

**“LOVE GOD, LOVE THE WORLD.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

**July 1, 2018, 10:30AM**

**Scripture Texts: Mark 10:41-45; Acts 2:42-47**

### **Introduction.**

You went and did it again, First Church. You were amazing this week and in all the weeks of preparation before. You went above and beyond all week long with our Serve project. I want you to know how proud I am of First Church.

40 youth and leaders came here from four CRC churches from FL, MN, and CO. They served our community through seven work sites and we as a church served them to make it all possible. Over a hundred members of our congregation served led by an incredible team of volunteer leaders and our own youth group and all of us under the faithful leadership of Dan Houston.

You volunteered and helped in the kitchen, in the worship, sound, projector, on the work sites, came to the prayer meetings or wore a prayer bracelet, were a host family on last Sunday morning, bought or donated tools or vehicles or trailers, helped with set up or clean up, stayed up late to be a night watchmen. Some of you took a week of vacation, time off from work, or came before work and after work.

### **Testimonies:**

We have to stop and reflect on what God allowed us to be a part of. I want you to know the fruit of your labors, I want you to know about the lives you touch, I want you to hear firsthand reports of God’s grace, God’s providence.

I have asked some members of our Serve volunteer team to share briefly from their experience.

Laura Buys and some of our youth; Ria Van Weerdhuizen; and Len Honcoop.

Three weeks ago I preached from Acts 2:42-47, the classic Scripture text describing the beginnings of the early church. I said it was a snapshot picture of a healthy church. Listen to that text again and see how it was put into practice this week.

**Acts 2:42-47** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people.

Luke says the early church was filled with many signs and wonders. Amazing things were happened, God was working, prayers were being answered. I believe we saw that over and over again this past week, many signs and wonders and evidences of God's grace and goodness and power and presence.

I have no doubt that the success and fruit of this week was a direct result of the incredible amount of prayer that was offered up for many months and especially over the past seven days.

One Serve student said to his leader that he had never experienced before what if felt like to be really prayed for, and by so many people.

Besides all those who wore bracelets and prayed for their Serve people, there was pray every evening while the kids worshiped, there were prayer teams available to pray for any student who asked. All of the students got prayed for by a team more than once. Melinda Burrma sent out a daily prayer guide for the praises and needs of each day.

God prompted us to pray and provided prayers to pray and God heard and answered those prayers, even down to specifics.

We saw a group of young people who were devoted to the **Word**, they heard the Word preached for seven nights during their worship, they were lead in devotions every morning, which started with worship lead by Paul Assink and Nicole Baughn before they went to work. They spent time in small groups discussing the things they heard preached and experienced from God in their devotions and prayer. Hearts were touched and lives were changed.

They ***fellowshipped*** together in a remarkable display of unity and cooperation. One student stood up during the testimony time and said he had been a part of several group work projects and this was the first time he experienced no complaining and grumbling and laziness. These kids worked hard. They finished all the work projects ahead of schedule and did above and beyond. From the first day they all bonded and gelled and got along.

We ***broke bread*** together during all the meals that Candi Laird and a great team of volunteers in the kitchen prepared. They were here at 6 am and before they went home at night they left behind great desserts served up after worship and small groups. Phama and I came over each night just to supervise and make sure it all went well.

And we broke bread together in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on Wednesday evening.

Finally, I have to say a word about the ***generous sharing of gifts*** and resources and talents for the meeting of needs.

It happened financially as God provided through you for the needs of this week. Several months ago Paul Assink saw that the budget was way over possible receipts. We took an offering and God provided exactly the amount needed to make up the difference. Others have been giving donations just in the past few weeks. A youth leader from another church handed me a donation for our church before he left last night.

Then there were all the donations of tools and equipment and trailers. Remember my announcement of the need for a seven passenger van last week? After the service a couple who have just visited here a couple of times went up to Dan and handed him the keys to their van.

We had so much manicure and pedicure supplies left over we were able to give each woman a baggie full, a little bit of beauty in a hard life.

Then there was God perfectly orchestrating who would be where. The first day at worksites it just so happened that the team that went to Van Hemerts had a pastor, born in Holland, who spoke Dutch and understood the importance of the books that needed to be organized.

The next day a female leader who had only been a Christian about three years was at Van Hemerts, they got to talking and John gave her some literature to help her grow in her faith.

Every team that worked at the Ferndale Camp got to hear from a veteran missionary, Tim Lewis, challenge the kids to use their God given gifts for the glory of God.

What we experienced was a beautiful orchestra under the direction of God's Holy Spirit, each part and each section doing its part and making a beautiful sound together.

The Serve team here heard countless times over and over again, praise for how well prepared, how well organized, how well run, how well prayed for it all was.

The kids commented how friendly and welcoming our congregation was last Sunday morning and Sunday evening, how many of you adults went up and talked to them. You blessed them.

Awe came upon them and many signs and wonders were done in the name of Jesus because of all of you praying, sharing, working, giving, making it possible. And we were all together with glad and generous hearts giving praise and glory to God for His favor upon us.

**I Peter 4:8-11** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

We don't all have the same knowledge or gifts or talents or abilities, but we can all serve, we can all put the interests of others ahead of our own. You don't have to go overseas or on a mission trip to be used by God. You don't have to do something huge. You can wash dishes, come on Saturday to clean up after everyone left, lose sleep on security detail, help a homeless person or pray. We can all live up to the example of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. You can be Jesus to someone else.

Love God and love others. This is pleasing to the Lord and it brings joy and gladness to our hearts and others. I love you and I am so proud of all of you, for your prayer and support and involvement. Well done, thou good and faithful servants of Jesus Christ. Glory to God!

**Prayer:** Our Holy Father in Heaven, we beg you this morning to bless our seeking of you. Above all, dear Father, grant that our church and our lives will increasingly bring glory to your dear Son, our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, in whose precious name we pray. Amen.

