

“WON’T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?”

“Embracing Abundance”

Mister Rogers will always be for me the best example of “neighbor.” When Fred Rogers was interviewed about his opening song “Won’t you be my neighbor?” he said, “Well, I suppose 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 everyone is our neighbor, particularly those in need. John Wesley said, “The world is my parish.” August is the month we celebrate our Television Ministry. For over forty years, First United Methodist Church has been reaching beyond its doors to people across the state and now across the world. It helps us be a good neighbor to those both far and near. We continue to work loosely with the Good Neighbor experiment written by the staff of SoCe life, and 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. Last week we looked at the scarcity myth while this week we will be confronted with it again only this time we will see how abundance is more of a reality than scarcity. May this week’s experience of Holy Communion prepare us to be open to the abundance of God’s grace everywhere. Pastor Cindy

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

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*

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

Study Guide

Monday, August 6, 2018 John 6: 1-6

This story is contained in all four gospels. It is one of the few that IS recorded so consistently. John tends to be more “theological” than the other gospels. And this encounter with Jesus and the crowds is one of true abundance. Jesus, after healing and teaching is paying attention to this crowd. How will they feed all those people? In organizations, churches, governments and neighborhoods, the question of scarcity is often raised. How can we? How is it possible? There never seems to be enough: time, money or resources. Jesus’ question to his disciples according to John was a test. Maybe it is more than a test for them and for us. Maybe the question is supposed to open our minds, hearts and spirits to what God can do when we are confronted with our fear of there not being enough. *Today spend some time pondering how you respond when you are afraid of scarcity. What questions do you ask? How do you usually answer them?*

Tuesday, August 7, 2018 John 6: 5-9

Jesus’ question prompts two very different responses. One is that there isn’t enough money and if there was, it still wouldn’t be enough. The other has an off the wall idea but shoots it down before anyone else can. Here is a kid with his lunch, but that’s silly! Scarcity versus abundance is a common enough theme with scarcity usually winning. In the Neighboring movement, abundance is always the answer to the fear of not enough. Rather than look around and see what is lacking, the question is asked, “What is available?” “Who can help?” “Whose gifts are being overlooked or underappreciated?” The understanding of scarcity always makes the assumption that someone has to have less, that there will never be enough and so why try. Jesus’ question almost feels like that is what he believes. His disciples share two very different answers, but they are responding to how can we take care of this rather than saying send them all home (as happens in Mark 6). Jesus asking the question means there is time to contemplate and ponder. Often as human beings we just power through and don’t allow God’s Spirit to lead and guide. *Today, in the midst of your life, ask one or two “how” questions. Don’t try to answer them right away, just ask them and sit with God and see how God’s Spirit leads you in a more abundant understanding.*

Wednesday, August 8, 2018 John 6:10-14

Jesus goes with the loaves and fish answer. We know the story so well. The disciples have every one sit down. Jesus thanks God for the abundance that he had in front of him. He starts passing out the food and everyone is fed AND there are leftovers. How often do we look at what is in front of us and see what is lacking? Regardless of the various explanations of this miracle (and there are many), Jesus trusts in God’s generous abundance. In my opinion, I find it more of miracle if people following Jesus’ lead shared the food they had and all were fed than Jesus magically made more bread appear. For me, the abundance is in the opening of the eyes and hearts and minds of those people who then shared because of God’s amazing grace. *How about you? How do you see abundance working in your life and in your relationships? In your church, family or neighborhood, how is God’s generosity made real?*

Thursday, August 9, 2018 2 Kings 4:42-44

This whole chapter of 2 Kings is about abundance. It begins with a widow who was almost out of oil and whom Elisha blesses with more oil than she put into containers. She is told to sell it to take care of herself and her children. Then Elisha blesses a woman who has given him shelter twice. Elisha then makes food that was poisonous into something edible. This sets up these two verses about bread multiplying to feed the people (sound familiar?) This is a chapter about abundance. Jesus was not the first to trust that God would provide, indeed it is woven into the very fabric of the Jewish faith: manna in the wilderness, water from a rock. While these stories are miraculous, there is truly nothing miraculous about God’s grace and love that is poured out on all creation. It is human beings which try to contain it, of who try to hoard it. We are so often convinced something can’t be done, that we refuse to try to do anything different. God calls us to trust that there is more than enough: money, time, love, grace and hope to make a difference. *What ways could you trust God to be more generous with what you have? How do you share your time, energy and gifts with others?*

Friday, August 10, 2018 Ephesians 2: 8-10

Paul reminds us that it is grace, God’s grace that allows us to live in abundance. We don’t earn it, buy or possess it. Grace is God’s generous gift to all. We are created for good works, to share and to live our lives in way that makes a difference in the world. *Today, list some ways you can live out the generous grace of God in your life and in your neighborhood. Do one thing today that speaks of abundance, mercy and grace.*