

**Spur One Another on to Good Deeds**  
**Prov 6:6-11, John 7:37-38, Hebrews 10:24**

Well brothers and sisters – how have you been doing in getting back to blessing people?

I'm genuinely wondering about that because to be honest I was thinking that after we'd had a few people sharing about their blessing projects, and having me explain how we know this Blessing Project is definitely something God has put in place for us to do... I was expecting that I'd be inundated with more emails with your ideas and requests for the blessing cash.

But it's a bit slow... and I finding myself doing a lot of prompting and suggesting and encouraging and inquiring *"what's preventing you from doing a blessing project?"*

And people have told me they are struggling to identify someone they know who is in need... someone who needs help...

Others are looking for someone worthy of the blessing, who will put the money to good use... others are waiting for God to bring the right person across their path – feeling that if they just go out and pay for someone's gas – that's not letting God work... and still others are apprehensive about having to share about their blessing project with the congregation...

But I haven't come across anyone who is opposed to blessing others or who doesn't believe this is a project from God, so whatever might be causing our hesitance to get back to blessing people at least it's not outright sinful resistance to God's command.

But brothers and sisters – rarely does sin ever manifest itself in our lives as followers of Jesus in an outright belligerent refusal against what God has called us to do – it's usually far more subtle and nuanced than that.

Now if you are thinking – ouch, that's a bit harsh to call out our hesitance to blessing people as sin, especially when we've got some good reasons for it - I understand...

But our verse from Hebrews 10:24 says *“consider how you may spur one another on towards love and good deeds...”*

If you're not familiar with spurs – I'm not talking about the San Antonio NBA team – let me show you a picture of them. Horse riders wear them and when they need to get their horse moving and moving quickly, they jab the sides of their horse with these – ouch! - but the horse moves!

So, I'm bringing up the sin-factor this morning as something to spur us on, something that jabs us, pricks us and motivates us to get moving... It's not pleasant – but its not supposed to be, that's how spurs work right?

And the sin that most frequently causes our hesitance – and subtle disobedience when God has called us to go and do something is the deadly sin of Sloth.

So let's take a closer look at this deadly sin this morning and how it impacts us and our relationship with God and with our church community.

And we'll start by getting to know a few members of the Sloth family. This is Uncle Jim and he's what we would expect from a *typical* Sloth.

Jim doesn't like to put much effort into anything, he's not motivated to do much, and he has very few ambitions in life, except perhaps to kick back and take it easy.

Jim does have a natural knack for mechanical work but hasn't done anything with it because it requires too much effort and commitment to go and study further to get certified.

As you can probably guess Jim has trouble holding down a steady job because he is lazy and not very reliable. He is frequently moving from one place to the next mooching off his friends and family and church to help him get by when he isn't able to qualify for welfare.

On the occasions when Jim attends church, which usually happens whenever he needs some extra help, he likes to go

somewhere where they give good handouts and don't ask too many questions or try to get involved in your life.

In fact, Jim's slothfulness is why some of us are looking for a deserving recipient of our blessing money...

Jim is classic sloth if there ever was one, and certainly someone whom we would say should read, and heed, the advice in Proverbs 6:6 about being lazy and being destroyed by poverty. Uncle Jim, the sluggard could certainly learn a couple of lessons from the Ant.

But... there are more members of the Sloth family, and they aren't exactly what you might expect.

This is Alex, Jim's younger brother; he had a talent for making money – an eye for business opportunities. In fact when he was fourteen he had already started his own lawn mowing and snow shoveling operation in his neighborhood and had four of the neighborhood kids working for him.

He studied business in university and after he graduated he raised enough capital to purchase a Tim Horton's franchise. It's been a runaway success and he now owns three additional locations.

But it demands a great deal of Alex's time and energy to stay on top of it all and so on the weekends when he doesn't have to work, Alex likes to get away from it all at his "cottage" and just relax with his wife and kids.

And on the occasions when Alex attends church, which between the demands of work and the times he needs to get away are few... and far between - usually just Christmas and Easter plus a couple other Sundays.

So he's happy to go to the little country church that he grew up in, just a short drive outside the city, where nothing ever changes and no one ever wonders why they haven't seen him for six months.

Not what you'd typically expect from a sloth friends, but a sloth nonetheless...

And Alex's wife Janice is also a Sloth. Since Alex is gone so much of the time Janice is very involved in their little country church.

She helps to organize bake sales and other fundraising efforts; she takes care of the church's flower gardens in the summer, visits the seniors in the nursing home, and is her church's representative in the multi-faith initiative group for their city.

She really likes their church because as she says *"the minister makes it really easy to be a Christian, she doesn't get all hung up on taking the bible too seriously or talking about sin... its just positive and inspirational – I feel like I can be a normal person just like everyone else"*

So that's the Sloth family friends. Maybe you know them... maybe they remind you of someone, maybe you can relate to them a little bit, maybe you see some of yourself in them...

Because brothers and sister, when it comes to Sloth as a deadly sin – it's all about how much physical energy, effort and discipline you are willing to put into pursuing your relationship with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

It's kind of obvious that a lazy person is probably not going to put much effort into it, but we don't necessarily have to be lazy people to neglect our relationship with Christ and his Body - do we...

We might not put very much effort or energy into it because we're too busy, because we have skewed our priorities, because we're afraid of what others might think about us...

Maybe it's because we don't want to be seen as "radical..."

Maybe it's because we realize that if our relationship with God grows, He will expect more from us, He will take us out of our comfort zone and ask us to do things for Him... like go out to bless people!

or perhaps we just believe that *genuine* spiritual growth is something that happens only on its own, and somehow if we've worked at achieving it, if we're putting effort into it then we're not really truly experiencing God working...

Whatever the reason friends when we neglect to put energy, effort, intentionality and discipline into our relationship with Christ and we allow ourselves to plateau and stagnate... we are being Sloths, we are committing the deadly sin of sloth.

And, like every other deadly sin, it wrecks relationships and destroys community – and to get a sense of how that happens with Sloth, let me say that if Anger blows relationships up – then Sloth kills them by a thousand paper cuts of negligence.

If Envy destroys community by turning people against each other, then Sloth kills it by causing people to stop putting in the effort and work required to maintain a connection or to share a common cause, because there's always a legit reason to miss church right? We have good reasons why we are hesitating to just get out there and bless somebody right?

Now at this point, having been made aware of our tendency to neglect and avoid working on our relationship with Jesus and His body – we would typically expect to be told “to stop neglecting it” and “start working on it.” Just get out there and start blessing people – come on!

But I think that would work about as well as telling Uncle Jim that he should go and read Proverbs 6:6-11 take a lesson from the ant, stop being lazy and go and get a job –right?

How many people do you know who stopped being lazy and started working hard because all they needed to be told was “get a job you bum!”

And how many Christians do you know who know have a vibrant relationship with God because all they needed to hear was “*start working on your relationship with God!*”

And how many of us are going out to bless people just because the pastor has been telling us to “get out and bless somebody!” Not many of us...

So, let's try a different approach in dealing with this deadly sin this morning, let's ask ourselves *"what good thing is sin twisting and warping in this instance that is producing sloth?"*

And to get us started in answering that I would ask you what did God do on the seventh day, after he spent six days creating? He rested -right?

And He built that pattern of working and then resting into the very fabric of our world, that's why when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments He said... *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God."* (Ex 20:8-10)

And in other parts of the Law God commanded that *"in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest, a Sabbath to the LORD."* (Ex 25:4)

And Jesus reiterates this creational principle in the New Testament when he says *"The Sabbath was made for man not*

*man for the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:27) and in his actions as he *"often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."* (Luke 5:16)

So brothers and sisters - when Sin twists and warps this inherent pattern for rest, the need and capacity and energy which we have for renewal, it produces sloth.

Now this is helpful to know, it's an encouragement for us when we are feeling lethargic and need some motivation to get back to work or to get back to blessing others... maybe we just need a day of rest to be renewed and then we won't be feeling so sluggish...

But if you are the kind of person who is, well... a sloth - and this is what you constantly struggle with, or if we are the kind of church that struggles with going out – not just to bless people- but just getting out in general - then the good news for us brothers and sister is that we are a church which has a very high capacity for bringing renewal.

It's how we are wired, its what God's has designed us for.

So in dealing with sloth from this approach - by invoking the transforming and redeeming power of the Holy Spirit - we can begin to untwist our Sloth and have it become an energy to bring about renewal – in our lives and more importantly in the lives of others whom we are to bless.

Serving others with this capacity for renewal is how we recycling our sloth, blessing others helps to build Christian community and untwists the warping that Sin causes.

And I can't find a better description of what that capacity for renewal is like than what Jesus says in John 7:38 *"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."*

Brothers and sisters, when was the last time you felt like you had streams of living water flowing out of you?

What an amazing metaphor for what it's like to have the all energy, the health, the joy, the motivation and enthusiasm we

need to pursue whatever kingdom work God has given us to do as stewards of His world!

And wouldn't it be amazing to not only receive living water... but to also have it flow out from within us?

And not just a small stream like one of those wimpy little water fountains, but a cascade of clean, clear, ice cold refreshing water like Elbow Falls - just gushing out of you? Lord I would like that!

And I believe the Lord would also like that for Valleyview, and more and more I believe that is His plan, His vision for Valleyview – and I see Him moving us in the direction of that vision.

I know I've shared with you before – but it's worth repeating again that back in 2017 or 2018 when we hosted the Dunamis Ignite conference here – during a time of prayer we were given that exact vision of Valleyview, a church with water flowing out of it into the surrounding community.

Now maybe we're sitting here this morning listening to this thinking *"Jesus said if we believe in Him we'll have streams of living water flowing out of us- but I'm not feeling like living water is flowing out of me, not even a little wimpy water fountain... I'm tired and drained and I feel spent!"*

Brothers and sisters I hear you – I sympathize with you and I can relate as well... and this illustrates the truth of the matter that we need renewal... on a regular basis.

Now brothers and sisters recycling our sloth into renewal and being re-energized is not a simplistic, formulaic matter like restating the fact that we believe in Jesus.

If we are feeling drained, it's not just a simple matter of attending a worship service on Sunday because we believe in Jesus and then we come away with living water sloshing all around inside us, feeling renewed.

But I think that's what we might be expecting – we're drained and we're hoping that worship will somehow re-energize us...

Brothers and sister Jesus had some other things to say about believing in Him that we need to be aware of. He also said *"When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me."* (John 12:44) and when *"the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things... and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* (John 15:26)

So... believing in Jesus is also about believing in the Father and in the Holy Spirit, and this "belief" involves far more than simply admitting to the fact that the Triune God is real and He exists.

Believing means trusting, obeying, honoring, listening, following, worshiping, giving, and a whole bunch of other very practical verbs... that apply to our relationship with each person of the Trinity - Creator, Savior, and Sanctifying Spirit. And these verbs mean we need to take action, put forward effort, and expend some energy.



Now when we're already feeling drained by life - Sloth is very tempting; and here's the subtle temptation of sloth – here's how it twists thing – Sloth is all about getting more immediate results for a lot less effort.

Will you feel somewhat recharged and refreshed after you get away to Canmore for a week-end of just doing nothing?

Pretty Sure.

Will you be ready to face another week at work after spending Sunday afternoon at the spa with your friends? Quite possibly.

Will you be entertained and energized by spending your evenings couching it and watching TV and playing video games? Most likely.

But think of how quickly that effect wears off once you get back into the daily grind friends, it's not even Wednesday before you're already thinking of your next getaway to help you make it through the week... let alone paying attention for opportunities that you can respond to with Blessing...

Now none of these or any other relaxing activities are necessarily bad friends – in fact in and of themselves they are good gifts from God, but let's remember...they are no substitute for God.

Someone once asked a renowned artist how they managed to stay so creative? The answer that came back was "I spend time with the Creator."

And that is the kicker friends – the amount of living water that will flow out of us, the amount of renewal we will experience, will be directly related to the amount of time that we spend with God.

Now the good news is friends that we don't need to experience this as an either/or situation.

It doesn't have to be - either I spend time with God, or I spend time relaxing in the mountains, either I sit down and read my bible or I go see a movie, either I go to church or I take some quiet time for myself...

Now don't misunderstand me here, I'm not trying to soften the requirements and make it easier to accommodate our sloth... I'm not saying that renewal doesn't take energy, effort, discipline and sacrifice...

What I'm getting at friends is that there are opportunities to spend time with God all around us. We have the chance to put in the effort to develop our relationship with the Triune God in all that we do and wherever we are!

In fact getting out to Bless someone is one of those opportunities to spend time with God and He is funding it for you!

Getting back to blessing others is something the Lord is giving us to get back to experiencing renewal and revitalization with Him.

So as we respond in obedience we will discover we don't necessarily need to get away so often, we don't need to rest up as much, we have more to give... more time more energy

and we can take that and re-invest it into the Body of Christ to help others who need to experience renewal.

You see brothers and sisters – if you struggle with sloth but you recycle it into renewal and you use that renewal to help build community – it has an effect similar to re-investing all the interest of a high yielding investment back into it - and seeing that exponential growth that takes place over time....

Those who wait upon the Lord – will renew their strength and then streams, torrents of living water will be gushing out of your inner being!

Brothers and sisters - getting back to blessing others is the path and the pattern of renewal which God has laid out for us here at Valleyview.

Let us consider how we can spur each other on towards this and this morning we've done so by calling out the deadly sin of sloth.

May this spur you on to action brothers and sisters. Don't just go home or log-off and continue to think about this... don't wait until you feel motivated, don't look for a short-cut and don't put it off – that's just being Slothful again.

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will have piqued our interested this morning and will spur us on to recycle how sloth is twisting our good reasons for hesitation...

So, what's your hesitation?? How is sloth twisting that to prevent you from doing what is good?

Brothers and sisters – use what we learned about recycling sloth this morning to recycle how sloth is twisting your good reasons, and through that process I believe the Holy Spirit will show you the path forward to blessing someone...

May we experience the renewal and revival of blessing and being blessing as we seek to be obedient and overcome the deadly sin of sloth – Amen. Let's pray.