*The following is the fifth message in Purpose 2016*

**You Are Shaped for Serving God**

*Presented by Dr. Marty Baker /November 6. 2016*

              Good morning and welcome to Stevens Creek Church. My name is Marty Baker and I am glad to see you here. Over the last several weeks we have been in a series called Purpose. This series asks questions like this: Why am I here? Does my life matter? What’s my purpose?

We know that we were created to be loved my God and we are called to love him back. We know that we were formed to be a part of His family and that we are to live our lives like Jesus lived.

It is my prayer that God is going to use this series to reshape your life. I pray that you find meaning and purpose. I believe that God has you on this earth to make a difference.

As a teenager, I dreamed of making a difference in the world, but I just did not know what I could do. I was called into the ministry just before my 14th birthday. I started preaching when I was 17. In those days, I thought that I could make a difference in the world by being a traveling evangelist. I would go anywhere and everywhere to preach..

In June of 1980, I was 18 years old preaching at a church in upstate New York. In those days, traveling preachers stayed with the local pastor. At this particular stop, we had ten people in that house and only one bathroom. I was the first one up that Wednesday morning and thus the first one in the bathroom. When I opened the bathroom door, I noticed a cat sleeping in the bath tub. I have never been around cats. I closed the bathroom door, picked up the cat and let him sleep beside the tub.

I asked the Lord to supply my needs and I found some cleaning supplies and cleaned out the cat hair and stuff out of the tub. Then, I got in.

As I was washing my hair, I heard a knock on the door. It was the pastor’s wife. She said, “Let me in. Let me in.” I yelled, “I am taking a bath.” She said, “Let me in.” Once again, I said, “I am taking a bath.”

She then proceeded, “Is that cat still in there?” I said, “Yea, he’s sleeping beside the tub.” She said, “He ain’t sleeping. He is D – E – A – D! I said, “What? Dead?” She said, “Shut up the kids might hear you.”So, there I was taking a bath with a dead cat… wondering if this is what ministry was going to be like. I believe that most all of us want to make a difference with our lives. We want to be contributors, not just consumers. This is the message of Ephesians 2:20:

**Ephesians 2:20**

“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

              We’re all meant to give something back.  We’re all meant to make a contribution.  The Bible says we’re created to serve, we’re saved to serve, we’re gifted to serve, we’re shaped to serve.  We’re commanded to serve God back.

            God never gives you an assignment unless he provides you with the equipment to accomplish the task. God made you unique and He wants you to use the gifts and talents that you have been given to make a difference in your world.

**1 Peter 4:10**

“Each of us should use whatever gift he’s received to serve others.”

Your talents are not for your benefit.  Your purpose in life is to be what God made you to be.  He gave you gifts, talents, abilities, experiences and all these things for the benefit of other people, to be used by serving others.

Do you know why you are alive?  You are not here to take up space and coast through life.  You were put here to serve God. The way you serve God is by serving other people.

**Fourth Purpose:  “My fourth purpose in life is to serve God by serving others.”**

Now, some people want to serve God; they just don’t want to serve others.  But you can’t do that.  The only way you can serve God is by serving others.  You serve God by serving others.

Now the Bible has a word for this, it’s called **“ministry”.**  Like worship, fellowship and discipleship, this word **ministry** is often misunderstood.

When I say the word “minister” most people think of priest, pastor.  They think of somebody who wears those funny collars, robes and talks in distinguished tones.  The Bible gives a broader definition of the word.  The Bible says that every believer is a minister.  Now, not every believer is a pastor, but every believer is a minister.

Ministry simply means using my gifts (ie **shape**) to help somebody else in the name of God.  Any time you use your talents, your abilities, your background, your experiences to help somebody else, that is called **ministering**. You are a minister.

              In the Bible the word **“service”** and **“ministry”** are the same word. In the Bible **“servant”** and **“minister”** are the same word.  So all of us are called to ministry. Every Christian is a minister. Any time you use your talent to help somebody else, you are ministering. You are serving. It may be physical assistance. It may be financial assistance. It may be emotional support. It could be relational support. It could be practical support. There are a thousand different ways that you can serve the people around you.

So whether you’re a truck driver or an attorney or a janitor or a hospice worker or a homemaker or a teacher or a deal maker or a stockbroker or an accountant or a farmer, it doesn’t matter what you are. If you are a Christian you are to do it for two reasons – to help others and to honor God. It’s the fourth purpose of your life.

***Everything in your life can become a ministry if you do it to help others and to honor God.***

There are some benefits that come your way when you ***serve others***. In fact, there are at least ***four benefits when you serve others***. First of all, you will have joy.

**Benefits of Serving Others**

1. **Serving others will create joy in your life.**

Most people are looking for happiness in all the wrong places. You don’t find lasting happiness in power, pleasure, fame or fortune. Those are all temporary. I believe that you can find ongoing joy in serving others… by giving my life away. God wired us that when you give your life away that’s when the joy flows into your heart. **Practically speaking, how do you do position yourself to live in a place of joy?** There are two things you need to do.

1. **Get the focus off yourself.**

The more you focus on yourself, the more miserable you’re going to be. It’s not by accident that the word “miser” and “miserable” come from the same root word. You’ve got to shift your focus from inward focus – it’s all about me – to outward focus – it’s all about God and serving others.

When you do that, that is a counter-culture move because everything in our society says it’s all about you. Every advertisement says it’s all about you. We do it all for you. Have it your way. You’re number one. You’re the best.

But when you begin to give your life away, the more you give your life away to help others guess what? The more joy flows into your life. A good example of this is the Apostle Paul.

**Philippians 2:17**

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

Have you noticed that the most helpful people are the most happy people in life. **If you want to be happy, be helpful**. The more helpful you are the more happy you are. The more self-centered you are the more unhappy you’re going to be in life. It’s just the way the universe works.

Joy floods into my soul when I begin to give it away. God wired the universe that the more unselfish you are the more joy flows into your life. The Bible says this in

**Philippians 4:4-5**

**4** Always be full of **joy** in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!

**5**Let everyone see that you are **considerate** in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

Be considerate. If you are inconsiderate and selfish, you’re not going to be joyful. But if you are unselfish and considerate you’re going to be joyful.

**Philippians 2:4**

**4**Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

In other words, “*Forget about yourself long enough to lend a helping hand.”* If you want joy, you have to give back. If you want joy, you have got to make a contribution. I said that there are two secrets to joy. Here’s the second one:

1. **Use your gifts to help others.**

Joy comes from getting the focus off myself and joy comes from using my gifts to help others. When you use the gifts that God gave you to help other people it feels good. If you lack joy in your life, start serving. I was at a department store, last Tuesday. When I walked up to the register, the cashier said, ***“I go to Stevens Creek.”*** I get that a lot. But then she said, **“I want to help out. I want to do my part…whether taking care of babies, working with children or wherever.”** Here’s what I know, she is on a path that will ***increase joy*** in her life.

Use your gifts to help other. Find a place to serve. God didn’t put you on this planet just to live for yourself.

**1 Peter 4:10**

**10**God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

We’re blessed to be a blessing. God blesses you so you can bless other people. How do we bless others? We bless others by using our skills, by using our time, our talents. Whatever we have we will use it to help other people and in doing so, we will find joy. Serving others unselfishly will create not only joy in my life. There are four benefits of serving others, here’s the second one.

1. **Serving others will improve your relationships.**

I sincerely believe that your relationships will get better the more you learn how to serve. It takes practice, but I personally know that serving improves my relationships. Why?

Because the root of every single relational problem in your life is self-centeredness. There are other issues that come in but the root is selfishness. I want what I want when I want it and you want what you want when you want it. And neither of us are willing to budge and give in and change. I want my way and you want your way. This is a sure-fire way to conflict. Put others first and see what happens. I believe that it will change your relationships. It can also change your business. If you are in business … consider helping your customers instead of trying to sell them something. If you do this, you will start to see your business grow in ways that you did not imagine.

              Over two thousand years ago, God gave us a model in Jesus Christ.  He came to this earth to show us how to serve.  Last week, we said that we were created to become like Christ.  What did Jesus Christ do while He was here on this earth?  He served.

**Matthew 20:28**

**28**For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

When you take on the attitude of Jesus and you begin to live your life not for the benefit of yourself, but you begin to live your life for the benefit of others. When you do this, two incredible benefits happen. One, you become more like Jesus. And two, you’re more loved, respected, you’re more popular. If you want to have more friends, learn to be a servant. If you I have found that my closest friends at church stem from serving together in our church. Deep friendships don’t usually begin by running up to someone and saying, “I want a friend; you need a friend?” Friendships don’t work that way. Instead, you bond by having a common purpose or interest.

If you want to make a deep lasting friendship, it must be more than simply about you or them. It must be about something else you that ties you together. Find a place to serve at your church, and you will make friends. One more thing though: : Once you have made friendships, don’t forget what it felt like to be new and friendless. Continue opening your life to people who need friends. In doing this, you will find that your life will be filled with joy.

There are four benefits of serving others, here’s the third one.

1. **Serving others will make your life meaningful.**

That’s the first big surprise that most people don’t know. The only way you find meaning in life is to give your life away. God wired the universe on this principle.

Meaning does not come from money. We think, “If I just get more money, then my life will have more meaning.” It does not work that way. I know dozens of millionaires. If they were here on this stage, most of them would tell you that money has many good uses. It can make life easier. It can give you opportunities. It can open doors. It can save you time. But money cannot give you meaning. No amount of money will ever give your life meaning. Meaning comes from ministry…from giving your life away. Jesus said it like this,

**Mark 8:35**

If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.

So, how can I find meaning? The Apostle Paul said it this way:

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

“Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your work in the Lord is never wasted.”

Notice a couple words in that verse. It says always give yourself *fully*. That word fully in Greek literally means “not half hearted.” You’re all in. You’re jumping in. You’re going in the deep end. *“Give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your work in the Lord is never wasted.”* That word “wasted” means “empty." It mean useless. It means without purpose.

Everything you do for Christ has a purpose. It may seem insignificant and maybe no one else seems to know about it but it’s important. The Bible says that even if you give a cup of cold water in God’s name, in Jesus’ name, that you get rewarded for that in eternity.

Write this down: **Menial tasks become meaningful tasks when I do it out of love for God**.

**Colossians 3:17**

“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

So it says whatever you do, it can be a ministry, it can be a blessing if you honor God and you help others. Whatever you do, you do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. It could be running a camera; setting up the building, changing a diaper, making a deal in the marketplace, helping someone across the street or whatever.

***Everything in your life can become a ministry if you do it to help others and to honor God.*** Menial tasks become meaningful tasks if I do it out of my love for Jesus, for God.

Here’s what that looks like. Let’s say you’re in a meeting at your office where you work. All of a sudden the meeting is over and everybody gets up and walks out. They left coffee cups and trash. At that moment, you say to yourself, “I’m going to clean up. It’s not my job but I’m going to do this to help people and honor God.” At that point, you have just done a ministry. And God will notice and God will reward you for it.

The fact is, the ***calling to salvation*** and the ***calling to service*** are the same. So when you became a believer, you were not just called to be saved, you were called to serve. You’re saved to serve.

**Have you ever considered serving here at Stevens Creek?**

Right now we are gearing Christmas and the New Year.

**Would you consider hosting a small group next semester? We need 25 new hosts for small groups. We need young adult groups, groups for empty-nesters, groups in Aiken County along with several other areas.**

Let’s say that you cannot host, but you are **friendly**. We need **10 new volunteers** to help people get connected to small groups during our Sunday services. If you are nice to people, we need you. If you are not nice, we have a place for you, but it is not on this team.

Are you interested in serving here? Consider the **Tech Team.** We need **20 new volunteers**.

Most people who volunteer to serve behind the scenes on a Sunday come in with no technical experience.  We have trained teachers, accountants, real estate agents, and military members to produce incredible experiences week after week.

The tech team could really use camera operators, and I'm told if you can operate your home video camera or take a picture with your phone, then you can run a camera. We could also use a boost on our lighting team. While all of this may seem complicated, our lighting design is done completely by volunteers every week.

We need 4 people who can serve on our data team; **15 people** in Creek Kids. Our student ministry needs **5** people who can set-up the auditorium on Tuesday nights so that we are ready to go when students show up on Wednesdays.

We need around **20 people** for First Impression and check-in teams.

Consider joining the coffee team or the communion team. We serve communion most every Sunday night.

**I believe that you can find meaning in serving Christ and His Church.**

That brings me to the fourth benefit. Serving creates joy in my life, it improves my relationships, and it makes my life meaningful and…

1. **Serving others will leave a legacy.**

You will make a difference in the lives of hundreds of people. You will leave a mark. Actually you’ll leave two legacies. You will leave a legacy **on earth** and **one in eternity**.

The one on earth is not going to last very long. Because after about three generations everybody forgets you. Your trophies are going into the trash. Your records will eventually be broken. All the things you think are so cool right now in two generations nobody will even care.

You may get your name on a building but in the future, nobody will even ask, “Who was that person?”

How many of you drive down the John C. Calhoun Parkway …. Do you know who John C. Calhoun was? He was the 7th Vice President of the United States. But, do you know where he was from? He was from **Abbeville, SC.**

You may get your name on a road or in Wikipedia, but two generations from now, people will not care, **but the rewards you get in eternity are going to last forever**.

**Let me ask you: *What are you going to be remembered for?***If you were to die tomorrow would people say, that person was a real blessing! They really lived for other people. They served. They were sharing. They were generous. They were kind. They were always thinking about other people.

Or would they think, they were pretty self-centered. They only had their goals and they only went after what they wanted. They didn’t really care about anybody else.

I will never forget 20 years ago, I was asked to do a funeral for a relative of a prominent family in the area. If I said the name, you would know it. I drove 45 minutes to the funeral home and I saw this community figure standing at the casket looking at his mother-in-law.

As a pastor, I stepped up beside to give him comfort. When he spoke, I was shocked at what he said. He looked at his mother-in-law and said, ***“Now, that’s a mean old woman right there.”*** Here’s the problem. He was not a member of the church, but she was.

This probably helped me craft the common Creek phrase, **“Be nice to people.”**

**Proverbs 10:7**

Good people will be remembered as a blessing, but evil people will soon be forgotten.

I want you to be remembered as a blessing and I think most of us have that desire. We want our lives to count. Deep down inside of you, you want your life to have significance. You want your life to have meaning. You want your life to have purpose. You want to do something great with your life. In Matthew 20, Jesus tells us how to be great.

Here’s how Jesus said you become great.

**Mathew 20:26**

“If you want to be great, you must be the servant of all the others.”

The more you serve the greater you are going to be. The more you serve the more influence you’ll have. I call it the ***Mother Teresa syndrome***.

**Mother Teresa** went to the poorest of the poor, the most outcast of the outcasts in Calcutta, India to people who were on the street and dying. Nobody has less influence than them. And she began to take the dying into her home and she cared for them. And she began to serve those who everybody was trampling over. As she went to the least influential people in life, God gave her enormous influence around the world so she could walk into the Congress and everybody would listen. When she was alive, she could walk into the United Nations and everybody would listen.

If you want to be great you learn to be the servant of all. God sees your efforts and He will bless you. What you have done in secret, He will reward you openly.

**Hebrews 6:10** (NCV)

God is fair; he will not forget the work you did and the love you showed for him by helping his people. And he will remember that you are still helping them.

God will honor you for your efforts. The greatest use of life is to invest it in that which outlasts it.

You’ve got three choices with your life. You can spend your life, you can waste your life, you can invest your life.

I believe that you are here at Stevens Creek because God knew you had **something to give back**.  He brought you here to serve.

              One day you’re going to stand before God and He’s is going to ask you two questions. This is your final exam per se. The first question is: **Why should I let you into heaven?** The answer to that question is that you have trusted Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. The second question is: **“What did you do with what I gave you?** This is a question of stewardship. We are called to give back.

(Potential Story of Dream Center)

**Closing Prayer.**