how she worded it completely. She could have been a little bit more tactful in the way she said it. And, I don't even know who it was. Now, how many remember that story? That was quite a while ago. But, how do we look at a predicament like that? On the one hand, we could think, "Okay, well, yeah, it's his job." Not necessarily every single day. I think that was really going the extra mile. Let's just say, over that course of time he visited her three times. I would say that's pretty good. I mean, I would say that's good. I mean, you got to look at it like, "Hey, thank God," you know? But, what I would say is this: what's expected of us? Are these the kind of jobs that are only the jobs of the pastor, or those in leadership? And, what's expected of us is part two of the message today.

## Part 2: What's Expected of Us

I remember, shortly after I was baptized, and, I was still in the service, I was stationed down in Norfolk Virginia, and had a few days of leave time, so I ended up spending it with some people in the church. The church that's down there now, this was back then. I had been home visiting family, probably about a month-and-a-half before, so, I didn't feel like I was going to do a return visit. I mean, you got a factor in the cost of the airline ticket and everything else. And, I thought, "Oh, it's only a few days, so I think I want to spend it with the church, kind of get to know people here a little bit more." So, there was an apartment building that a few brothers had owned. And, so, they had asked, "Well, if you've got a few days off, you want to stay with us? That's fine." We have different functions, you know, we had a Wednesday night service, Thursday, different things, ran errands, things like that. So, it wasn't like it was an overload of church activity the entire time, but, it was something where there definitely was activity. So, I didn't really understand the concept of Fellowship, really, that well; I've shared that before, for those of you that don't know me. I wasn't really raised religious; I was raised Catholic, but stopped going at kind of a young age. Fellowship was what? I mean, honestly, it was just an absolute foreign term. I didn't even know—"What? What is that?" I mean, I'm just telling you the honest-to-God truth. Prior to being baptized, does anybody here knew absolutely nothing about fellowship? Oh, good. I'm in good company. So, anyway, after an evening, one night, we went back to the apartments, I don't know, maybe nine o'clock, ten o'clock, kind of wind down the day, and, as we were sitting around, one of the guys was just like, "Hey, you want to look at some pictures? I've got some photo albums of trips I've made, and things back home." John Hoffman is the guy, he's still down there, and I have to say, it might sound, "That's boring, that's nothing. So the guys got, showed you some pictures, big deal." Well, you know what? It meant a lot to me. It really meant a lot, because here's a guy that didn't have to do that, he's spending time, he's just sharing some things. Real life. I mean, this isn't like, "Well, you want to go over another Bible study?" Now, don't get me wrong, there's a time and a place for that. It's all things in balance. You know, life is about time. So, it's not a matter of, you want to overload everybody with the same thing. But, I remember this isn't something that was earth-shattering or spectacular, or anything that anybody would write a book about, but I'm sharing it because it meant so much to me, early on, Rebecca, shortly after I get baptized, that made such an impression on me. I mean, not just that, there were other things that followed. I mean there were plenty of other things that I believe, you know, acts of Charity, or miracles of God, or things that happened in my life that I knew this is where I want to be. This is the ministry that I believe God's called me to be. I'm sorry, you know what? it was actually Linda, you had shared that about shortly after being baptized. Rebecca, you had shared about the gifts and different things like that. But, these are some highlights. These are some ways of encouraging people, of uplifting people, of keeping them in the faith. And, you know, at that time, it was a faithful brother in God just sharing something with a total stranger, and that stranger was me. But, like I said, that did make a difference. I'm going to read a verse from The Book of Proverbs, eighteen, ten. A common verse, a very simple verse:

**Proverbs 18:10**      *The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*

I'm going to ask Vince Stepchuk to come up. He's got something that happened several years ago, and he's going to share a little more of the details, but have you ever had something that happened, or an experience that you just knew was just right? You knew you couldn't put your finger on it exactly, but you knew this is absolutely right. This is the way life should be. This is the way things should happen.

**Vince:** This was probably over thirty years ago, but I was in the Navy, and I was stationed in upstate New York, Saratoga Springs. Parish, maybe you're familiar with it? Fellow nuke. Anyway, that's where they went to train the nukes in the Navy for, you know, to go on a ship. When I was living in upstate New York, I would go visit my grandparents who lived in Vermont on a pretty regular basis, and, one time, during the winter time, there was snow on the ground. I was coming back, and I have an old Torino station wagon, old Ford Torino station wagon, and for some reason, I can't even remember what it was, why I did it, I think I was just trying to get my bearings, maybe pull a map out, make sure I was going the right way. Because, those roads up there, sometimes you can't even find a sign for something, like, what road am I on? And, I pulled over to the side, and I was a little bit too far off to the side of the road, because everything had a flat patch of snow on it. And, I ended up part way in the ditch. And, the car just sort of just slid down into the ditch. And, anybody here, you know anything about those old cars, they're not light. They're not easy for a couple of people to push around. And, I was just stuck there. No cell phone, no nothing. And, there was one house right near where I was in the ditch, but, I'm thinking, "Man, what do I do now?" And, this guy just walks out from his house, he looks at it, doesn't say a word, and he goes back into his garage, gets his pickup truck out, gets out a chain, tells me to hook it up to the frame of the car and pulls me out. He didn't even say a thing until he mentioned hooking the chain up to the car. Pulled me out of the ditch, asked me where I was going, and then asked me if I want to come in and sit down and have dinner with his family? And, I'm just thinking, "Where am I at? This is not Chicago, this is not Detroit." That was God, you just can't forget things like that. I appreciate people's hospitality when they show up like that. He went out of his way to help me out, not only did he not ask anything in return, he was sitting and asking me if I wanted to come in and have dinner with his family on top of it. I was like, this guy's generosity knows no bounds.

And, I knew I felt safe around that group. And, even though I'd only known them for a very, very short time, that verse that I just read about the name of the Lord is a strong tower the righteous run into it and are safe. That's how I felt. I mean, I just—I couldn't explain it. And, it was one of those things like Vince was sharing, who are these people? Now, the funny thing is, a couple of months later, Vince, and a group of other people, they were—in Norfolk, there's a lot of military, a lot of Navy, I think army is down there too, Marines, right, right so anyway, their ship came in, there was about eight people from their crew, that were part of the church, and they were all like-minded. I mean, it was sort of miraculous, because I was seeing wave after wave, and it was like everybody had individualism, everybody had a personality, everybody had different places to be, different ethnic groups, so on and so forth, but I was blown away by that steadfastness, that unity, that love of God, that it started to really dawn on me more and more, that's what it's about. That's where the difference is made. And, I would say, it just left such a strong impression. But, you know, this isn't about getting on some emotional rollercoaster. As far as, trying to go up-hill to make up for lost time, you feel like you've missed out, but, on the other end of the scale, it's not about getting on that same roller coaster and going down, and thinking, "You know I've done enough. I've just had it; I don't feel like I really want to do much more of it. And, I'm just going to mail it in from this point forward." it's about being steady, and about just going on about our business, without fanfare, or everyone else noticing. "God Sees All," is part 3, and the last part of our sermon today.

### **Part 3: God Sees All This**

I'm going to ask Abby Avellino, she's going to come up and read, from the Book of First Thessalonians, four, verses nine through twelve. We may feel like we're not getting the recognition, or notice, or honor, or whatever way you want to put it, but, God sees all.

**1 Thessalonians 4:9-12** *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And, indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And, that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*

Thanks Abby. So, study to be quiet, do your own business, and work with your hands. How's that for putting our nose to the grindstone, as the old expression goes? It's not about whether somebody's really loud, or a clam; it's about being steady, and continuing to do the work of God whether anybody else sees it or not. And, sometimes people will see it. Sometimes they won't. This might sound kind of strange, but I honestly believe that the biggest reason that people decide not to start utilizing those gifts, not to do visitations, not to share the Word of God, not to give, not to have hospitality, and not to pray; it's the same reason that they would stop doing them, if they were already doing them. Because, Satan likes to get us to think it doesn't make any difference. Satan likes to get us to think, "Well, it's the pastor's job. It's somebody else who's getting paid." And, I'll tell you this much, I have worked in the finance department of our ministry, and it's a very, very modest amount, any of those who are on full-time, or have ever been on full time. And, I don't think that's putting it lightly. That's something where, give honor where honor is due (Romans 13:7), we don't muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn (Deuteronomy 25:4, 1 Timothy 5:18), and the Word of God has to go forward. And, as I shared earlier about Pastor Paine, when he did those visitations, I mean, that's not an easy thing to do, and it takes time. And, when you've got hundreds of people that are, you're at their beck-and-call, I guess you could put it like that, a lot of times you just feel like you're being pulled in every single solitary direction. And, that's a challenge. And, so, as far as, it talks about, like, in the Old Testament, those who held up Moses hands, when they were in battle, then the Israelites were winning. They were winning the war. They were victorious. But, when they didn't hold them up anymore, they started seeing defeat (Leviticus 17:11-12). I mean, I know that's metaphorical, too, but it's an actual literal thing, if you look at the Old Testament. Now, that translates into just being supportive, just being able to do your job. What is your job? It's those six things we mentioned—there's others. There's others. I mean, this isn't trying to get accusatorial, or, "You're not doing your job!" Nobody answers to me. Everybody answers to God, though. And, God does see it all. Last verse, today: Hebrews, chapter six, verses nine through ten:

**Hebrews 6:9-10** *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

"God Is Not Unrighteous to Forget," is the sermon today; it's the title of the sermon today. And, there's a specific reason I shortened it to "God Is Not Unrighteous to Forget," as opposed to that verse in its entirety. The reason is God is not unrighteous to forget anything at all, including our labors. God's not going to forget anything that we do, including our labors. That's why God is not unrighteous to forget. But, ultimately, it's a reminder that even if and when people don't notice what we do, and very often that will be the case, God is not unrighteous to forget. And, even if and when we feel like we're doing something that very few are willing to do, those dirty jobs, it's for the upbuilding of God's kingdom. God is not unrighteous to forget. And, it's a reminder that our time here on Earth is not going to last forever. We need to work the work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work (John 9:4), and that God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love. Thank you, and God bless you.