

“YOU DID GOOD.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

June 23, 2019, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: I Thessalonians 1:2-5; II Thessalonians 1:11-12

Introduction.

The theme of Serve this week was Go Do Good, and I am pleased to report You Did Good.

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.

God had a vision and a purpose that He gave to Dan H about four years ago, to stretch ourselves to become a Serve site. Little did we know then it was a three-year commitment. And now look what you did, you did good, above and beyond good for three years. So, thank you to Dan for listening and following through especially when it seem impossible.

This year 40 youth and leaders from four CRC churches from MI, MN, and WA served our community through four 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 H.

You volunteered and helped in the kitchen, made cookies, donated chips and pop, helped in the worship, sound, projector, on the work sites, came to the prayer meetings, were a host family on last Sunday morning, bought or donated tools or vehicles or trailers, did laundry, 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.

I don't know if you noticed it yesterday, how quiet it was all over Lynden. There was a lot of serious sleeping going on all day. Everyone worked hard, played hard, built relationships hard, did lots of heavy lifting physically and spiritually.

I Thessalonians 1:2-5:

Paul had a custom of beginning his letters with some praise of the Christians in various churches, commending them for their faith and the fruit of their faith put into action for the blessing and benefit of others.

Notice three things:

First, notice Paul doesn't congratulate them for their gifts or abilities or talents or hard work.

Rather Paul thanks God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for their work of faith and for their labor of love. Paul is reminding them it is all from God, it is all grace, it is all a blessing and benefit from God, given by God for the sake of others. What we have done is evidence of the Holy Spirit at work right here among us. This is proof of God's love.

Second, notice Paul mentions prayer. Again, the focus is upward, on God who is the source, the supplier, the foundation of all we are enabled to do. God answered, God did this.

Having seen the fruit of prayer and how God has powerfully answer in so many ways, I call you to continue to be stirred up to prayer in all things. There is much work before us that needs the undergirding of prayer. The search committee, the building committee, the creation of a new classis. (Synod last week approved the formation of a new classis here in Whatcom County.)

Finally, notice he mentions the Gospel and how the Gospel wasn't just received as so many words, but it took root and bore much fruit, it was powerful and effective, it produced good results. It had legs, hands and feet. It was tangibly believed and lived.

So, Paul's purpose is to give proper glory and thanks to God, recognizing that it is all by His grace. And he also means to encourage them to persevere in this, to not grow weary in well doing, but to continue in the grace of doing good, for it was for this very purpose, as we heard last week, that we have been saved.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Knowing God has saved you for this purpose, knowing that God has had this purpose in mind from before the foundations of the earth, knowing that God has given you His very Holy Spirit to empower and enable you, be moved to do good and do your part in responding and acting.

Having seen the work you have done and what gifts God has given you to do it, I call you to continue to be stirred up to love and good works for the glory of God and the sake of the Gospel. Paul is urging us don't let your love remain inactive, don't shrink back from any need.

Faith that is not busy is not faith. In Galatians 5:6 we read faith works by love, faith shows itself in love.

To whom much has been given, much is expected.

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 He touched through you, I want you to hear firsthand reports of God's grace, God's providence. How He preached the Gospel to others by our love and labor.

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

II Thessalonians 1:11-12 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.