

GROUNDED **“Grounded in Grace”**

Last week we began a new sermon series “Grounded.” 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 “Grounded.” 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. This week we look at how we are grounded in grace. Grace is that gift that reminds us that we are loved by God, totally, fully, and unconditionally. Being grounded in God and in grace challenges us to offer that grace to others. May our grounding give us strength to offer ourselves and our gifts to the world. -- Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: “Grounded in Grace”

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

Prayer for the Week

Loving God, you have loved me when I was most unlovable. You created me, you offered me grace and reminded me I am your beloved child. By grace I am saved. Help me today, to live into that grace, to ground myself in your very presence. Through that grace, may I live as your beloved child offering all I am and all I have to your work in the world. Open my heart, mind, and spirit to your love and to all I meet. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Study Guide

Monday, October 11, 2021 Mark 14: 3-5

This experience comes in the midst of Holy Week. This is also noted in John and Luke, but Mark focuses on this unnamed woman and Jesus is anointed as king instead of on his feet as told in Luke and John. While in Mark's version we do not know who she is, we do know that she offers an extremely expensive gift. The nard was worth a year's wages for most folk. She was scolded for her generosity. There is no explanation as to why this woman does what she does. The very act was one of rebellion (anointing Jesus asking, as Messiah), one of deep faith and love. This is not a half measure here, a drop or two of perfume in oil or water. She offers it all to Jesus.

*What kind of grace do you imagine she has received that she gives so much in return to Jesus?
Where do you see the grace of God at work in your life?*

Tuesday, October 12, 2021 Mark 14: 6-8

Not everyone responds well to people offering such extravagant gifts to God. The pure nard the woman used was incredibly expensive, almost a full year's wages for a worker. Judas, one of Jesus' disciples was horrified and complained. Jesus' response is *"the poor you will have with you always, leave her alone she is preparing me for my burial."* What Jesus was doing, was not being uncaring about the poor, he was quoting Deuteronomy 15:7- 11, "If there is a poor man .in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. Rather be openhanded ... Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." Jesus reminds them it is not this woman's job to care for the poor, it is everyone's calling. Grace is for everyone, the poor, the rich, the insiders and outsiders.

How are you grounded first in God and then in grace? Do you find yourself sometimes feeling judgmental towards others? How can God open your heart that you might extend grace to those around you?

Wednesday October 13, 2021 2 Corinthians 5: 16-17

This scripture is often used at Easter. Grounded in grace means our eyes are opened to see the world and others through the eyes of Christ. Everyone of us is saved by grace and that grace changes who we are and how we relate to one to another. In our gospel reading the woman was being viewed as scandalous and her gift as outrageous. Jesus invites the disciples to look to their own hearts and behavior before judging hers. *Who do you still view from a human point of view? How has grace made you a new creation and grounded you in God and God's love?*

Thursday October 14, 2021 2 Corinthians 5: 18-21

Paul reminds the church at Corinth and us that we are given the ministry of reconciliation because Christ has reconciled all the world to himself. We are ambassadors Paul says, God making his appeal through us. Another word might be witnesses. We are witnesses for Christ and the new life and new hope promised in resurrection. All who love Christ are called to this ministry and this task of witnessing on behalf of Christ. Grace enables us to become ambassadors and proclaim the newness of heart, life and spirit offered in Jesus. *As we reflect on being grounded in God and in grace, how do we become the righteousness of God in word, in deed and through our gifts?*

Friday, October 14, 2021 Mark 14: 9, 2 Corinthians 5: 18-19

In our United Methodist membership vows we claim to support the ministries of the church "through our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness." The last two weeks we have focused more on our prayers and presence: being grounded in God and grace invites us into a deeper relationship with Christ and being present with Christ. Both Jesus and Paul notes that when we offer all that we are that we become witnesses and ambassadors. Jesus claims that the whole world will know the grace and goodness offered by this woman to him. We don't know her name, but we will still tell her story. The next two weeks we will be focusing more on our gifts: money, time, and service. First, we ground ourselves in God and grace and then become moved to ground ourselves in generosity and gratitude. *How will you respond to being grounded in God? How will being grounded in grace be reflected in your generosity of time, talent, and service?*