

Sermon: For This Reason

Sunday, July 14, 2019

Scripture Readings: Colossians 1:1-14; Luke 10:25-37

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What a week! Although many of the parents and grandparents who have sent their youth to the mission trip knew exactly how many days were left for us to come back, some of us at the mission in Wise County, VA completely lost track of the days because of different circumstances and change of perspectives.

Most of us left all our electronics back at home. Youth were asked to free themselves from having a phone for a week. Some of the adult ministry partners turned their phone into a paperweight for few days because they did not have connection. Well, at least that is what we did until we found out there was wifi – a day before we were due to leave. And then there was some of us who had connection but decided to put it down to do other stuff... like sleep and shower and attending to other matters.

When we freed ourselves from the non-essential things of life, we realized that life is much harder. Without air conditioning in a gym packed with 105 bunkmates shoulder to shoulder with a building fan that was making a noise that sounded like a giant hamster wheel that was turning all night long; dealing with 98% humidity; skin scorching Sun; and different challenges that always presented itself that made our work more complex... I started to look for one thing and wanted to know where it was all the time. If you thought I was going to say Jesus, you truly are a saint.

Rather than a phone, which is my first tool of choice for my every-moment-carry, it was replaced by my water bottle that carried cold iced-water that was quenching my thirst. It was one of many things that was in my possession and have utilized it many times in the past, but I realized I have taken for granted.

Do we have a go-to-spiritual tool to turn to or to utilize for our every-day-carry? Today's Scripture from Colossians tells us that we do!

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, <sup>10</sup> so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, <sup>12</sup> and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

The spiritual tool we are looking for? It is prayer. Each time I turned to by my water bottle, I should also have asked for Jesus' help. Every time we reach for our phones, we should ask for God's help. Each time we reach for our keys, we should be asking the Holy Spirit to guide us during our car ride and fill our homes with love. It's because everything that we possess other than essentials are blessings of God. As we work hard in our vocations to bear its fruits, and as we have deeper comprehension of the God's grace through the fruits that we bear, we will realize how much we have taken God's mercy for granted. The byproduct of doing God's mission is that we shine light on to our own lives to witness the deeper work of God's grace. For this reason, we are forever changed. Mission team members are not going to be the same

people who left here a week ago. For this same reason, the people who have prayed for us, sent us out, participated in fundraisers, wrote us encouraging letters, are also forever changed by witnessing the grace of God empowering and utilizing these youth to be the ambassadors to the world.

The other spiritual tool we have is love. As the Samaritan turned to help a stranger, Jesus is asking us to be moved in love. Do not simply do what is being asked of you. Do as how you would do for yourself in that situation. Love them as you love yourself.

There is a phrase that was repeated to me several times this week during the mission, and that is “a stranger is a friend that you have not met yet.” We are blessed in even more ways than we previously thought, or we can imagine. For this reason, let us spread our wings of compassion and love and show Christ-like mercy in each of our daily lives. For mission team members, let us continue to love on our homeowners by remembering them in our daily prayers. For the rest of the family of Westminster, let us continue to love on these youth to walk beside them in their spiritual walk. And let all of us greet friends we have not met yet with love, for this is the reason we are all called to do likewise. Amen.