**Celebration Service (Draft Sermon)**

**NOTES:**

*N.B. Suggest showing the film “The Big Picture, Thank You”*

*(2 minutes long)*

**Actions speak louder than words!**

Today’s service is a celebration service. A celebration of what we’ve achieved in God’s name and for Him.

Celebration is something we do to mark an achievement. It also motivates us to carry on.The dictionary defines ‘celebrate’ as:

1. to observe (a day) or commemorate (an event) with ceremonies or festivities:

*to celebrate Christmas; to celebrate the success of a new play.*

1. to make known publicly; proclaim: *The newspaper celebrated the end of the war in red headlines.*
2. to praise widely or to present to widespread and favourable public notice, as through newspapers or novels:*a novel celebrating the joys of*

*marriage; the countryside celebrated in the novels of Hardy.*

1. to perform with appropriate rites and ceremonies; solemnise:

*to celebrate a marriage.*

Celebrations are good. They remind us of the good things we’ve done and achieved and hopefully spur us on to even better things. *(Include a personal story of something you’ve celebrated and why. Make it both personal and inspirational; worthy of recalling as well as stimulating e.g. getting good results, winning, best time etc. that spurred you on to do more).*

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Do we all agree that our main purpose on being on Earth is to get to Heaven? Now that would be a good reason for celebration.

In Luke 10:25-37 we read the parable of the Good Samaritan which tells us about helping our neighbour but it starts with a question to test Jesus v.25 ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** What follows is the parable of the Good Samaritan and that answers the question.

Fast forward to Matthew 25: 31-46

### The Sheep and the Goats

***31“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.***

***34“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’***

**NOTES:**

***37“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’***

***40“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’***

***41“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’***

***44“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’***

***45“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’***

***46“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”***

Don’t we all want to share eternity with our Father in Heaven? Jesus is showing us who will.

What Jesus is saying is, “Thank you *(name a person in the service)* for helping me go to school in *(country)* and giving me an education when my family couldn’t afford it.” “Thank you *(name another person in the service)* for helping to feed me and giving me medicine when I was sick in *(country).”*

*(You can add in here any other ministries the church is involved in that fit the context and relate it to individuals, but make sure it personalises it to somebody).*

Jesus is saying that he’ll thank you personally. When you help the least of these, you help HIM. Wow!

*(You might consider telling one of the inspirational stories of transformation provided by Compassion).*

If Jesus was hungry, wouldn’t you do all you could to feed him? If he was thirsty wouldn’t you find him a drink? Of course, you’d do it right there and then … and you wouldn’t count the cost.

That is what we’re doing here at *(church name)*. Through our partnership with Compassion, we’ve had the opportunity to feed Jesus, to ensure he gets an education and stays healthy. At least *(number)* children are sponsored by people in this church and the children would like to say thank you *… (Show the Thank You film. It lasts 1 minute and should be played quite loud).*

But helping Jesus isn’t legalistic. It’s not “I’ll do this and therefore get something back,” It’s doing something for the poor because Jesus and Father God want us to. It’s our faith in action. In v.7 of Matthew 25 the righteous say ***‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’*** They did it because of their love for God. Because He wants us to and expects us to. In Matthew 6:2 it says **2**“So when you give to the needy…” It doesn’t say “If you give to the needy…” The assumption is that we *will* give to the needy.

**NOTES:**

*James 1: 27Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

***Faith and Deeds***

James 2:14-24

***14What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.***

***18But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”***

***Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.19You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder.***

***20You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless[***[***d***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+2&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30314d)***]? 21Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+2&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-30317e" \o "See footnote e)] and he was called God’s friend. 24You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.***

The title of this talk is **“Actions Speak Louder than Words”**

How often have you heard that phrase or saying? How often have you used it?

Normally used by me towards someone else. But shouldn’t I take my own advice?

When you act kindly, you bring a smile to God’s face. He looks down from heaven and says to the angel standing near him “Look, did you see what *(name person in the service)* just did? She helped *(name)*. She chose to lift her out of poverty. What a great disciple she is. I must reward her for that.”

If you don’t think that’s Biblical, look at ***Proverbs 19:17 Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.***

So let’s celebrate the *(number of children)* sponsored through *(church name)*.

* Let’s celebrate that we have the opportunity to say “It’s not all about me. I’m blessed so I can be a blessing.”
* Let’s celebrate the great sense of worth and value we feel when we help others.
* Let’s celebrate the child who gave their life to Christ in a Compassion project in the last four minutes.

**NOTES:**

* Let’s celebrate that another will do the same in the next four minutes.
* Let’s celebrate the doctors, nurses, lawyers, police officers, farmers who were born into poverty but can now walk tall because they were given an opportunity.
* And let’s renew our resolve to do all we can for the 400 million children still living in extreme poverty.

Let’s celebrate because we’re people whose actions do speak louder than their words.

**Closing prayer:**

“Lord thank you for the privilege of being able to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Thank you for the *(number)* children we’ve been able to support through Compassion and *(mention other ministries to the poor)*. Lord bless every one of them. We thank you for the privilege to sleep each night in a comfortable bed, to have clean water at the turn of a tap, to have three meals a day and a health service that looks after us when we’re sick. Lord never let us be so comfortable that we assume everyone is as fortunate as we are. Expand our understanding of the needs in this world and our capacity to show compassion to the least, the lost and the lonely. Show us where and how we can do more for you. Amen.”