

GROUNDED “Grounded in Gratitude”

This week we finish our sermon series “Grounded.” Stewardship is important all year round, but this is time we focus on what our giving will be for 2022. Stewardship is how we live and how we share what we have and make the world a better place. 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. Once we are grounded in God we have an experience of loving grace that reminds us we are beloved children of God. Being grounded in God and in grace challenges us to offer that grace to others. Generosity is a by-product of our being grounded in God. This week, as we prepare to offer our estimate of giving cards for 2022, we are invited to ground ourselves in gratitude for all we have received from God and from God’s amazing grace at work in our lives. May being Grounded in God, grace, generosity and gratitude be reflected in our lives this week. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: “Grounded in Gratitude”

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

Prayer for the Week

O most gracious God, we often spend much of our lives on that which does not satisfy. We do not always count our time and resources as precious gifts. Look kindly upon us, remind us that we are called to commit our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness to you. Enable us to be about changing lives and transforming communities. Remind us that we are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Study Guide

Monday, October 25, 2021 Luke 19: 1-7

This story is so familiar. Many learned it by singing “Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he!” Scripture doesn’t actually say whether it was Zacchaeus or Jesus that was “small of stature” only that Zacchaeus couldn’t see and climbed the sycamore tree to see Jesus. The song ends with Jesus going to Zacchaeus’ house and it sounds so happy and wonderful. But scripture shows that most were unhappy about what transpired between Jesus and Zaccheus. After all he was a hated tax collector and a “sinner.” Tax collectors worked for Rome and were rich because they made sure they got their share on top of what Rome required. Tax collectors were cheats, liars and traitors. No wonder the crowd grumbled. Why should Zacchaeus be singled out and honored? In our society both the rich and the poor are vilified. *How do we find ways to speak about money and about generosity without drawing lines? How are our lives and our generosity witnessing to our faith in Christ?*

Tuesday, October 26, 2021 Luke 19: 8-10

In response to Jesus, Zacchaeus offers half of what he has to the poor and to those he has cheated he will repay four times! Scripture asks for voluntary restitution of what has been taken to be returned plus 20 percent. Compulsory restitution is the original amount doubled. It can come to four times the amount, but not usually. In response to Jesus, Zacchaeus is doubling the voluntary restitution and offering not a tithe, but 50 percent of what he has to the poor. Jesus proclaims that salvation has come. Zacchaeus is an amazing witness to the power of Jesus to change lives. His generosity is more than time or talent, it is reflected in his offering of his money. Zacchaeus is grounding himself first in his relationship with Jesus, second in response to the grace he has received and third in generosity in his response. I believe his gratitude is made clear in his generosity. When everyone else will have nothing to do with him, Jesus, JESUS comes and offers a new relationship with God and grace upon grace. *Does your gratitude come from your experience of God and grace? Do you become more generous with your time and talents and tithes out of your experience of grace?*

Wednesday October 27, 2021 2 Corinthians 9: 6-7

“The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” Another way to say it is “What goes around comes around.” Certainly it is not always true, some can sow sparingly and reap a huge harvest, while others sow and sow and sow and come up with very little. The concept for one’s spiritual life is profound. What one shares, what one gives, does come back sooner or later. When human beings are stingy and refuse to share, the less that seems available for all. The more human beings share, the more generous God and the universe seems to become. It begins with being grounded in God and then in grace. Out of that comes a generous heart. Verse 7 is the key verse in this section. Giving in whatever form must be out of a sense of gratitude or faithfulness or love. One is not able to see the blessings if every gift of time, energy, talent or treasure is given out of obligation or compulsion. Grounded in God and grace, all good and generous gifts given “cheerfully” open the door to other blessings and opportunities. *How do you find ways to be a cheerful giver?*

Thursday, October 28, 2021 2 Corinthians 9: 8-10

Paul says, “God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.” Those blessings begin in our deep relationship with God and God’s grace. Our blessings become blessings for others: family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, the whole world out of our groundedness in God’s goodness and generosity. Our response is then to be generous as well. When we give, when we bless the world with what we have and what we are, we share in God’s re-creating the world into that reign of peace, justice, righteousness and goodness. *Think of the ways you bless the world through what you have and what you are. Grounded in God, grace and generosity, you are blessing to the world.*

Friday, October 29, 2021 2 Corinthians 9: 10-12

In this last portion, Paul talks about how God supplies and God multiplies and because of those gifts the Corinthians and all those who have followed Jesus will be gifted, enriched, blessed. The needs of ministry are supplied and there is a great gratitude offered and shared because of those gifts. We live out our witness and our service for our faith, first and foremost through our grounding in God and grace. Out of that grounding comes a generosity that offers thanks to God for all that God has done. In some ways it is a circle: first God, then grace, then giving and finally gratitude which returns us to ground ourselves once in God. Our giving funds ministry now and in the future. Through the gifts given, the prayers raised, we work for the future to worship, to praise and to go forth to serve as we changing lives and transforming communities. *If you have not returned your estimate of giving card, would you prayerfully commit to being part of a grateful and generous community as we look forward to ministry in 2022. Today, pray for the ministries of First United Methodist Church.*