

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday – We have to go all the way to the 20th chapter of Acts to find a key phrase from Jesus – “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Of course, Jesus’ whole ministry embodied these words. What do you think Jesus meant by this statement? Does your own experience prove these words to be true? Is your life defined by what you give or what you receive?

Tuesday – I have always believed that the best things in life are those things we can share. The things we can only keep for ourselves never bring lasting joy. What gifts can you share? Take an inventory of your life today. Make a list of your resources, talents, knowledge and possessions. What are you able to share in God’s name? Our level of joy is determined by our level of sharing.

Wednesday – God always blesses our desire to share. When we seek to share with others out of love and compassion God will always provide the method and the means. We just have to be willing to be used. Do you want God to move in your life? Pray, “Lord, I want to be used by you to share your love. Put me to work.” Brace yourself. God is about to move.

Thursday – What do you enjoy doing and what do you do well? If you can answer that question, you are well on your way to discovering how God wants to use you. How can you use your gifts to bring glory to God and share His love with the world?

Friday – The church is God’s chosen vessel of love in the world. If God is going to do something in this world, God is going to do it through His church. How can you share your gifts with the church? Do you see church as something you receive or a conduit through which to give and share?



PASADENA COMMUNITY CHURCH

a United Methodist Congregation

227 - 70th Street South ~ St Petersburg, FL 33707
(727) 381-2499 email: pasadena@pccumc.org
www.pasadenacommunitychurch.org

Pasadena Community Church

I Dare You to Share!

Sunday, July 24, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Acts 20:35

I believe inside every heart is a powerful desire. This desire influences us more than we realize. A good explanation of this desire was given by the famous oral historian Studs Terkel. Terkel died just a few years ago at the age of 96. Throughout his lifetime he talked to tens of thousands of people. He was on radio and television telling the world his insights about people. He famously said that his epitaph would be “Curiosity did not the kill the cat!”

Once Terkel was the one being interviewed and he was asked, “What do people want more than anything else?” Without hesitation, Studs Terkel said, “People want their lives to count for something. They want to make a difference” (Arthur Caliandro, “How Do I Make a Difference?”).

Terkel was right. Deep inside all of us is a strong urge to make our lives count – to make a difference. I believe this urge is given to us by God. We all want to make an impact on this world.

I have learned that when people visit our church or any church there are three questions on their mind. They may not consciously realize they have these questions, but they are there. The first question is “Can I be a member?” In other words, “Can I be part of the group?” The second question is, “Will they accept me?” And the third question is, “Can I make a difference?” (I am grateful to Mike Murray for his insights related to these questions).

It is my experience that most churches are filled with people who are satisfied with having the first two questions answered. They have become a member by accepting Christ as Savior and agreeing to be in covenant with the church. They also feel accepted and welcomed by the congregation. However, many still have this nagging conviction that will not leave them alone because the third question has not been answered to their satisfaction. They want to make a difference but they don’t know

how. This is why most Christians are only living out about 10% of their potential in Christ.

Today, as I continue this “I Dare You” series, I am asking us to dare to share and make a difference for Christ. I want us to dare to make an impact on our community and world with our gifts. I want us to dare to realize our full potential as children of God.

So, how do we do it? We all want to make a difference. We all have the desire to make an impact. How does it happen?

It all begins with six words – six of the most important words of life. Every person who has made a difference in the world lives out the power of these six words. These six words are the gateway to making a positive impact with your life. They have been spoken by several different leaders, ministers, and executives: “**Find the Need and Meet It.**”

A good example of someone doing this in the business world is Howard Schultz. Schultz wanted to make an impact with something he enjoyed – coffee. He asked himself what people are looking for when they stop for a cup of coffee. He did some research and remembered that in Europe people like to go to café’s and sit, read, and chat in a relaxed pleasant atmosphere while they drink their coffee. Schultz found the need and met it by starting a company called Starbucks (Caliandro). Maybe you have heard of it?

Another example is a man named Bill Casey. Casey was just nineteen years old when he discovered a need that was not being met in his community. Many folks could not leave their homes because of age or health reasons and they needed groceries and prescriptions. So Casey and his buddy got on their bikes and picked up items that were needed by the homebound and dropped them off. They started the first messenger service in America. This little enterprise started to grow. Soon they

opened an office in California and then another one in New York and then they opened offices all over the world! That is the story of the United Parcel Service, UPS, started by a teenaged kid who found a need and met it (Caliandro).

Let's move from business to journalism. Take the example of Bob Woodruff of ABC News. Just 56 days after he attained his dream and became the news anchor at ABC, he was on assignment in Iraq and his tank was blown up by an IED. He suffered a major brain injury. They didn't know if he would live, and if he did live what limitations he would have. Would he be able to walk? Would he be able to talk and see? Would he keep his memory? Would his personality be the same?

With the help of God and the skills of extraordinary military surgeons, and sustained by his faith in God, Bob lived, and they began to put him back together again. Today he is back living his dream reporting the news on ABC.

As a result of his experience, Bob and his wife, Lee, recognized a need that was not being met. Bob knew that he had received the best medical care in the country. He was in one of the best hospitals with the best doctors. But he knew that not everyone in the country received this kind of medical care. He realized there are many wounded veterans and soldiers who are suffering because they do not receive the medical care they need. So the Woodruffs created a foundation. They seek agencies and groups that help the military wounded, and they supply them with money (Caliandro).

Find the need and meet it! Now, if people in the business world and the world of journalism can do such a great job at this, then what do you think those who follow the King of Kings and Lord of Lords can do? Oh, there are so many needs in the world and Jesus is aching to work through us to meet them! I love Frederick Buechner's definition of a calling. He said a calling is "when our greatest passion meets one of the world's greatest needs."

There is a lady in our church who is living out this calling. Her name is Dr. Kim Dean. She has been touched by our ESOL ministry, led by Cris Wolfe, which helps people learn English so they can support themselves. However, many of the students cannot afford the health care they need. So, Dr. Dean is stepping up to meet the need by offering free medical care to these students. She also will be coming to our campus and offering free medical consultations for these students.

Dr. Dean has found a need and is meeting it! What about you? What gifts do you possess and how

can you use those gifts to meet a need in our church and community?

There is another way you can make a huge impact in this world. And you can start today! You have the power right now to make a difference. Just a little bit of this power can work miracles. It can change lives. It can change communities. What is it? Kindness. You want to make a difference? **Just Be Kind.** After all, isn't kindness the simplest expression of God's love?

There is a man in our church whom I have great respect for. He embodies the love and compassion of Jesus in so many ways. It is because of who he is that he was able to tell this story. He told me that he was playing golf a couple of weeks ago when he and his group got behind a slow foursome. There is nothing more frustrating to a golfer than slow play. When my friend was near a member of the group ahead he said, "Could your hurry it up?" The man gave back a stern look. Another guy turned to my friend and said, "Take it easy on that guy. He just lost his wife a few weeks ago." My friend said that he felt three feet tall at that moment. Then he remembered the quote by Plato: "Be kind to everyone because everyone is fighting a battle."

There is a popular bumper sticker on cars these days that expresses what I am saying. The sticker says, "Just Be Nice!" Just a simple act of kindness can go so far. When I am in the Chick-fil-a drive thru, sometimes I like to pay for the order behind me. I love watching their reaction in my rear view mirror. It makes me happy seeing them happy. Occasionally, I will pick out a table in a restaurant and ask the waitress for the check. Can you imagine their feeling of joy and surprise when they find out someone paid their bill? The power of kindness.

I recall a lady coming to see me about an all too common problem. She told me that she did not enjoy going to work. She said she would quit but there weren't many jobs and she needed the money. I asked her why she did not like going to work and she replied, "Well, everyone has a bad attitude. My co-workers talk behind each other's backs. No one ever has any fun. It is miserable. I dread going to work every day." I asked, "Have you ever thought of killing the bad atmosphere with kindness?" She replied, "What do you mean?" I said, "Do you ever smile at your co-workers? Do you ever offer to help them with their work when your load is lighter? Do you ever offer to get them lunch?" She said, "Well, no. It never really occurred to me to do that." I said, "Try it for a month and see what happens."

She did try to do those things for a month. And guess what happened? She came back and told me that "it had worked." She said the atmosphere in the office had completely changed. She mentioned that even the boss had said in a staff meeting that he had noticed a change in the office and he liked it! Just one simple act of kindness can do so much! It begins with you and me.

Many of us are fond of saying "Let's play a joke on somebody." Arthur Caliandro says that we should do something different. He says that we should get people together and decide to play kindness on somebody, just do something which will overwhelm and touch another person. You could change a life. I like that idea! Kindness is the most underrated power in the world. It so simple and easy and it can work miracles.

John Boyle O'Reilly, a nineteenth-century Irish patriot who spent many years in some of the worst British prisons before escaping to America, had reason to understand the power of kindness. After he came to America, he penned these words:

*"What is good?" I asked in a musing mood.
Order, said the law court;
Knowledge, said the school;
Truth, said the wise man;
Pleasure, said the fool;
Love, said the maiden;
Beauty, said the page;
Freedom, said the dreamer;
Home, said the sage;
Fame, said the soldier;
Equity, the seer.
Spoke my heart full sadly:
"The answer is not here."
Then within my bosom
Softly this I heard:
"Each heart holds the secret;
Kindness is the word."*

Most consider Abraham Lincoln one of the greatest presidents in our history. The reason is not complicated. Lincoln knew the power of kindness and he lived it out. He said:

"Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow."

There is one more thing you must do if you desire to make a difference for Christ in this world: **Measure Your Powers, Not Your Problems.**

You will always have critics who are eager to tell you about the problems in this world and how it is impossible to make any difference. You will

always have folks who are eager to criticize you. You will also face the temptation of being overcome and overwhelmed by the enormity of needs in this world. But don't give in to the negativity. Instead, focus on what you can do to make a difference. Look at your abilities, not your challenges.

One of the greatest examples of this lesson in scripture is when Jesus feeds the multitudes with just a few loaves and fish. The disciples counted the large crowd and then looked at their meager portion. Jesus looked at them and asked, "How many loaves do you have?" In other words, "Don't look at hillside, look at basket! Don't count the crowd; count the loaves!" Then they took the first step and did what they could do with what they had. And because they were willing to allow God to use what they had, God blessed their efforts and they had more than enough (Dr. Jay Stocking, "The Investment of Life").

Let me tell you something I believe with all my heart! When we decide to use our gifts for God to make an impact, God will always, always, always, always provide the power and the resources to make things happen. I have seen it over and over again. When people ask God to use them to meet the needs of this world, God moves like a tidal wave. Are you looking to experience God? Ask Him to use you to make a difference, and then watch out!

How am I so sure that God will always provide strength and resources when we want to do good? Well, it is because something Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 25. Jesus is talking to His disciples about the rewards that await the righteous in Heaven. He says,

"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

As He was talking, the disciples were totally confused. They wondered what Jesus was talking about. One of them said, "We never saw you in any of those situations, nor did we do any of those things." Then Jesus said something remarkable: "Any time you do this for any person, you do it for me."

You want to make a difference for God? I dare you to find the need and meet it. I dare you to be kind. I dare you to measure your powers; not your problems. Then you will know why Jesus said that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Amen.