

**“VACATION FOR THE SOUL”**  
**“Blessings”**

We have come to the end of our sermon series, “Vacation for the Soul.” The summer, at least in terms of the school year, is almost half over. We have had an opportunity to learn and practice some new and old prayer practices and spiritual disciplines. This final week is no different. Our prayer practice and spiritual discipline will be celebration. In some ways each week in worship is to be a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. If we are honest, some weeks it is hard to celebrate. It may be our life is filled with difficulty and strife. We, or a family member might have health issues, grief strikes or there may be anxiety over many things. According to Richard Foster in his book *Celebration of Discipline*, “Celebration is at the heart of the way of Christ...Celebration brings joy into life, and joy makes us strong.” Celebration doesn’t make light of our hardships, it underpins faith that says that God is with us and understands us in all of life. As we come to an end of this Vacation for our Soul, it is my prayer that we will all continue to learn from these practices and disciplines. May we know moments of celebration this week. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Blessings”**

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**Prayer for the Week**

*Holy God, Sometimes our only response to you must be an outburst of sheer joy! All heaven and earth, and all human beings and animals, sing to you our hymn of praise! Alleluia!! Amen!*  
*(Psalm prayer based on Psalm 148, in the Upper Room Worshipbook*

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

## Study Guide

### **Monday, July 23, 2018 Mark 6:30-34**

John the Baptist has been executed. John's disciples have buried his body and Jesus finds out from his disciples all that has happened. Naturally Jesus wants to get away. His disciples are tired and I suspect Jesus is happy for them and sad at the same time and wants to spend time in prayer and with God. Instead of getting away, people were there with all their pressing needs. Jesus could have left, but instead, out of compassion he stays, teaches and takes care of them... According to Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*, celebration is based on obedience to Christ and the work Christ calls us to do. Perhaps Jesus in his grief, is obedient to his call and through having compassion on the crowd, he finds deep joy. Joy is not about happiness, joy is our lives transformed through the grace and love of God. *As you think about your life, where do you find those moments of celebration of joy when things are difficult?*

### **Tuesday, July 24, 2018 Ephesians 1: 15-16**

Paul begins this letter to the church at Ephesus reminding the believers that they are children of God through Christ. In the first fourteen verses, Paul packs much into this plan of God who gives us good news in Christ Jesus. Paul is praying for the church because of their faith and their love for all God's people. Giving thanks as Paul does for their faith can be another way of living into celebration and joy! Paul is giving God thanks for the Ephesians. *As you ponder the prayer practice of celebration, for whom do you celebrate and give thanks? Take a moment to celebrate and thank God by name those persons who have helped you in your faith and been there for you when times were tough.*

### **Wednesday, July 18, 2018 Ephesians 1: 17-19**

"I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God's call....that is working among believers." Unity is an important theme in this letter as it is the understanding that the church is to live out God's love and grace. "God has gifted those who follow Jesus with the power and spirit of wisdom that makes sharing the good news with others possible. That spirit is what helps Christians follow Jesus, even in the toughest of times. God is working among the community of faith and strengthening them for the ministry and mission to which they are called. *How do you celebrate your calling and the wisdom that God has given you? Find one way today to share your joy and celebrate God's work in you.*

### **Thursday, July 19, 2018 Mark 6: 53-56**

The gospel read Sunday "jumped" over the feeding of the five thousand. In two weeks, we will explore that scripture, only it will John's version. These verses, like on Monday, focus on Jesus' compassion. Jesus had once again tried to get away from the crowd, but they followed him everywhere. They recognized him and brought their sick relatives and friends. Jesus recognized their desperation. Jesus' compassion was his way of celebrating his mission and ministry. There must have been deep joy when Jesus was able to alleviate people's suffering. In our world, we often hear about "compassion fatigue." *How do you find ways to not give into compassion fatigue and celebrate the many opportunities to be in ministry? Today find one way to do something to help someone else. Then say a prayer of thanks for God's many blessings in your life.*

### **Friday, July 20, 2018 Mark 12: 28-33**

We begin a new sermon series this next Sunday, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" For decades Mister Rogers was the quintessential neighbor. When he was interviewed about his opening song he said, "Won't you be my neighbor? Well, I supposed it's an invitation. It's an invitation for somebody to be close to you." In the Christian tradition, when Jesus is asked, "Who is my neighbor" through story and actions, Jesus pointed out that everybody is our neighbor, particularly those in need. John Wesley said, "The world is my parish," maybe that is another way of saying the world is my neighbor, those both far AND near. *Please join us for the next six weeks, as we discover the joy and celebrate of what it means to be a neighbor!*