

I've been reading a great book called *Love Does* by Bob Goff. Bob is someone you should all get to know and I'd really encourage you to read his book. Bob is a lawyer who lives in San Diego, CA. After a trip to India where he saw the injustice done to children; Bob founded an organization called Restore International whose mission is to find audacious ways to restore justice to children and the poorest of the poor. But most importantly Bob is a disciple of Jesus who is using his influence to change the world.

One of the stories Bob tells in the book is about the time he and a friend walked into the Library of Congress. Oh, yeah, it was in the middle of the night while they were shooting scenes from the movie, *National Treasure 2*. Now Bob is a respected lawyer, but he also loves to push the envelope when it comes to doing things no one else would do.

So Bob and his friend dodge a few security guards, cut through some bushes and in a matter of minutes find themselves at the side entrance where the movie crew is going in and out of the Library of Congress. As Bob says, they just acted like they belonged there and walked farther and farther into the Library of Congress. As they went down hallway after hallway they followed the signs that said 'set.'

They had gone a long way in when suddenly they came to a security guard. Bob and his friend figured their caper was up!

The security guard, who was on the phone with his girlfriend; asked for their crew badges. Bob and his friend confessed, "We don't have them." But the security guard mumbled something about remembering the badges the next time and waved them on. After rounding one more corner they were standing in the Library of Congress at 2:00am!

They figured they had a great story to tell their friends; but now they had to find a way out! So as they turned around to make their exit who came around the corner but the two stars of the movie and their entourage. Bob and his friend just fell in line with the crowd and followed them out the front door.

Most of us would never go where we are not invited; but not Bob. Bob has learned instead that we've already been invited. Not with a written invitation that comes in an envelope in the mail; but with every sunrise, with every new day, there comes an invitation from Jesus.

If you received an invitation to the White House I doubt you would turn it down. But, as Bob points out, people every day turn down the invitation to live the life that Jesus invites us to live as his disciples. Today I want you to understand that how we respond to that invitation determines if we will be a church of disciples that give the blessing.

Today is the Day of Pentecost. Unfortunately, Pentecost isn't one of the special church days that receives the kind of attention that Christmas and Easter get; but it should! Pentecost is the birthday of the church! Pentecost is the day on which the disciples of Jesus experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and began going where Jesus invited them.

In our scripture this morning from Acts 1 we get a glimpse into Jesus final words to his disciples before his ascension. This is our reminder that we don't need to be afraid to go anywhere in the world because Jesus has already invited us in.

Acts 1:1-8

Over the last few weeks we've explored the power of the blessing to transform and change lives- ours and others. By practicing meaningful touch we've seen the power of blessing others with *acceptance*. By speaking words which express high value we have offered the blessing of *encouragement*. By combining the picture of a special future and making an active commitment to a person and their future we learned the power behind the blessing of *certainty* in an uncertain world.

But for us to be a blessing, for us to be a church that gives the blessing, we need to understand that we've been invited- invited into the world that needs to experience the blessing of God in their lives. However, too many disciples ignore the invitation thinking that we can't enter into someone's life without first receiving an invitation.

You've already got the invitation; it's right here in Jesus final words: 'Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

That is all the invitation we need! The creator of the world, the one whose breath gives all of us life; invites his disciples to enter *His* world as witnesses called to bless other's lives.

I think one of the greatest challenges that disciples of Jesus face today is the perception that as people of faith we cannot enter into the lives of others. I think the main reason for that is because we tend to compartmentalize our faith. We think our faith is what we do on Sunday; and that our faith shouldn't touch the other things we do in our life- especially our relationships with other people.

If we are going to be a church that gives the blessing we need to be obedient to follow the invitation of Jesus into the world. Will it be easy? (No.) Will it always be welcomed? (Maybe not.) But it is necessary because so many today are unaware of the blessing that God has for their life.

One of the things we believe about the grace of God is that God's grace is continually reaching out and drawing people into a relationship with God- that's what we call

prevenient grace. Now here is something I know we've talked about before; you and I are a part of the prevenient grace of God. We are a part of the invitation that God has issued to the world to come and know him as Savior and Lord.

And when Peter and the first disciples on the Day of Pentecost began to understand that they were invited to partner with God in extending the blessing to others; they became bold and courageous. They didn't let anything stop them or slow them down- after all they were invited- and nothing was going to keep them from responding to the invitation.

How did they do it? Simple. They proclaimed the gospel in word and deed. They leaked Jesus everywhere they went and they made certain that those who didn't have, had what they needed.

You see when we begin to see ourselves as invited, and we begin to accept Jesus invitation to be his witnesses; then the invitation becomes contagious. Other people begin to watch us and see we live life in amazing ways because we've been blessed by Jesus.

When we accept our invitation and live as those who are blessed by following Jesus, people- the kind of people who think the invitation isn't for them- start seeing invitations from God everywhere.

You and I have received an invitation to be witnesses. Will you accept the invitation? Will you enter into places where Jesus invites you- into the lives of people that need to experience the blessing- acceptance, encouragement and certainty.

As Bob's book title reminds us, Love Does. You've been invited; now go and be a witness to Jesus to everyone you meet.