

VI. Global Ministries Conference 2022  
“Partnering Together for Joy”  
John 4:36  
Pastor Bryan Wintersteen  
March 6, 2022 • Sunday Evening Sermon

Mark 10:45 says [45] *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* It’s interesting to note that this passage is right before Jesus went to heal the blind man. Jesus not only declared He came not to be served but then He went immediately after that to serve. He gave life and brought sight to the blind. This is just like Jesus, not only teaching us all the things we should do, but then showing us an example of what to do as we follow Him.

I want to go a little deeper with this idea about gifts. Some of you have done the love languages and for many the buying or giving of gifts ranks highly in the way you show love to others and also the way you receive love for you love it when someone provides a thoughtful gift. But gifts are given on purpose – for an occasion like a birthday, to celebrate something, a graduation, Christmas or anniversary, etc. There are many reasons we give gifts but again they are always given intentionally, with purpose. Often times gifts are meant to accomplish something.

Think back to some of the more meaningful gifts that you have been given. These kinds of gifts generally come with a certain sense of thoughtfulness. The person who gave you the gift really thought about you, your preferences, or likes when they gave it to you. They were others-centered in their thinking when they bought or made the gift. Perhaps it was a gift that was very helpful or useful to you in your life, ministry, job or home. There is thought and intentionality that has gone into this gift. These are some of the reasons why these gifts are so meaningful to us.

This is what I think about when I think about the gifts we can give in the name of the Lord to serve His church and around the world. Recently, Pastor Reeder has been doing a series on spiritual gifts telling us what they are meant for and who gives the gift. Every believer has received a spiritual gift. The idea is that we have been given a gift and it’s not meant to stay dormant. We are to open the gift – try it on and use the gift.

Paul tells Timothy in II Timothy 1:5-7, [5] *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.* [6] *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,* [7] *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

As I look at this passage, we are not only meant to receive a gift but we are meant to fan it into flames, as we blow on those coals getting it to erupt so the gift can be used, brought to life and take what God has given to us and deploy it fervently with passion out among the nations, in your neighborhoods, in your family, your work, those you love and anyone you meet. We are meant to use the gift so that it comes to life and makes a difference in people’s lives.

Romans 12:4-8 says [4] *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,* [5] *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* [6] *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; [7] if service, in our serving; the one who teaches,*

*in his teaching; [8] the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

If you are a new creation in Christ, He has given you a gift and it's our responsibility to fan that into flame, to put it on and use it. Again, gifts are meant to be used and we can see it in this passage.

Another passage about gifts is in I Corinthians 12:1-7 says *[1] Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. [2] You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. [3] Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.*

*[4] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. [7] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit **for the common good.** Don't miss this. The gifts are given for the building up of the church, the building up of the body of Christ for the common good.*

Ephesians 2:6-10 says *[6] and (He) raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

Certainly, there is some level of effort and engagement that this passage talks about for us. These gifts have been given to build up the common good, other believers, to enhance the church, reach the lost, encourage others, bless others for these gifts are given for a purpose with intentionality.

I love this passage in Ephesians 2 because it talks about the reality of how God is working both in us or on us, as well as through us. None of us are completed yet. Philippians 1:6 says *[6] And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* According to this, Christ has started a work in us, and He has given us a gift to use for His purpose. I have a couple personal stories I'm going to share to illustrate not only that God is good to give us gifts but also He is faithful that He doesn't expect us to be experts when we first get the gift. We are learners and we're growing. Here are some of these personal illustrations.

At 16 years old I went to a youth ministry meeting at my church and I heard a presentation about short term missions. It set my heart on fire. The youth leader challenged us to give two months of our life that summer between school to go and serve the Lord in short term missions. I prayed about it and I was fired up to go serve the Lord in missions which I hope some have gotten since attending this mission's conference this past week. I came home, had the mission's pamphlet in my hand and said 'Dad, the Lord is calling me to serve in short term missions this summer in Brazil to make movies for God. Isn't that great?' He said 'No, God is not calling you to do that.' I said 'Surely, He is because I heard Him and I prayed. I have filled out the form and I just need this part filled out with a parent signature.' My dad said 'Until the Lord tells me that you are to go, you're not allowed to go and I want you to stay within a two hour flight of me and Brazil is a little further than that.' I remember being so discouraged and thinking 'my dad just doesn't know the Lord and he is blinded to God's will.'

I remember talking with my youth pastor about it and told him how upset I was about it and discouraged for I had all this youthful zeal. My youth pastor said to me 'Bryan, what's the goal here? So, you want to do a short term mission's trip. You're dad didn't say you couldn't do a mission's trip. He just said he wanted you to stay in the states. This brochure has plenty of opportunities in the states. Maybe this is a test from God to refine your heart. Maybe you're not really serving Him with pure motives because God has put your Dad in authority over you for your good.' Boy, that was humbling but that youth pastor spoke truth to me. God used that trip that summer that I did get to go on to go all around the National Parks of the United States sharing the Gospel. I learned how to do the Roman Road, the ABC's for Christ and all the Scripture presentations to do Gospel evangelism in ways I never would have done on the film team because I would have focused more on making the film, but this trip actually taught me how to share the Gospel. It gave me a skill that I have been able to use the rest of my ministry life, but at first it was discouraging that I had to learn to receive it and walk in God's ways.

Another life example was the Urbana Mission's Conference when I was a freshman in college. I was invited to go to Champagne, Illinois where they have the world's largest global mission's conference for students and it was a wonderful experience. I came away with two things from that ministry opportunity. One was that I had my eyes opened to global missions in a real way. There were 20,000 students packed into their arena singing praise to God with so many different mission agencies there where you could sign up and go right on the dotted line. Right from that meeting you could go and join a mission agency and it opened my world to what missions was all about and the opportunities out there. Again, my heart leapt and I had zeal for what God was doing around the world even though I was still pretty young as a believer.

There was a time during that week where they challenged us from the podium that we should understand as students that the rest of the world doesn't have what we have in America. There are many places with extreme poverty. So, the speaker challenged us to give up our meal that day which we had paid for in our registration of the conference so that we could identify with the rest of the world that had so little. We would sacrifice and learn how to fast and pray for missions during lunch. I thought that was powerful because I had not been thinking about skipping lunch, but I knew at that moment there was only one right answer and that was not to eat lunch now that they said that from the microphone. I wasn't really into that or thinking about fasting and praying for poverty around the world during lunch. Like most of the students there I ended up packing into Pizza Hut with my friends and the line was out the door. I realized as I was enjoying the pizza with my friends that I still had a long way to go for I wasn't quite where I needed to be with my heart, attitude and mindset about missions even though I loved missions. I wasn't fully developed as a believer yet. God pressed that on my heart through that Pizza Hut experience.

Another one from that same Urbana Conference was one of the speakers at the conference was John Kyle who had written this book that they gave us titled The Unfinished Task and it was all about reaching the last and the least with the Gospel. It was a powerful book and I remember learning as I read it about a revival meeting that was started by some students who were challenging us as college students at that event. They shared about an event that happened some 200 years before at Williams College. There were five students in particular at this college who were praying for missions that God would send out laborers to reach the harvest around the world. During that prayer meeting as they were walking around the campus, there was a thunder storm that came up and these students had to take cover so they hid kind of sheltered underneath this haystack.

They continued to pray and after the storm passed it had kind of galvanized their hearts that they needed to be praying more regularly and consistently for missions and for God to send out missionaries around the world. From that meeting was birthed a prayer meeting among young people that is still going today and that has birthed multiple international mission agencies to send laborers all around the world. Thousands of laborers were started in the modern mission movement because of those five students who met and prayed continually from that first time. They were gifted. For me, I was still growing in that and that was a real challenge for me. At this Urbana Conference I was challenged about my own personal prayer for missions and that God would set my heart on fire again to pray for missions.

I heard the Chinese brother who spoke this past Wednesday night at our mission's conference, about the persecuted church and I was very convicted when he shared a story of a brother who was in prison and this Chinese brother was asking him how he could pray for him while he was in prison. The brother responded, 'Pray for more pastors to come into the prisons and for more pastors to be arrested so that we can minister here in the prison.' I realized that I wasn't sure that I had the faith yet to pray that. I'm still immature in my faith. I still have room to grow and that is the prayer of my heart – to send more pastors to this prison to minister to the inmates. God, help us to grow and fan into flame the gifts that He has given us.

In closing, I want to encourage you, especially those who attended the conference for you say ministry gifts on display this past week through our ministry partners. Some of the things I heard this past week were just simply incredible of what our missionaries are doing all around the world. Here is a sample of some of the things I heard. I heard that in Nicaragua a lady is training leaders how to minister the Gospel, particularly to survivors of trauma which is really important there because they have had volcanoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, viruses have increased and militants are walking the street with assault rifles due to all kinds of governmental pressures. This lady is training pastors in trauma healing and ministering to people who are suffering so that no one in Nicaragua is left without the hope of the Gospel.

There is man here from Mongolia sharing about his military ministry where he is ministering at five of the war colleges training soldiers who come from all nations to America to receive training in military procedures. This man and his ministry are seeking to reach them here at the war colleges because they know if they do that, they will send back missionaries all around the world to those future military leaders in the decades to come for they will become the future generals. This ministry is praying for future generals. They are using their gifts to reach the future power leaders in the world.

I heard about what has been taking place in Lebanon. There is extreme poverty there and the currency is going down as there is so much pressure essentially due to the big explosion that took place in Beirut a number of years ago. There are so many former ISIS that are there. This missionary was sharing a story about one man who was a former ISIS and he was introduced to this team that was going out in the name of Christ giving out all kinds of health products, food, and water to those who were suffering and this former ISIS man was wracked with guilt for all he had done when he was a part of ISIS. And they were able to pray with him and he was set free from his sins as he received Christ understanding that Christ came to wash him clean of his sins and fill him by the Spirit. Now this man is being disciplined in that church in Lebanon.

I could go on and on. We heard this morning about how so many atheists are coming to Christ in Léon, France and how exciting it is to see a church that's tripled in a land that was kind of known as the graveyard for missionaries. Their church is being sustained by the power of your prayers and they are using the gifts that God has given them and fanning them into flame.

There is also work that is going on among the indigenous tribal peoples in the Philippines. Former head hunters have come to Christ and now they are trying to reach other tribes with the Gospel and they are being motivated to go beyond to other tribes. These men and women are using their gifts as God is fanning them into flame.

May God use this time to do the same in your heart, that you would be active. Think about how you could use your spiritual gift and that God would set your life on fire for Him and that He would keep growing you as He is faithful to do as His Word has said. He won't leave you where you are. He meets you where you are when you come to Christ but He loves you to leave you where you are and this has really resonated with me. Fan into flame the gift of God. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father in heaven, I pray that You would do this in our church. Help us Father, as we learn more about spiritual gifts that You cause our hearts to be set on fire for the Gospel. Would You bless this work, Lord? Help us remember all that You have done for us and accomplished for us. We receive these gifts from You as needy children. Thank You for Your faithfulness to feed us, in Jesus' Name, Amen.