

“SETTING THE TABLE”

“The Oil of Healing”

We are ending our sermon series “*Setting the Table*.” We began the series focusing on hospitality. Remember Abraham, how he offered hospitality to strangers and then bartered with God for the life of strangers? The last few weeks we have pondered the food that the biblical writers and Jesus used as examples for our lives and discipleship: unleavened bread, salt and figs. Today’s readings bring us back to hospitality and offers a glimpse into the healing power of olive oil. Olives and their oil were part of the everyday life in ancient Israel. In the last twenty years or so, “EVOO” Extra Virgin Olive Oil has become the go-to for home chefs because of the plethora of cooking shows. Olive oil is better for us and is a gift for many reasons. The gospel reading will have us look at the story of the Good Samaritan in terms of hospitality and healing. Next week, on Labor Sunday, we will once again have an invitation to be anointed for our work and ministry in the world. This week, as we continue to “set our table” may our lives be open to sharing hospitality and healing in our world.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: “**The Oil of Healing**”

Daily prayer: *O God, Creator of the universe, Sustainer of life, Redeemer of humankind; bring your healing light and power into our wounded hearts and bodies and minds and souls, clear the way for each of us to discover within ourselves the fulness of your power and all of your wondrous blessing. Help us dear God to respond to your vast love and to bless you, so that we may be a beacon through which you may shine into the world. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

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

Study Guide

Monday, August 26, 2019 James 5: 13-14

James is a very practical book. In this last chapter the author offers a warning, but also encouragement and advice. He encourages patience in difficulty and prayer. Specifically, the author notes that those who are sick should ask for prayer and be anointed with oil. This is an old, old biblical practice, and an old practice from ancient traditions. Olive oil, perfumed with herbs and spices was used for a variety of practices including healing, consecration and to make people “beautiful.” Even today, olive oil is used in these ways. Taking care of one another through prayer and anointing is one act of hospitality. It points to the community of faiths’ responsibility to one another. It gives witness to the truth that when one person is sick it affects all in the community. Most faith communities in biblical times were small, but even in larger congregations, when one person is sick, it affects everyone in their small group or Sunday school class. Prayers are the ultimate act of hospitality and care. *Today, spend some time praying for the people in your Sunday school class, choir, small group or inner circles. Know that your prayers matter and made a difference.*

Tuesday, August 27, 2019 Luke 10: 25-29

This familiar parable begins with a couple of questions. They are as relevant now as they were then. What must we do to inherit eternal life? What does our faith say? The answer is always the same for most faith traditions: Love God, Love our neighbor. The real rub is the next question. “*Who is my neighbor?*” Hundreds of books, essays, sermons and various forms of social media have attempted to respond to this question. *How would you answer it? Who is my neighbor? Who is your neighbor? How do you set the table for your neighbor? How do we as a church set the table for our neighbor? Today, find one way to identify, pray for and be in ministry to your neighbor.*

Wednesday August 28, 2019 Luke 10: 30-37

Jesus responds to the question “*Who is my neighbor?*” by telling a story. This story has become so well-known and this week’s focus is not so much on the personalities as on the healing. Certainly, any of us can think about who would be a modern “outcast” or “Samaritan.” We can name who the modern “religious leaders” might be. The reality is the outcast stopped, checked on the injured traveler, tended and bandaged his wounds with “oil and wine” and then transported him to an inn and PAID for his care, promising more when he returned. In our day and age, health care and healing are so expensive that people are going without. The Samaritan offered hospitality, healing and hope. The oil of healing was not just the olive oil, but the prayers and intentionality of the Samaritan. *How could you offer the oil of healing to someone? Perhaps you could give a financial gift to Grace Med or to another organization that offers medical care to persons without insurance. Perhaps you could visit someone to offer hope and prayer who is in the hospital or recovering from surgery or in a long-term care facility. Today, find a way to be a presence of healing, hope and hospitality.*

Thursday August 29, 2019 Luke 22: 39-44, Matthew 26: 36-39

Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives to pray before his arrest, trial and crucifixion. In Matthew, it is noted that Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane next to the Mount of Olives. The name “Gethsemane” is an English corruption of two Hebrew words meaning the place where olives are pressed. Pressing the oil from olives requires crushing, pressing and extracting the oil. Considering Jesus went to this place as his final place to pray gives new insight into his strength and courage even as he asked God to create a different plan. In Isaiah we read of the suffering servant, “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.*” Out of the Mount of Olives and the Garden of the Olive Press, you and I are healed. The olive tree, the fruit of that tree and the oil point us to the grace, hospitality and healing offered through our faith in Christ and a challenge is given to offer the same to others. *Today, spend some time pondering the healing oil of Christ’s love and grace and find one way to share with someone else.*

Friday August 30, 2019 James 5: 13-16

James notes that the prayer of the righteous is a powerful thing. He instructs believers to anoint the sick with oil and to pray deeply for their healing. Even today, Christians anoint each other with oil for healing, for hope, and for dedication. On Labor Day Sunday (coming this Sunday) we anoint people for their work and ministry in the world. Anointing with olive oil scented with frankincense and myrrh connects us generation to generation, to those who have gone before us. We pray for our own healing of mind body and spirit and we pray for others. We begin a new sermon series this next Sunday on Connections. *Come and worship, be anointed for healing, for hospitality and for your work in the world.*