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## ***The Party Favor II (The Non-Purpose-Driven Party)***

Peter Hiatt @ The Sanctuary Downtown  
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### **[Opening Song – “All I Wanna Do” – Sheryl Crow]**

This week’s sermon is a continuation of last week’s sermon, so I asked the band to play the same song for the offertory. Like I told you last week, for years I’ve listened to that song and fantasized about just sitting at the bar with William and Sheryl ... incognito. If they knew what I did for a living that would probably wreck the party.

I’m not just saying that. Countless times I’ve been at parties, and someone will say, “What do you do for a living?” And then, the entire mood will change. They’ll apologize for four-letter words, some might be very accepting and ask for advice ... but it probably won’t be as much fun for them or me.

They’d expect me to try and judge them, and I’d feel pressure to judge them.

They’d expect to become my evangelism project, and I’d feel pressure to make them my project.

They’d expect me to “use them” for some purpose ... use them to build my church, my ministry, my ego ... and I’d probably begin to use them and feel a bit depressed that I did.

But whatever the case, it wouldn’t be fun.

“Fun” is a word you can’t find in my Bible (the ESV). Or in the King James, Revised Standard, New King James, and only 1 place in the NIV (and there’s it’s used in the phrase “made fun of...”). But you know that folks wanted to have fun in Jesus’ day.

So I asked myself, “What biblical word is closest to *fun*?” As best as I can tell, it’s the Greek word “*Makarios*.” It’s often translated “Happy.” According to Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, it denotes “the transcendent happiness of life beyond care, labor, and death.” “*Makarios*” sounds like hardcore fun to me.

Or perhaps “*Kara*,” which normally gets translated as “Joy” – it’s a derivative of “*Karis*”, which means “Grace,” like the opposite of depression and woe.

This week, I read a recent government survey revealing that personal caregivers – followed by waiters, cooks, and bartenders; followed by doctors and nurses – had the highest rates of depression among all professions. Caregivers, bartenders, and doctors, that is. People who are paid to love other people.

I recently read another article that put professional pastors in that group. According to one survey, 70% report a constant battle with depression... with “not fun.” Those Pharisees were not much fun.

The Jesuit Priest, Anthony DeMello writes:

“Religious people have a natural bent for cruelty ... because they all too easily sacrifice persons for the advancement of a purpose.”

They use people in the name of Love. That’s depressing.

So I got depressed and fantasized about hanging out with drunks in a bar on Santa Monica Boulevard. Yet I never did... ‘cause I hang out with my children. See? Drunk people and little children have something in common: they are both people stripped of pretense, self-consciousness, and pride. Little children, because they don’t yet have those things; drunks, because the alcohol has numbed the brain cells with which we maintain those things.

The Bible says, “Don’t be drunk with wine (for that is debauchery), rather be filled with the Spirit.”

You see, there is something else that can strip you of pretense, self-consciousness, and pride, and turn you into a child far more permanently and effectively than wine. “To enter the Kingdom, you must become like a child,” said Jesus. Children know how to have fun ... they party.

For 21 years now, my favorite parties have been with my children. And that started when they were little – when they had no pretense, self-consciousness, and pride. It started when they were “good for nothing ... just good.” That’s what shocked me as a new dad. My kids were “good for nothing!” I mean, they just devoured all my time, energy, and resources, and produced **nothing**. And yet, each one of them was like a Great Banquet – Just Fun.

Remember last week, I argued that the Breath – the Spirit of God – is somehow present in every person? **[can’t read in notes]** the last and least of these his brethren – each one, “Good for nothing ... just good.” Just Breath of God, with very little dirt and no fig leaves to cover it up ... like Adam and Eve in the Garden before they fell.

Well, over time they have become “Good for something,” and that covers their “Good for nothing.” So the world uses them. They are “Good for something.”

The world sees degrees and awards, successes and failures.  
The world sees the vessel of clay and fig leaves.

The world sees a couple of college girls and assigns them a value in proportion to their GPA.

But I see this: **[Picture 1]** I'm their Father. I still see them: an intrinsic, unconditioned wonder – the Breath of God.

These are my daughters, Elizabeth and Rebekah. This has been an emotional week for me; both of them went off to college at CSU – Elizabeth a Junior, and Becky a Freshman. And I really miss them; even the Disney Videos strewn across the TV room floor. They still love them: Cinderella, Ariel, and Beauty. Becky used to tell people that “Pretty Pretty Princess” was her middle name.

Well to me, they each are more valuable than any other girls in the world... and there are billions of girls in the world. They are the most fascinating, intriguing, and beautiful girls in the world, but not for any objective reason ... only because I've seen them and known them when they were “Good for nothing ... just Breath of God.” And I still see them.

Ironically, I see them best when the pretense of this world – when the dust and dirt – is stripped away. Not when they're a great success, but when they're humbled; when they feel inadequate, insecure, and foolish; when they long for my love. Then I see them best: unconditional, absolute wonder – the Breath of God.

Ironically then, it's when we die to ourselves – our pretense, our self-consciousness, our pride, our flesh – it's then that we can see that breath most clearly. Not when we've dressed ourselves in fig leaves and dirt; not when we've exalted ourselves; but when we're humbled.

Well, these are my girls, and I really love to just be with them just because I've seen them – the greatest treasure in this physical world ... unconditional, intrinsic, absolute wonder ... the Breath of God.

Now, look around this room. You are surrounded by the Breath of God. You are surrounded by the most fascinating, intriguing, and beautiful people in all the world, if only you could see them.

Well, like I said, I've had the best parties with my kids, and the 2<sup>nd</sup>-best parties with people who act like kids – people who have been humbled. I like to party with idiots and fools. (Singing): *Don't you want somebody to love? Don't you need somebody to love?*

Well anyway, children are like the ingredients for a great party, but they are not always a party. I remember one night in particular. Jonathan was 4, and Elizabeth was 3. **[Picture 2]** I ran to the store to buy some milk, and I took them with me to give Susan a moment of sanity. They'd be fighting all evening, and were still fighting. They fought over who got to hold the “slinky,” and then they fought over who got to sit in the front seat (the place of honor). It was miserable. I had been begging them to say something nice.

And then, Jonathan did – it was like a miracle that started a chain reaction and turned the night into a party. When I got home, I grabbed a pencil and wrote down as much as I could remember:

*“They were fighting. I begged for a kind word – a gracious word. And Jonathan said, ‘Hey Elizabeth, I’ll get you a car for your birthday.’ She said, ‘I don’t want one.’ I suggested lipstick to Jon. He tried that, and Elizabeth said, ‘Oh yeah, I’d like that.’*

*Inspired by her response, he started telling her all the things he’d get her for her birthday, and he wouldn’t stop. He said, and I quote: ‘Cakes and an Ariel cake, and a Pooh cake (that’s Winnie the Pooh)...’ Each time Elizabeth would squeal, ‘Oh yeah, I’d like that!’*

*He continued: ‘Darkwing Duck, pink lipstick, a zebra, and a 2...’ Elizabeth interrupted, ‘And snow and dollies?’ Jon said, ‘Yes, I will get you 20 dollies and 20 houses and a stop sign and a lighted bundie (I have no idea what that is), Mr. Bucket, slinky, and number 506.’ Elizabeth squealed, ‘And a campfire?’ ‘Oh yes,’ Jon said, ‘I will get you a campfire!’ “*

Jon kept going like that until we got to the store. Elizabeth said, “Let’s hold hands.” Then, “Jon, you can sit on my lap on the way home.” That didn’t happen. But on the way home Elizabeth told Jon everything that she would get him for his birthday: “Exercise pants, a horse, snow, and a light...” and she kept going. And each time, Jon would say, “Oh yeah, I’d like that!”

Well, it was the best party I had been to in years. I was happy, and it was fun. It really had no purpose. It was absurd, and if they ever did get each other that stuff, I’d be the one who would pay for it. But I’d gladly pay for it, because for a few moments, my children saw what I saw: they saw each other. They saw what their father saw. It was a party – “Good for nothing ... just good.”

And just think – it was there all along. The ingredients were there all along; we just had to get the party started. How do you get the party started?

#### **[Luke 14]**

*One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away.”*

Literally, “released him.” Jesus gave the man life, but the Pharisees wouldn’t see Jesus, and they wouldn’t see the man. They controlled the party, so they wouldn’t join God’s Party.

*[Jesus] said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” And they could not reply to these things.*

*Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

*He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind..."*

That is, invite people like the disfigured, lame man with dropsy.  
Invite people like William at the bar on Santa Monica Boulevard.  
Invite children.  
Invite people without much dirt, dust, and fig leaves.  
Invite people stripped of honor and unable to repay.

*"But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you."*

"Blessed" because they cannot repay you.

"Blessed" is the word "*Makarios*," which means "happy" or "fun" ... "having fun."

"Having fun, happy, blessed will you be when you throw parties for no reason ... for no blessing in return."

You'll have fun when you give fun and stop worrying about getting fun."

"Blessed are you when you throw non-purpose-driven parties."

Have you ever been invited to a party by an old friend who acts like he misses you ... and in the middle of the party, he tries to sell you some life insurance or some cleaning products? It's not fun. Have you ever thrown a party like that? It's not fun.

Have you ever been invited to a party by an old friend and they try to convert you to something? Their movement... their organization ... their religion, perhaps? Is it fun? Have you ever thrown a party like that? Was it fun?

I read about a bejeweled English socialite who stepped out of a high class hotel in London, where she'd been dining and dancing at a charity ball for street children. She was about to get into her Rolls Royce when a homeless child approached her and whined, "Spare some change, mum. I haven't eaten for 2 days." The woman recoiled and shot back, "You ungrateful wretch! Don't you realize I've been dancing for you all night?!"

She went to the ball, but entirely missed the party. That child was the party. She'd have to humble herself to join that party.

Imagine if I said to myself, "Self, a good pastor would witness to the 'last and the least' ... like the people in that bar on Santa Monica Boulevard." Imagine if I partied with them in order to save them. Wouldn't I be exalting myself over them, and thus using them, and thus unable to truly see them? And thus, no longer "blessed is me," but "woe is me." Depressed is me. For then I'm loving for some other purpose... loving to be repaid. I am a purpose-driven party.

In some circles, they call that prostitution. It looks like a party, but it tastes like hell.

Like we said last time, I'm not the judge, savior, and redeemer. However, I'm called to be a witness to the Judge, Savior, and Redeemer; and I bear witness to the Judge, Savior, and Redeemer when I love people.

Well, imagine if I went to the bar on Santa Monica Boulevard because I loved William ... genuinely liked William, and so wanted to be with William. Well, it might be fun for William and me. And if I went to William, then Jesus would go with me. And Jesus is the Judge, the Savior, and the Redeemer.

But then you might think: "Hey, wait a minute. If Jesus is the Judge, Savior, and Redeemer, doesn't he exalt himself over those he judges, saves, and redeems?"

NO. And that's what we miss.

He humbles Himself – He judges, saves, and redeems by humbling himself... by becoming last and least. And He humbles Himself because He is Love. So He doesn't love us in order to save us ... He saves us because He already loves us. He doesn't throw parties for a purpose. Parties **are** His purpose. And so He humbles Himself to party with you. Parties are people, bound in love.

### **[Phil. 2:3]**

Paul writes,

*Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves... Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing (that's very last and very least), taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

*Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

That will be an incredible party. And what's the purpose of that party?  
Well, that party **is** the purpose.

It's Jesus, the Life of God, having filled all things.  
It's the Kingdom of God.

God has no purpose. He is the purpose. He is Love.

And so, Christ humbled Himself ... to party with you.

Origen, who many regard as the greatest of the early church fathers, taught that Christ remained on the cross as long as one sinner remained in hell. You can disagree with that, but don't disagree with this: "As you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me." So if you abandon the least in hell, perhaps you abandon Jesus to hell.

At the cross, Jesus took His party (which is Himself), and descended to hell to party with the last and least.

In other words, Jesus goes to the bar on Santa Monica Boulevard, because William is His party. Jesus goes to the slums of New York and Port au Prince to party with the poor. Jesus humbles Himself to party with us, and God exalts His party.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; of them consists the Kingdom of God."

So go to the bar loving Jesus and loving William, and don't be surprised when William meets Jesus. And what's your reward? William. At last you see him; he is your brother. The party consists of Him.

### [verse 13]

*"... But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

Then Jesus tells the story we preached on last week. But look at verse 14: "And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you ... you will be repaid **AT**..." That preposition is normally translated "in," "by," or "with."

"You will be repaid 'in,' 'by,' or 'with' the resurrection of the just."

Who are "the just?"

Luke 18:14 – Jesus tells us, using the very same phraseology:

The just are the humbled whom God exalts.

The just is the one who admits he's a sinner and believes God's Grace.

The just is the one who loses his pride and joins the party.

The just is the one who loves for no reason, because love **is** the reason.

So, the one who throws parties for no purpose will be rewarded with the Party for no purpose. For that party is the purpose – the Kingdom of God. So what's the payment for loving my kids? Loving my kids.

Now, make no mistake ... In this world, love can get you crucified. It hurts. But the reward for loving my kids is loving my kids. The reward for loving my enemies is my enemies... as friends.

In two chapters, Jesus says, "Use your unrighteous money to make friends, that they might receive you into the eternal habitations." Use money to throw parties for them **here**, because they are the party **there**.

You see, the payment for the party is the party.

You see, the payment for Love is Love.

But if you love for pay, it's not love... it's prostitution.

If you love for what a person will do for you, or what God will do for you, it's sin.

If you use love, you crucify Love – it is sin, and the heart of sin.

And we're all sinners, but church is supposed to be a party.

So we sit around staring at each other, wondering, "How do we get the Party started?"

Well, Jesus said, "Humble yourself." That is, "Lose yourself."

Forget about yourself, so your love can love for no purpose.

But how do you humble yourself?

If you try to humble yourself with yourself, isn't it just more self?

If I think, "Don't think about yourself; don't think about yourself, I think even more about myself."

If I got to a party all insecure and think, "Don't be insecure, don't be insecure, you're so insecure, **don't be insecure!**" ... well, I just got even more insecure ... more stuck on myself.

To humble myself, I must be humbled by something greater than myself, and not **of** myself.

Remember our video clip from last week, from the movie *Chocolat*?

The mayor of the town felt responsible for the town; responsible for the party; and thus killed the party. Remember how he was humbled?

### **[Movie Clip – *Chocolat*]**

He tried to destroy the chocolate banquet, so he attacked the chocolate banquet, and tasted the chocolate banquet ... then lost himself in the chocolate banquet and joined the party.

Remember how the Pharisees were humbled? They hated Christ's banquet, so they attacked the banquet: broke His body, shed His blood. But when they see that banquet and taste that banquet – like Saul of Tarsus – they lose themselves and join the party.

With this fallen world, God makes us hungry for Grace, and then He gives us Grace – His banquet of Grace. It's His Grace – "His kindness that leads us to repentance"... repentance of our selves and our pride, so we can join the party.



When the kids were little and would have a party, all these little kids would sit in a room and stare at each other. So Susan would make up gift bags full of party favors. They'd open those gift bags, forget themselves, and show someone else their favor ... and that's how we'd get the party started.

Jesus is the Party Favor; when you see Him, you forget yourself and show someone else. Amazing Grace ... it's how God gets the Party started. And it's how we are to get the Party started for others – His Grace.

This is Luke 14. Luke 15 is all about parties, and in Luke 16, Jesus tells about a dishonest steward in charge of collecting his master's debts. When the steward gets in trouble and loses his job, he goes to all his master's debtors and forgives debts in the name of the master. He starts parties, so that when he loses his livelihood, he'll be welcomed into these parties.

Then Jesus says, "Use your unrighteous wealth (you call it yours, but it's God's) ... use your stolen stuff to win friends who will receive you into the eternal habitations." See? Your Father gives you everything in order to throw parties... snow, dollies, campfires, lipstick. We are to use things to love people and never use people to love things.

And Father even gives you the authority to pronounce the forgiveness of sins – the forgiveness of debts against Himself. He gladly pays for this Party with His body and blood. He wants you to give Himself to your brothers and sisters for their Birth Day. He wants you to announce "The year of the Lord's Favor" – All debts forgiven. (Luke 4:19)

Let the Party begin, all is forgiven! The only catch is that there is no catch. You must believe that you cannot repay. You must have faith in Grace – for the Party **is** Grace. Father is throwing a Party, and He will not be repaid. Blessed and Fun is he ....

The Kingdom of God is a Party. Church is to be a Party.

Today, we're throwing a party: A non-purpose-driven party. So, if you go to the party and think, "This party isn't working," then you probably haven't arrived at the party. I mean, you're partying for some other reason, which means you haven't arrived, and it can't be fun.

If you go to House Church and think, "This House Church isn't working," then you probably haven't arrived at Church. I mean, you're loving for some other reason, which isn't love, and it won't be fun.

Jesus teaches when you go to a party, forget you. Humble you. Lose you, and your agenda. Ask people questions about themselves. Be fascinated at the wonder that is them. Lose yourself. Lose yourself in loving them. Jesus hides his banquet in them, like Jesus lost Himself in loving you. And God will exalt you and them... He'll make a Party – Life.

The church is a party pregnant with life. The church is Christ's Bride. If you say, "My Bride just isn't working for me," it means that you want her to work for you. It means that to you, she is a prostitute, and you haven't yet seen her.

Some of you remember Tony Campolo. He used to tell all about a particular night in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He was walking back to the Holiday Inn, when three girls intercepted him on the street. They looked to be about 15 or 16 years old ... a little younger than my daughters Elizabeth and Rebekah.

The one in the middle said, "Mr. for ten dollars, you can have me all night long." Tony turned to one of the others and said, "How about you? Ten dollars?" She nodded. He asked the third. Tony says it's hard to look sexy when you're 15, poor, and desperate for dinner. But the girl tried to hide her shame and her contempt ... she smiled and agreed.

Tony said, "Fine, I've got thirty dollars. I'm in room 210. Be there in half an hour. I'll pay you then... But I have all three of you for all night." Tony rushed back to the hotel room and called down to the concierge. He said, "Bring every Disney video you have to room 210. And I want ice cream ... banana splits with everything you got... extra nuts, whipped cream, and loads of chocolate syrup... a chocolate banquet. I want four of them."

Within a half-hour, the videos arrived, the girls arrived, and then the banana splits arrived. Tony paid the girls to watch Disney movies and eat banana splits all night long. They had a party and watched cartoons until about 1:00. When the girls fell into a sound sleep, sprawled across his bed, Campolo says he sat there in the stuffed chair looking at these poor sleeping girls, and thought: "What's the point? Nothing's changed. Tomorrow they'll be back on the streets, selling themselves to dirty old men for \$10.00 a throw. They'll call it a party, but it's a piece of hell. **Nothing's changed!**"

And then he says he heard the Spirit of God (the Breath of God): "But for one night, Tony, you let them be little girls." That's good for nothing ... just good.

So what's the point? That **Party** is the point. It has no purpose, for it is the purpose. It looks like nothing, but God will exalt it. You will see it is everything ... it is Love. And the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

Luke records that on the night Jesus was delivered up, He threw a party; He hosted a banquet for His 12 disciples. The 12 disciples, like the 12 tribes, like us ... are His Bride... His unfaithful prostitute bride. All 12 would abandon Him that night – 2 would deny and 1 would betray. In this world, they had been used, and would use. If they loved, they loved Him in order to be repaid. Jesus knew it, and still He threw the banquet and still He said what Luke records: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

The vocabulary Jesus uses is a bit shocking. He used the word "*epithumeia*", normally translated "lust." It means burning desire. "In desire I have desired..." See? Even then, for

Jesus, love was fun. He loves to love, even when we repay Him with hell. He still gives His Banquet.

He took the bread and broke it, saying, "This is my body given to you."  
And He took the cup, and gave thanks, saying, "This is the New Covenant in my blood."

We repay Him with hell, and He still gives His Banquet. He is blessed, and He wants us to be blessed. He wants the whole world to be blessed, to have fun forever without end. It doesn't have a purpose. It IS the purpose: Everything filled with Love ... and God is Love.

It begins here and now.