

**“Finding a Faith that Matters”
“Community that transforms the world”**

We continue in our sermon series “Finding a Faith that Matters.” This sermon series will invite us to recommit our lives to Christ, who has come to offer light and life and love. We have pondered our call to authentic faith. Each week we have wrestled with different aspects of our faith, how to live with conflict, how to live out our call and how to live out love. This week we want to focus on how we can be a Community that Transforms the World. Our scriptures this week invite us to be witnesses to what God is doing and will do in our world. Jesus invites us to look at our resources and take care of those around us. Let’s accept the challenge this week that our faith and our lives might be part of what God is doing to make a difference in the world. ---Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Community that transforms the world”**

Prayer for the Week

O God, change my heart. Transform the attitudes from which my actions grow that I may honor you and others in my daily interactions. Amen. (Mary Lou Redding)

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 2/20/17 Matthew 15: 29-31

These verses come right after Jesus heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman. The setting is important because of the symbolism of what comes next. The Canaanite woman asks for healing and Jesus in not so uncertain terms, blows her off. She, however, persists and asks for what she wants and needs. Jesus acknowledges her faith and heals her daughter. Jesus is then surrounded by large crowds seeking healing and hope. People were amazed and praised the “God of Israel.” Some scholars believe this points to the fact that the people being served were Gentiles, who specifically were praising the Jewish God and not their own. Jesus’ willingness to reach outside his normal community of faith transformed and healed many people and changed the world around him. How do you reach out to people “not like you” and share God’s love and grace?

Tuesday, 2/21/17 Matthew 15: 32-34

There are two different accounts of Jesus’ feeding a large number of people. The feeding of the 4000 is told only in Matthew and Mark. Unlike the feeding of the 5000, Jesus is not concerned that there is no place for them to get food, but because they have been with him so long he is afraid they “won’t have strength to travel.” Here the “bread of life” they were receiving was satisfying their souls, but the bodies still need to be fed. All they had was 7 loaves and some fish. In the biblical tradition the number 7 was symbolic of the mission to the Gentiles. This goes back to the healing, to the praising of God and the willingness of those outside of Jesus’ tradition to receive the grace and good news of God. As you look at these verses, how do you reach out to people who are hungry or weary and offer them grace and love?

Wednesday, 2/22/17 Matthew 15: 35-39

Jesus has the crowd sit, gives thanks and everyone is fed and they are satisfied. In these accounts, Jesus seems able to remind people that there is abundance in life. How often do people look only at the lack, “we have only seven loaves and a few fish?” Jesus, takes what is offered and through the generosity of God’s grace and love feeds thousands. What do you think might happen in your life and the life of the church if we look at God’s great generosity and grace in terms of our gifts? How do you think God could multiply our offerings of time, and talent and tithe?

Thursday, 2/23/17 Isaiah 43: 8-10

Last week we looked at the first part of this chapter from Isaiah. The word of God reminded the people that they were “called by named, precious in God’s eyes, honored and loved.” Now, that the people are reminded of who they are, they are reminded of their call. God says, “you are my witnesses, that you should know and believe and understand that I am God.” We as believers are called to be witnesses in order to transform the world. How do you “witness” or share the good news of God’s love and love in the world?

Friday, 2/24/17 Isaiah 43: 11-13

Isaiah notes, “I announced, I saved, I proclaimed, you are my witnesses I am God.” In our world, sometimes to “witness” can be seen negatively. The stereo-type of a person on the street corner with a sign “the end is near” or screaming at the top of their lungs that people will be “going to he..” is a hard image to break. People “witness” all the time: by writing review of their favorite restaurants or trying to get people to see a movie or a play or listen to a band. Witnessing is giving voice to what a person believes is important or moving or funny or enjoyable. God asks that his people be witnesses to his power, to his love to his grace. How will you be a witness today in your words and actions?