

## **GROUNDING** **“Grounded in God”**

We begin a new sermon series “Grounding.” October is the month at First Church we traditionally focus on stewardship. Now stewardship is how we live and how we share what we have and make the world a better place. In truth, it is something we do every day. However, each year we look ahead to see how as a community of faith we can focus the gifts we receive into the mission and ministry of the Church. It all begins by being “Grounding.” In spiritual terms, being grounded is a way of speaking to our relationship with the Divine. We are centered or grounded in our relationship with God in Christ Jesus. On World Communion Sunday, we remind ourselves we are grounded in God and in that relationship, we are connected to one another all over the world. This Sunday, may our eyes be opened to what is first in our lives: God and God alone. May our grounding give us strength to offer ourselves to the world. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: “Grounding in God”

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This week’s sermon may be viewed at <https://boxcast.tv/channel/f9yfyjzko2esfwfc5vkn>

### **Prayer for the Week**

*God, you are the endless source of every good and perfect gift, with you is life and the joy of living. We forget and search everywhere for gifts that only you can give. We seek for riches, possessions, status, and accomplishments, when all you ask is for us to love you, serve you, and follow you. Help us keep our hearts and minds on Christ, that we might have new lives and spirits and we might offer you all that we have and all that we are. We ask in Jesus; name, Amen.*

### **Study Guide**

#### **Monday, October 4, 2021    Mark 10: 17-21**

This story is told in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In the beginning of the tenth chapter, it is set up with Jesus’ teachings on divorce and remarriage. Then we have disciples trying to keep children and babies away from Jesus, but Jesus says the kingdom of God belongs to them. Jesus then hugs the children and blesses them. A rich man comes up and asks about eternal life and he is already doing what he is supposed to do: follow the commandments. Jesus either seeing something or hearing something looks at this man who wants more. There is something in this person that Jesus recognizes as a deep need to be closer to God. Jesus encourages this rich man to sell everything and follow him. This is never an easy encounter to read. *Do you identify with the rich man? Do you also do what is right, but are hungry for something more, something deeper in your spiritual life? Are you looking to be grounded in something deeper?*

**Tuesday, October 5, 2021 Mark 10: 21-23**

I had us re-read verse 21, because only in Mark does it state that Jesus “loves” him. This “poor” rich man is given a choice that seems so impossible. Give up everything and follow Jesus, be part of the disciples or continue his life the way it has always been. His life has a certainty about it, but following Jesus had no road map, no real sense of a future. The rich man chose what he knew, what was secure. All sorts of possibilities were laid before him, but he was not willing to risk it all. This man was already “religious,” already “spiritual” he didn’t need to do anything else. This story points to a place deep within this rich man that was ready and curious about a deeper relationship with God. *If the rich man’s wealth was something that was getting between him and God, what keeps you from going deeper with God? What keeps you grounded in what is really important?*

**Wednesday, October 6, 2021 Mark 10: 24-27**

The words of Jesus that many love to hate, “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.” So many sermons and devotions have been written about how this is not literal, but figurative. In many senses that is true, Jesus did not hate or dislike people who were wealthy or rich. It was wealthy women that often kept his ministry going. I think for Jesus, the issue is always what people are willing to give up to follow him, or to love God with all their hearts, minds, and spirits and to love their neighbor as they love themselves. It is always in the justification that Jesus challenges people....If they say they follow the Law, Jesus is fine with that, but when they want more, more praise, more validation, more faith, then Jesus challenges them. *What do you want more of? In following Jesus can you offer more of your love, your time, your treasure, your gifts, your service? What are you willing to do in order to commit more of yourself to God?*

**Thursday, October 7, 2021 2 Corinthians 8: 1-8**

Second Corinthians is filled with hints of the tension between Paul and the church at Corinth. In the seventh chapter Paul is inviting the community of faith to open their hearts. “I have great confidence in you. I have great pride...and filled with comfort, even in the middle of our problems” (7:4) It appears that the church has been generous before in helping the Jerusalem church and Paul is reminding them of the work in the poorer areas of Macedonia who are pouring out themselves as a generous people. Paul is challenging the Corinthians to continue to lead with excellence: faith, speech, love, knowledge, love, and commitment. Paul never orders, he invites the church to match the example of their past and of other churches. Giving is always grounded in God. God who gives generously, invites us to respond generously with our time, talent, and treasure. *How does your grounding in God enable you to offer yourself and your gifts to others?*

**Friday, October 8, 2021 2 Corinthians 8: 9-15**

We are reading a couple of extra verses that were not read on Sunday. Paul notes Jesus’ pouring out of himself for all, so that we might be rich. Paul challenges the Corinthians to “finish the job” they started the year before. The Corinthian church seems to be financially secure when other churches are not so gifted. Paul speaks to their “surplus” their extra and because of that there is equality in the giving. In a “churchy” sense it is why we often use the concept of tithe or ten percent. That of course is different from family to family, but it equalizes the giving. We also speak to the fact some are not able to do ten percent, but others can do fifteen. He uses the image of manna from Exodus 16:18 to help the church understand that there is not too much or too little, and that God provides. The church at Corinth wrestled with finding their grounding in God. The different cultures and understandings often clashed. Still, Paul invited them to deepen their relationship with God through their connection to one another and other churches. *How do you deepen your faith in God through your connection to the church and to other churches?*