

BETTER TOGETHER

“Grace Greater Than Our Understanding”

We continue our sermon series “Better Together. This month will encourage us to focus on our relationships and our calling to live out our faith in Jesus Christ. We have celebrated our work/vocation and last week celebrated intergenerational relationships on Grandparents’ Day. Today we draw our attention towards those who might not be in our immediate circles, people who might be harder to love, and look inward and upward for how Christ calls us to interact with all people no matter their status in this world. We are better together when we realize our need for each other. The readings this week will guide you through Mark. Pay close attention to how Jesus’ ministry constantly embodies this notion that we are better together. Notice the people Jesus heals, give awareness to the ministry of Christ that always seems to go beyond the limits of his time. Jesus shows us that we are better together when we rely on our neighbor to point new insights into our lives. May this week of reading daily scripture connect you in a more profound way to Christ and might you always know that we are Better Together!

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Grace Greater Than Our Understanding”**

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

Prayers for the Week

God, source of all oneness, bring our hearts and our hands together. Let our love grow in action as much as in ardor. Teach us to serve you with the light of our minds, the heart of our feelings, and the strength of our bodies. (Adapted from Praying with Vincent de Paul, Thomas McKenna)

O Jesus, servant to all humankind, give me the vision and the humility to see you in other people, especially in those who are poor and suffering. Grant me the courage and compassion to be your hands, your wisdom, and your heart in service to our sisters and brothers. (Praying with Elizabeth Seton, Margaret Alderman and Josephine Burns)

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, September 20, 2021 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Paul’s beautiful words show us that if we are in Christ, there is a new creation. This reconciliation of God and humanity is the grace that we need to live each day with the goodness of knowing the fullness of God’s promises in this world and in the world to come. Paul shares that we are to be ambassadors of Christ, witnessing to the reconciliation of Christ in the world. As we continue to reflect on what it means to be better together, we find that it is Christ who makes our unity possible. *What good news do you hear in this scripture? Do you have any hesitation about being an ambassador for Christ? How might being an ambassador for Christ look in your everyday life?*

Tuesday September 21, 2021 Mark 5:21-43

In Mark, there are many healing stories that legitimize Jesus' ministry. The healing of Jairus' daughter and the woman who bled for twelve years shows that Jesus was not limited to ministering to men, people of status, or adults. Jesus, heals both in a literal earthly sense and in a larger-than-life sense. Jesus atones us or saves us when we come and bow down at his feet. Grace is at work even before we know it in these stories of healing, and the people who Jesus includes in this redemption are all recipients of that grace, so are you! *When have you felt sick and in need of Christ's healing? What did you do? Who did you call? How did Jesus respond to you in your great time of need?*

Wednesday September 22, 2021 Mark 6:30-43

A little bit after Jesus heals the women in the reading from yesterday, Jesus feeds the five thousand. This miracle is a grand gesture of the divinity of God, and the faithfulness of Jesus who came to minister among us. By the grace of God, we have a savior who knows our needs and draws us all together to be feed, not just food of this world but food that is from heaven. When I think about who might have been at the feeding of the five thousand, I can't imagine all of the bystanders thought the same way, had the same values, many were skeptical about what was happening. But somehow Jesus draws all of those bodies together and feed them spiritual food, food of sustenance and food of purpose. *When have you been a bystander in a crowd? Did you think about how within the crowd, we could be better together? How do you respond when you feel discouraged by how crowds react? What can be learned from Jesus' feeding the five thousand no matter their situation in life?*

Thursday September 23, 2021 Mark 7:31-37

After more rapid travel in Mark with his disciples, Jesus is back near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is brought to a deaf man, who had a speech impediment. Jesus takes the man aside away from the crowd and put his fingers in his ears, and spat and touched his tongue, then he said, "Be opened." Jesus' ministry once again is not limited to those who have status. By healing this man, Jesus reveals that he has compassion on those who are in the margins. Deaf ministry, and ministry with the disabled is still part of the church's mission. Jesus includes the deaf man in his ministry because we know we are better together. When Jesus says, "Be opened," we all know that there are times in our lives when we can listen more clearly for the voice of God in our lives. When we see people who are down and out, we can also be an ambassador of openness. *Have you ever been in a relationship with a disabled person? How did that relationship open you up to receiving and understanding God more fully?* First Church has a program for developmentally disabled adults, the Religious Nurture Center. If you are looking for a way to learn more about how our church can support and encourage the disabled community here in Wichita, reach out to Matt Schrock, the director of the RNC.

Friday September 24, 2021 Mark 7:24-30

This is the scripture you heard preached on Sunday. This story is about the Syrophenician woman's faith. She points out the limits and scope of Jesus' ministry and opens up the possibility of ministering to Gentiles. Jesus' response to the Syrophenician woman shows that he was challenged by her wit, and that he realizes his error and opens up his heart to minister to her sick daughter. This story is all about how we truly are better together. *Are there certain groups of people you feel less comfortable around? How might you find commonality in our life together? What might Jesus say when you are uncertain about how to relate to those people?*