

# “WON’T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?”

## “Loving Our God”

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 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 everyone is our neighbor, particularly those in need. John Wesley said, “The world is my parish.” During the month of August, we are celebrating the years we have been neighbors to people through 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. In 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. The last two weeks we have been pondering scarcity and abundance. For the next two weeks, we will look at our relationship with God and others. This week we focus on Jesus being the life giving bread of our hearts and spirits. I continue to be grateful that we are neighbors and brothers and sisters in Christ. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Loving Our God”**

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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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## Study Guide

### **Monday, August 13, 2018 John 6: 15, 24-27**

I included verse 15 because it sets up why the crowd was looking for Jesus. Jesus had withdrawn because they wanted to crown him king. They probably also wanted Jesus to keep feeding them. Jesus names the truth; that they wanted him to continue to feed them and take care of them. They had gone back to the concept of scarcity and were trying to get more out of Jesus, more attention, more food, more of everything. Jesus, instead of trying to satisfy the crowd, points to God. The signs and miracles he had been doing were to connect people to the Divine. He was all about “changing lives and transforming communities.” In our lives, we too, often look for that “quick fix” rather than connecting to God and seeing God at work. *Where do you see God at work in your neighborhood and in your world? Are there times you are tempted to look for a quick answer rather than wait on God to reveal himself?*

### **Tuesday, August 14, 2018 John 6: 28-32**

One of the key phrases is when asked what one must do to perform the works of God, Jesus responds “Believe in the one whom God has sent.” Believe in me, basically. They want to know what work Jesus has been doing. I can just picture Jesus smacking his head, can’t you? Haven’t they paid attention? The feeding of the 5000, the healing of the blind man are just a couple of the signs that Jesus has performed to show God’s grace, love and presence in the world. Jesus points out that God is always at work, through Moses and through him. It is too easy to look at the human point of contact and think that person is particularly gifted. Jesus continues to point to God as the ultimate generous Presence in the world. Focusing first on the abundance available, Jesus asks us to love God and in loving God being open to what God will do in us and through us. In other words, “strive first for the kingdom of God” and our eyes will be opened to God at work. *Where did you see God at work today? Where were you struck by a sense of scarcity and how can you ponder that moment and open yourself to where God was at moment?*

### **Wednesday, August 15, 2018 John 6: 33-35**

Jesus notes that he is the bread of life, “Whoever comes to me will never hungry or thirsty.” Wow! What a promise Jesus makes. And yet, people are hungry and thirsty. Perhaps not you and I, but others are. We might be hungry and thirsty for something different. Jesus offered the woman at the well “living water” and now he offers “living bread.” If we believe what Jesus says, then we are promised an abundance of faith, hope and love. We are promised to be content and satisfied. It may start with saying thank you to God for the living water and bread we receive in Jesus. *Say a prayer of thanks today. Ask yourself, because of the abundance of God’s grace I have received in Jesus, how have I shared abundantly and generously with others?*

### **Thursday, August 16, 2018 Ephesians 3: 14-17**

Paul is so deeply grateful for his friends, his brothers and sisters, his neighbors in Ephesus. His prayer for them, asking that God might strengthen them in spirit and that Christ might be made known. Paul prays, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.” If Jesus is the bread of life, then that bread strengthens our spirits. As we are grounded in faith and love, then loving God is made real in the relationships we have with our neighbors. *How does your love of God become apparent in your relationship with your family and friends? How does it become apparent in your relationship with your neighbors?*

### **Friday, August 17, 2018 Ephesians 3: 18-21**

Paul’s prayer continues to ask that we might be filled with the fullness of God and that the love and knowledge of Christ become real in our lives. Jesus notes in our earlier reading that it is God’s love and power made real in him and also in Moses that accomplishes so much. “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine,” are words of deep abundance. God is able to abundantly take care of us and help us see new ways of being in ministry to the world. We are called to be neighbors, to work together and to be open to what God is calling us to do and become. *Are you willing to be open to God’s power at work in you? Do you trust that God can accomplish abundantly far more than you can ask or imagine? What would you ask for today: for your family, your church, your neighborhood and for yourself?*