

A Easter 7 2017

Good News: Tom Cruise has stirred a lot of enthusiasm with his announcement of Top Gun 2. American movie going audiences love sequels!

Today our first lesson is from the NT book of Acts which is a sequel of sorts. Luke wrote two books. The first is his gospel and then he wrote Acts.

The Gospel of Luke is all about God's gift of Jesus Christ. We see the Holy Spirit move through his life from... the moment an angel spoke to Mary about Jesus' birth and promised: ***"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God."***

Luke 1:35

to ...the crucifixion when, just before he breathed his last, Jesus cried, ***"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."*** (*Luke 23:46*)

So the whole gospel of Luke is the story of the spirit and at the end, the spirit returns to heaven. But there is more... and in the book of Acts the spirit returns to earth on the day of Pentecost as tongues of fire dance over the disciples' heads and Luke tells us that ***All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*** (*Acts 2:17*)

Next week is Pentecost Sunday and there is a real change in the message of worship. The whole first half of the year, since the first week in Advent before Christmas, we have reflected on God's gift of Jesus Christ. Free gift of Grace. God comes to us first. Then starting on Pentecost there is a

shift and during the 2nd half of the year, we begin to reflect on how we live out our gratitude for that gift of love.

This is the 4th week I have preached on the Purpose Driven Life and the 5 purposes of our lives.

I have put green book marks with a summary of his book in the pews and on the prayer table, and there are other resources you can borrow on the Purpose Center.

The 5 purposes are Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Service and Mission.

This week the theme is Service.

I read somewhere this week, ***Most people wish to serve God -- but in an advisory capacity only!*** (*It is from the Sermonillustrations.com website Quoted in Sunday Express, London.*) I get that. ☺

But what I want you to hear today is that all we do as Christians is in grateful response to God's gift of love in Jesus Christ.

So...we serve because Jesus Christ is the suffering servant, promised in the Old Testament. He came to serve us.

Our purpose driven lives are in response to that.

We serve because Christ served us.

So here is a bit of a summary about service from Rick Warren's book. PDL pgs. 227-278)

- First of all, you were put on earth to make a contribution. God designed you to make a difference with your life. You were created to serve God. You were saved to serve God. You are called to serve God. You are commanded to serve God

The Bible says: ***Because of God's great mercy...Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God dedicated to his service.*** (Romans 12:1)

- Furthermore, in the Bible, the words servant and minister are the same, so if you are a Christian, you are a minister and when you are serving you're ministering.
- By serving you are fulfilling God's purposes. God has a ministry for you in his church and a mission for you in the world.
- Next week we will talk about mission in the world but this week we are considering our service to God's church.

In their book *Let the Servant Church Arise* (Augsburg, 2003), Barbara De Grote-Sorenson and David Allen Sorenson write, "... ***we are discovering in recent years — in the midst of occasionally acting more selfish than we'd care to admit in this book — that in serving we ourselves are healed! In other words, serving others is much more than just the transaction of help that it appears to be. Servanthood is, in fact, a gift of grace God gives the givers to heal us of our nature of sin, our self-centeredness, our self-preoccupation, our selfishness. Servanthood is a gift to everyone involved in the God-given encounter with generosity.***"

Servanthood is a gift to everyone involve. That thought showed up several times on the Volunteers are the heart of our Ministry cards.

Here are a few responses:

I enjoy volunteering because...

- I enjoy the good feeling I get working with Confirmation students. Sunday School children, kids.
- I feel blessed more than those being helped. What a great feeling.
- I enjoy the friendship and fellowship! I love my choir and bell choir sisters.
- It puts joy in my heart.
- It feels good and I make new friends.
- I get to make a difference in the world.
- I like to look out and see that even someone like me, a single person among billions, can make a very noticeable difference.

Okay to close on this holiday weekend I want to show a fun video which reminds us that we all have something to share...

A Place for You to Serve by Big Pie Publishing,

Remember, you were created to serve God and when you do, you will discover joy in your heart and put a smile on God's face.

This is the good news of service. This is the good news of the gospel.