

ME304, Fall 2019
Reflection

*I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.*
-Rabindranath Tagore

This poem reflects one person's perspective on what has brought joy to them – and this is not a unique perspective. This poem reflects the teachings and thoughts of many of history's sages. I truly do hope that you have a joy filled life, but joy is not accidental; it is not something that is found by luck.

Spend some time thinking about this poem, and then spend more time thinking about "service". Perhaps you think of service as donating time helping at a food kitchen – which certainly is a form of service. But this is a very limited definition of service. Listening to a friend or neighbor, saying "hi" to a stranger, picking up a piece of litter on the sidewalk are all ways we can serve others.

Service does not have to be "voluntary." Healthcare providers certainly perform acts of service as part of their occupation. Although typically less personal, engineers also provide a necessary service to the greater good. Using your hard-earned talents to make the world a better place can provide great joy even if you are paid for doing so.

Does service have to have an immediate effect? What about time spent developing those hard-earned talents? What about the nurse who after hours goes on the internet to learn a little more about how s/he can help a patient of theirs. The time s/he spent on the internet is a form a service – s/he was giving up her free time to develop ability to better serve. What about when s/he was in nursing school – s/he was developing the knowledge that would be required later. In some sense, is developing your ability to solve future problems a form of service? Is it possible to find joy in solving a thermodynamics or FEA problem?