

# **“WON’T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?”**

## **“Confronting the Scarcity Myth”**

Mister Rogers will always be for me the best example of “neighbor.” When his show debuted I was “too old” “for it. Nevertheless, my siblings and I would often have PBS playing on the TV and Sesame Street and Mister Rogers were part of the afternoon rotation when we came home from school. When Fred Rogers was interviewed about his opening song “Won’t you be my neighbor?” he said, “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,” and maybe that is another way of saying the world is my neighbor, those both far AND near. Working loosely with the Good Neighbor experiment written by the staff of SoCe life, the next few weeks we will find a way to look at the key ingredients of being a good neighbor: Abundance, Relationship and Joy. There will be a challenge each day and the prayer we will share will be the same each week for this sermon series and taken from the curriculum from SoCe Life. May we discover this week that scarcity is not real, but abundance, real abundance is part and parcel of the life offered in Jesus. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Confronting the Scarcity Myth”**

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### **Prayer for the Week**

*God of Connection, open our eyes to discover your treasures hidden among our neighbors. Open our ears to listen deeply to their stories. Open our hands to receive the giftedness they bring into our lives. God of Creativity, stir our minds with curiosity about this wondrous world. Lead our feet forward, moving only at the speed of trust. Free our hearts to join the work you are already doing in our neighborhoods. God of Compassion, plant the seeds of patience among us, as we learn to love our neighbor as ourselves. Plant the seeds of grace among us, so failure leads us to your love. Plant the seeds of community, that we would discover your kingdom among us. Amen. The Good Neighbor Experiment curriculum copyright © SoCe Life*

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

## Study Guide

### **Monday, July 30, 2018 Mark 7: 24-27**

This story is for me personally, always hard to read. Much has been written minimizing Jesus' response, but there is no way I think one can get around how mean this sounds. Jesus has called this woman, this Gentile outsider a "dog." Some have said that in translation it should read "puppy" or "little dog" as if that would somehow make it sound better. In this passage, Jesus is distinguishing who he will help first, basically "the children of God" as defined by being Jewish. Perhaps his fatigue had taken over at last and he had decided to limit what he would do. After all, he was trying to hide. This is the same Jesus who later will define neighbor as basically anyone you meet. So, as you ponder these verses (don't jump ahead!!). *Honestly, who would you say was less deserving of your time and energy and love? Are these people or individuals that you are less "neighborly" with? Who are they and can you understand why that might be true in your life?*

### **Tuesday, July 31, 2018 Mark 7: 28-30**

This woman has remarkable faith. When Jesus questions why he should be abundantly giving of his gifts, particularly to outsiders, she answers right back. When called a dog, she claims it, "even dogs get the crumbs." Her willingness to take even the crumbs that Jesus offered and stand up for her own daughter meant her daughter was healed. In healing the immigrant's daughter, Jesus modeled abundance for his disciples and all who follow him. Like the feeding of the 5000, in chapter 6 and the feeding of the 4000 in chapter 8, Jesus again and again shows that there is enough when we share and look at the gifts, not what we are lacking. Jesus first statement gave voice to an understanding of scarcity, that there wasn't enough for outsiders. Instead, challenged by the woman and her faith, Jesus instead shared an abundance of faith and power and love. *How do you find ways to live into an understanding of abundance, rather than give in to the fear of scarcity?*

### **Wednesday, August 1, 2018 Ephesians 2: 11-13**

Of the earliest disciples, Paul modeled and proclaimed God's grace for everyone. There was certainly push back from the Jewish Christian community. Paul had to appear in front of the early leadership to defend his outreach and inclusion of the Gentiles or non-Jewish people. In these verses, Paul describes that definition of the outsiders or aliens who were not part of the original "community of faith" or part of the original covenant people. Paul believed that Jesus was making all people one, all people "neighbors" if you will. *In your life today, how do you see Christ bringing people far and near into relationship? How do you live out being a neighbor to people inside and outside your own person circle of relationships?*

### **Thursday, August 2, 2018 Ephesians 2: 14-18**

According to Paul, Christ has broken down every "barrier of hatred that divided us." That may be a hard concept to believe in today's political and religious environment. There is so much hateful rhetoric being flung around online, in print and through the airwaves. Barriers are being erected as to who "belongs" and who doesn't. How we treat children, outsiders, and people who are different in any way is a witness to whether or not we believe that Christ is our peace. Christ has created a new group out of two old ones, according to Paul. That peace is active, constantly finding ways to break down barriers that divide us. *How have you broken down a barrier that divided you from someone else? How have you gotten past any walls that keep you from accepting someone else as a beloved child of God?*

### **Friday, August 3, 2018 Ephesians 2: 19-22**

No one is a stranger according to Paul, all are fellow citizens, members of the household of God, brothers and sisters. Christ is using each person to create a living temple or building. Each person is different and brings their own gifts to the community. The Syrophenician woman brought tenacity, faith and pluckiness to the community. She wouldn't back down, not from Jesus, not from any condemning look she might have received. She changed the community around Jesus by those gifts. At Christ's table and in Christ's kingdom, all are welcome. All are equal and bring gifts that change the community and change the world. *What gifts have you overlooked from your neighbors and friends? What gifts are you not sharing? How can your part of the world be made different because you are abundantly sharing your gifts and accepting the gifts of those around you?*