

“CONNECT: BUILDING UP OUR LIFE TOGETHER”
“Connecting Through the Word”

We have begun our new sermon series, “Connect: Building up our Life Together.” Over the next few weeks we will examine our life together and what connects us to one another and to God. To help with our focus and our prayer, each week we will be given a “building block” in a particular color. This week our color of building block is blue. The color blue represents devotion and contemplation. Sunday is our third grade Bible Sunday. It is such a joy to present our children with the gift of scripture. Learning to contemplate and read this sacred “word” and then to devote ourselves to following the law of love written there takes our whole lives. We will also bless our bibles and ponder how learning to open ourselves to what God is speaking to us in this time and place is a blessing and connects us to one another and to God. As our building blocks represent how we connected through our work, our relationships and through scripture, may we find new ways to stay connected one to another and to the God who loves us.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Connecting Through the Word”**

Daily prayer: *Your word is a light to our feet and a lamp to our path. Your word is a glue of the universe wherein the whole creation coheres. Your word is the address of promise and command by which we live. Your word has come fleshed among us full of grace and truth. For all that we are more dazzled that your word is carried, uttered, acted by frail vulnerable human agents. We ponder and give thanks for those who this day: speak your where it is desperately needed; act your word for newness and peace and justice. In thanks for your word, we pray for courage in the name of the one who emptied himself. Amen*
(adapted from a prayer by Walter Brueggemann, in the book *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth*)

Study Guide

Monday, September 16, 2019 2 Timothy 3: 14-15

“Continue in what you have learned” the author writes, “knowing from whom you learned it.” Throughout the ages, men and later women as well, have taken time to instruct children, youth and adults in scripture. For thousands of years, these teachers invested time, thought, and energy into children in order that they might grow in faith, understanding and wisdom. How do we live so that the Word grows in us, changes us, encourages us and instructs us in faith? How do we learn? Can you list those teachers who have encouraged your learning and understanding? How has that learning connected you to the teachers, the biblical writers and those who are just now learning? *Holding your blue building block say a prayer today for those children who received a bible, and a prayer for those currently teaching and inspiring a new generation of learners.*

Tuesday, September 17, 2019 2 Timothy 3: 15-16

This particular scripture is often used to defend the “infallibility” or “inerrancy” of scripture. Note, it does not say that the scripture is absolute or without error. The verses actually say that scripture is “inspired and useful for teaching and training...that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” There is nothing in these words that would encourage believers to be debaters, proof-texters or anything other than children of God who are growing in wisdom and understanding (like Proverbs instructs people to do.) It is important to know that the only scripture that the writer of 2 Timothy had was the Hebrew scripture or what we call the Old Testament. There was no new testament. Scripture is inspired by God, and useful for teaching and training. So much of what was used in the early time was used so people would know God, love God and follow Jesus. Jesus noted that all scripture could be understand in the great commandment: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. This is what connects us: through our work, our relationships and our community of faith. *Use your three building blocks, put them together way you want and then ask God to bless your reading and contemplation of the scripture, and your devotion to Christ.*

Wednesday September 18, 2019 2 Timothy 3: 16-17

2 Timothy points out that scripture is to encourage and inspire believers to do “good work” in the name of God. Scripture is to help people of faith be strengthened for good in the world. God’s children are called to love God and others, and to feed, clothe, house, and make the world more like the reign of peace and righteousness that Jesus promised. *How does scripture inspire you to be more faithful, more loving and more just? How does scripture inspire you to good works in the name of Christ?*

Thursday September 19, 2019 Jonah 1: 1-3

The call of Jonah is short but sweet. God wants Jonah to go to Nineveh, “that great city...for their wickedness has come up before me.” What the author does not tell us is that Nineveh, was truly a great and prosperous city for the Assyrians. The Assyrians were the enemies of Israel and conquered Israel. To be sent to Nineveh was an insult and frightening. The Assyrians were known for their cruelty to their enemies. Why would any faithful Jew preach repentance to such an evil people? The Ninevites didn’t deserve grace or a second chance. The word of God comes to Jonah, and Jonah buys a ticket to a place far, far away. Jonah ran from the presence of God; not a particularly heroic response to the voice of God. This well known Hebrew scripture story is a good one for us to ponder how we “connect” not only to scripture, but also to those whom we disagree or see as an enemy. *As we engage with the Bible, not taking it literally, but looking at what God is saying to us, what do you think God is asking you to do that you do not want to do?*

Friday September 20, 2019 Jonah 1: 4-16

Jonah boards a ship and a storm erupts. His other shipmates are terrified, but not Jonah, he sleeps through it all. The captain finds Jonah, wakes him up and tells him to pray. The crew begins to gamble to try and figure out who is at fault. Of course, the lot falls to Jonah, and he tells his story. He asked them to throw him in the sea. The sailors resisted, it was certain suicide, but the storm got worse, they prayed to Jonah’s God and threw him overboard. Jonah is not being helpful, he does not want to go to Nineveh. He would rather die, than obey the voice of God. We in the 21st century are not so dramatic, but we too we often rather do anything, than follow the voice of God when it sends us places we do not want to go or do things we do not want to do. *Are there things you have done to avoid doing what is right? As you contemplate those building blocks representing work, relationships and devotion to God, how does this story from scripture challenge you to connect with those people you would rather not and to the call of God to be part of changing the world?*