

Sun., June 6 - (HC, Graduation Sunday) (Pentecost) The Fire Within #3: Refiring

Memory Verse: “We know that God works all things together for good for those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose.” -Romans 8:28

Text: “Therefore, I’m all right with weaknesses, insults, disasters, harassments, and stressful situations for the sake of Christ, because when I’m weak, then I’m strong.” -1 Cor. 12:10

Reading of Scripture: John 20:24-31

Sermon Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 (CEB)

Blurb: Graduation Sunday is all about celebrating our graduates! We speak blessings over them, but we also tell the truth that life is full of setbacks and failures. But we also proclaim that when we live for Jesus, we are sustained by His grace that transforms our failures into beauty. This Sunday we’ll hear the good news of how in Jesus, we are new creations!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor Andrew

“We know that God works all things together for good for those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose.” -Romans 8:28

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Set a Fire

Glory to Glory

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Set a Fire* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor David

“We know that God works all things together for good for those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose.” -Romans 8:28

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Empty Grave

O God

Hymn of the Holy Spirit

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

SCRIPTURE READING: John 20:24-31 -Reader: Erik Kargel

Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room Easter evening. Thomas was not there, and he doubted when they told him that they had seen Jesus. Jesus appears again a week later, and He invites Thomas to touch His scars. John 20:24-31,

24 Thomas, the one called “The Twin,” one of the Twelve, wasn’t with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples told him, “We’ve seen the Lord!”

But he replied, “Unless I see the nail marks in His hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into His side, I won’t believe.”

26 After eight days His disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!”

28 Thomas responded to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus replied, “Do you believe because you see me? Blessed are those who don’t see and yet believe.”

30 Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in His disciples’ presence, signs that aren’t recorded in this scroll. 31 But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God’s Son, and that believing, you will have life in His name.

GROW MOMENT: Summer Bash -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: (Pentecost) The Fire Within #3: Re-Firing

PP#1: The Fire Within: Re-Firing

“Therefore, I’m all right with weaknesses, insults, disasters, harassments, and stressful situations for the sake of Christ, because when I’m weak, then I’m strong.” -1 Cor. 12:10

The Fire Within: Re-Firing. 1 Corinthians 12:10, “Therefore, I’m all right with weaknesses, insults, disasters, harassments, and stressful situations for the sake of Christ, because when I’m weak, then I’m strong.”

I followed my mom’s recipe perfectly, but the cookies just didn’t taste as good as she used to make. I went over it again...no, I had done it perfectly. They were close, but just not as good.

PP#2: *Image of a beaming graduate looking all smart and successful*

Graduates, you are being certified as “ready.” You have put in years of work and training and learning and testing, and the diploma you receive is the credentialing that *you are ready*. You have *mastered* this level of information, of learning. You’ve successfully completed this level. You are ready for your next chapter. You are capable and prepared for a bright future.

And so, you’ve been hearing encouragements like, “You can do anything!” “There’s nothing you can’t do!” “It’s time to soar!” “Success, straight ahead!” “There’s no stopping you now!” “You can do anything you set your mind to!”

You know how to make the recipe. You’ve learned the ingredients. You’ve been taught the process. You’ve practiced the technique. It’s now time for you to go succeed!

PP#3: *Image of a group of people all beat up, bandaged and broken BUT still positive!*

But if you look closely at those of us encouraging you, you will notice that we limp. We have scars. Our lives have not worked out the way we thought they would. We've hit roadblocks. We've failed. We've taken both painfully sudden and slow turns. We've had to get up after hard falls.

Now, here at church, I've always promised to speak truthfully to you. I've tried to be plain and honest and tell it like it is. And so today, speaking on behalf of this church, limping and sore and scarred like we are, I need to tell you that actually you are *not ready*. You can't go and do whatever you want. You won't just soar. Success isn't straight ahead. There will be lots of problems, complications, setbacks, mistakes, failures, defeats. Your life will not go like you hope it will. Truthfully, life will break you!

PP#4: *Images of a Greek discus thrower statue, the Parthenon, a Barbi doll & a palatial mansion*

We often think of success as perfection. This comes from the Greek basis of our culture. You learned about this! The Greeks strove for the perfect form, the perfect human body, the perfect layout, the perfect measurements, the mastered technique. To do it *right* meant to do something so it came out like the perfect form. If you tone your body correctly and if you learn the technique flawlessly then you will be able to throw the discus perfectly. Your cookies will be perfect. You will succeed in life.

PP#5: *Examples of wabi-sabi items, such as uneven tea cup, salvaged house, weathered items, etc.*

But there's a different approach: a much more honest and realistic approach. It's embraced in Japan, where it's called *wabi-sabi*. *Wabi-sabi* is a world view that values imperfection. Beauty is not matching the perfect form, it's showing life that has been lived. *Wabi* reflects simplicity or lived reality. *Sabi* reflects weathering or aging. The most beautiful human is not a blemish-free 18-year-old fit person, but an aged and wrinkled person with character and experience. The perfect cup is not exactly right proportioned, but one that has stains and chips from use.

As your pastor, I've also promised to speak truthfully to you, speaking on behalf of our God and the truth He has revealed in Scripture. And so, today, I want to tell you that God's aesthetic is more like *wabi-sabi* than it is like the Greek ontological form of perfection.

Success, for God, is not doing things correctly. Winning is not being perfect. Achieving is not when things go the right way. Success is being beautiful. Beauty is when you reflect life. And life is when you keep going forward.

PP#6: 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 (CEB)

7 I was given a thorn in my body because of the outstanding revelations I've received so that I wouldn't be conceited. It's a messenger from Satan sent to torment me so that I wouldn't be conceited.

8 I pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me alone. 9 He said to me, "My grace is enough for you, because power is made perfect in weakness." So I'll gladly spend my time bragging about my weaknesses so that Christ's power can rest on me.

I want to point to 2 Corinthians 12. Paul, who was also raised in a Greek-based culture, was learning God's different approach. He says in verse 7, "I was given a thorn in my body because of

the outstanding revelations I've received so that I wouldn't be conceited. It's a messenger from Satan sent to torment me so that I wouldn't be conceited." So, Paul was struggling with some physical malady. I don't know what it was, but it really bothered him. He says that it came from Satan, meaning that it was limiting his ability to do God's work. As a missionary, perhaps it was joint soreness that limited his mobility. Perhaps it was poor vision. As a person who stutters myself, I've wondered if it were a speech impediment. Whatever it was, Paul says that God used it to keep him humble, since Paul had been given some pretty amazing spiritual visions. God used the limitation, Paul admits, to keep him from spiritually bragging. Don't miss that God used his weakness!

Okay, point learned. Now, God, please take it away! Verse 8, "I pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave me alone." See the Greek aesthetic? He thought he would be better off if he didn't have the limitation. He would be more successful if he were more perfect. Surely God would fix this flaw so that Paul could better work. But God responds to him in *wabi-sabi*. Verse 9, "He said to me, 'My grace is enough for you, because power is made perfect in weakness.'" Whoa!

Perfection, to God, comes in human weakness. God looks for flaws, for failures, for defeats. God looks closely at all the cups and chooses the chipped, worn, stained one. Why? Because flaws highlight the inner beauty of God's sustaining presence within us!

PP#7: 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 (CEB)

9 He said to me, "My grace is enough for you, because power is made perfect in weakness." So I'll gladly spend my time bragging about my weaknesses so that Christ's power can rest on me. 10 Therefore, I'm all right with weaknesses, insults, disasters, harassments, and stressful situations for the sake of Christ, because when I'm weak, then I'm strong.

Let's keep going: "So I'll gladly spend my time bragging about my weaknesses so that Christ's power can rest on me. Therefore, I'm all right with weaknesses, insults, disasters, harassments, and stressful situations for the sake of Christ, because when I'm weak, then I'm strong."

Paul has learned God's value of his imperfection. He sees the beauty in his failures. He has learned that his success comes not from his own accomplishments, but in Jesus Christ living in him and working through Him, often in ways he wouldn't expect or choose.

Jesus was crucified to earn our forgiveness for our sins. He died and was buried. But did you hear in the story read earlier from John 20, that when Jesus was raised from the dead, *He still had His scars*? When Thomas sees the resurrected Jesus, he sees the wounds of His crucifixion.

Jesus' body had been made perfect, and it still has the scars. When you and I meet Jesus face to face, when He comes to take us home to glory and He extends His hand to us, we will see the scars there! Why? Because it's beautiful! Perfection is not a hand that has been restored to the ontological standard, but a hand that reveals God's power of salvation earned through the cross. Isaiah 53:5 says that "by His wounds we are healed." That amazing miracle is displayed forever!

PP#8: *Images of beautiful pottery*

[*Hold up beautiful china plate.*] Graduates, church: your purpose in life is to reveal the beauty of God's power of redemption. So, unlike everyone else, I pray that you will NOT be perfect, NOT succeed...in a way that turns your attention all onto yourself! I hope that you will NOT soar as a winner...in a way that will make you rely only in your own abilities and strengths. I wish for you to that you will experience failures and setbacks and defeats, so that you will learn to trust in God's power at work within you. I pray for you to know weakness, so that you will be made truly strong.

[*Hold up hammer.*] I also tell you honestly that your life ahead will not go as you plan, or even as you would like. You may change schools, or majors, or roommates, or careers. You may bomb relationships, projects and tests, your attempts at adulting. You may experience death of dreams, of loved ones, of life as you know it. You may see yourself right now as a beautifully crafted work of art...

PP#9: *Image of shattered pottery*

...but as you head into life, you will be broken [*smash china plate with hammer!*], shattered, damaged, crushed. And when you experience failure, you will feel like a failure. You may think your life is ruined, that your future is destroyed, that your success is gone. How could you ever be beautiful again? Fired pottery cannot be re-fired. [*hold up a broken piece of the china plate*]. By Greek standards, it can never be perfect again. It can only be repaired, but stay imperfect.

I need to tell you the truth. Our God is an all-consuming fire. And thanks to Pentecost, when you give your heart to Jesus, this Holy Fire burns within you. And when you are broken, when you are weak, when you fail, it is then that the power of Jesus in you can be seen in your life. God's grace then becomes sufficient! And then, God's different aesthetic can work through you, showing His amazing beauty in your life and the strength of His redemption! God sees beauty differently!

PP#10: "We know that God works all things together for good for those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose." -Romans 8:28

In Romans 8:28 Paul says, "We know that God works all things together for good for those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose." All things! *All things!* Not just the successes and the accomplishments you see, but also the failures and problems. [*Show broken pieces of the plate.*] Every setback, every defeat, every mistake, God uses it for good. Now, this doesn't mean you should try to fail, or to not bother. No. Try your best, and learn to lean on God. He will make you able to accomplish His plan for your life. But when you experience defeat, hear that God, the Holy Fire, takes the broken pieces of our lives and *re-fires* them into something new and beautiful!

PP#11: *Image of a beautiful, ancient mosaic, NOT Greek*

Two thousand years before the Greeks set an ontological standard for beauty, there was a more ancient form of art called mosaics. [*Show Tobga mosaic plate.*] It took bits and pieces from something else and crafted them into a captivating work of art. It was taking broken pieces and making beauty. **This is what God does in our lives! He takes the broken pieces from what we once hoped for, of what we may have tried to be and do, that have been smashed by life and failure and defeat, and, by His re-firing grace, God crafts them into something different, something differently beautiful.** Mosaics use broken pieces of fired pottery that have been re-fired into something new. This is what our God does with the broken pieces of our lives!

PP#12: *Picture of one of the mosaic crosses*

I have a present for you high school graduates today. It's a beautiful piece of art. It's hand made by an artist in Arizona specially for each of you graduates. It's a mosaic cross, topped by a

crown. I want you to display it in your dorm at school, or wherever you live, so it can remind you that your success, your value, your beauty, doesn't come in being perfect by some set standard. Your life may fall to pieces. But that's okay...you will be okay. Give your broken pieces, your broken life, to the God who takes them and re-fires them into something new, something different, something beautiful. This is what Jesus does: [*lift up mosaic cross*] that's why it's a cross. He gives you new victory, and that's why there's a crown. Jesus proclaims, "I make all things new!" (Rev. 21:5)

You are not able to soar and be successful, to the world's standards and expectations. You cannot do anything you choose, in your own power alone. But you are not alone, and the God who holds you has a different definition of beauty. He made you for a purpose, the purpose to reveal His grace and power and strength. You do that even through your cracks and failures, when you give your pieces to Him. **It will be okay when life doesn't go as planned. You will be able to get up again. You will join the rest of us, limping, sore, and scarred...but still moving ahead in the life and victory that only God can give: a scarred life following a scarred Savior.** But a successful life, an exciting life, a beautiful life. John 20:31, "But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, *you will have life in His name.*"

PP#13: *Image of a boy sitting at a table with mom or grandma eating cookies, smiling and warm.*

I finally realized that my problem with the cookies was not the getting Mom's recipe right or perfecting her technique. It was that the cookies simply tasted better when I sat at Mom's table and we talked together about all the good and bad of life while eating them. And so I realized that in those moments, no matter what, life was good. Graduates, church: may you sit at God's table and share together the good and bad of life, for He makes your life perfect! Amen.

CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES -Pastor David

PRAYERS FOR GRADUATES -Cassi

HOLY COMMUNION -Pastor Andrew

[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG: *Glory to Glory* -Sanctify

OFFERING -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the "square" on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Reception celebrating our graduates in the fellowship hall following worship.
Next Sunday's message: The Fire Within: Evidence of Fire -Pastor Andrew

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"We know that God works all things together for good for those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose." -Romans 8:28

BENEDICTION -Pastor David