



GOBIN CHURCH

A United Methodist Community for All

Monday, July 6, 2020

Matthew 10:40-42

<https://tinyurl.com/y997toqo>

Ponder

Today's Scripture looks at extending and receiving welcome. Notice the balance. Notice the "and." As Christians, we can easily follow the call to give to those who have a need – water, clothing, shelter, financial assistance. A core value of many churches and faith communities is to operate helping ministries. Offering bottled water, freshly brewed coffee and snacks for grumbling tummies at worship times is basic hospitality that can be easily embraced. But the instructions from Jesus in this passage are not only about extending welcome. They're about receiving welcome. They're about what it looks like and feels like for followers of Jesus to accept the risks and rewards of extending hospitality to God's prophets. Those prophets might be the truth-tellers who stand on courthouse lawns with provocative signs and shouts for justice. Prophets can be the messengers who tell disheartening stories of bias that are not easy for the privileged to understand. It's about being open to demand officials ensure the safety of people incarcerated in modern prisons, some of whom lack air conditioning in stifling, overcrowded cells. So how might we achieve balance? One way is to minister in the margins among the prophets. Be one who receives welcome. Learn to graciously receive, rather than being the privileged ones who benevolently extend welcome, generosity, charity and hospitality to others of less privilege. Become a vulnerable outsider so you can experience and witness the depths of Jesus's saving love. Learn the art of receiving welcome, so you can then extend welcome honestly.

Prayer

Dear God, You have blessed me abundantly in many ways. Continue to feed my need to understand the situation of my brothers and sisters who don't have the same blessings. Put me in situations where I must graciously receive so that others can be blessed by giving. Grow my understanding, and my compassion, and my strength to be a blessing to others, and to be blessed by others. Amen.

Action

Consider participating in or organizing a mock scenario of the marginalized to develop understanding of what people go through when seeking assistance for housing, transportation, food and basic needs. Don't be a provider, be a receiver.

Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Jeremiah 20:7-13 <https://tinyurl.com/y8ku3gns>

Ponder

The prophet Jeremiah was no stranger to personal persecution. Often known as the weeping or complaining prophet, in this passage Jeremiah finds himself bound and on display in a public place where people can shame and humiliate him. The reason for his treatment? He spoke some hard truths leaders did not want to hear. These days, it might be fair to say American society has become saturated in doom and gloom prophecy that seeks only to stir up worries and trouble without bringing healthy change. That attitude has made it hard to acknowledge warnings about valid truths. Global warning, mass incarceration and pandemics come to mind. Jeremiah calls God “a dreaded warrior.” That phrase, too, sets off warning bells in a heart that values peace and avoids a “scary” God of punishment. But when it comes to injustice, evil and oppression, aren't we called to wield God's love in a battle against indifference to human suffering, gun violence, addiction and careless consumerism. What about “not in my back yard” zoning laws that push “embarrassing” drug-treatment centers to less-visible locations? Should fear of exceeding the public's tolerance on hard issues cause us to back down or walk away from battles worth fighting? It's an ongoing challenge to soften our hearts so they have compassion for those affected by the tragic situations of the world, and at the same time, to toughen our resolve to tear down the bias, neglect and institutions that support those very tragedies.

Prayer

Dear God, Frustration is my frequent companion when I try to challenge the inequality and injustice I see in my community. Give me the right words, the correct posture, the compassionate voice, the steely resolve to make a positive difference. Continue to encourage me when I think I have failed. Keep nudging me to action when I meet resistance. May the wisdom of Jesus guide my actions always. Amen.

Action

Go online to <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org> and learn about an ongoing call to action aimed at “confront the interlocking evils of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism.”

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

Matthew 9:35-38 <https://tinyurl.com/yctaxrlt>

Ponder

So much to harvest, but so few laborers. Jesus had compassion for the crowds and he saw they needed help and leadership. He did not wring his hands when faced with a seemingly huge challenge. He enlisted help. The ultimate leader did not try to do everything on his own. He involved his disciples in the mission of transforming the world around them. Today, we also commit to become disciples of Jesus -- to become laborers sharing his peace, love, grace, mercy, justice and hope. The transformation does not stop when we ourselves are harvested as disciples. Look around you to see where you can continue the harvest.

Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for the transformation you have created in my life. Continue to guide me and help me as I labor to gather your harvest. Amen.

Action

Think about where you spend the most time, make the most impact, and where your disciple-making efforts should be focused. Share your Christian journey with others, and learn about theirs.

Thursday, July 9, 2020

Romans 16: 1-16 <https://tinyurl.com/y8yg9kll>

Ponder

Personal greetings from the apostle Paul wrap up his letter to the Romans. The list of names includes a remarkable number of women, whose offices and duties are not distinguished from those of men. Paul is convinced the Holy Spirit gifts both women and men for all areas of ministry. He did not place women in lower positions than men. Some challenges to that openness still exist today in some religious communities as well as in other aspects of American society. In political arenas, it sometimes seems that gender is an easy target for negative attributes. In business arenas, gender can be a dividing line for pay inequities and promotions. How refreshing that in this society's current era of categorizing and organizing into camps and clans, we have this Scripture as example of Paul's practice of inclusion and his straightforward positive acknowledgements of both women and men. John Wesley also recognized women's gifts. And, women were able to exercise leadership in the early Methodist movement. Gender inclusion is another way to overcome bias.

Prayer

Dear God, Help me to value all people regardless of their differences from me. Help me to embrace all people as my brothers and sisters in your beautiful and diverse worldwide family. Help me recognize and end bias in my actions. Amen.

Action

Make a list of the influential people in your life. What traits do they have that you value? Do they have qualities you don't value? To examine your own bias involving race or gender, go online to the free Harvard implicit bias test and select an area to examine –

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

Friday, July 10, 2020

Psalm 65: 9-13

<https://tinyurl.com/ybkqxkmt>

Ponder

A small 20 feet square plot sits among a city block of well-tended garden spots in the community garden at Indiana State University. Half of this small plot currently grows potatoes with bushy green stems spreading out and tangling together while the root crop develops under the soil. Three rows of onions reach upward nearby. A variety of tomato plants vine outward. Pepper plants resemble small bushes. A volunteer pumpkin – a remnant of last year's planting -- has survived a transplant from the midst of the potatoes. One zucchini has already been harvested. And growing up three wire cages are the vines of loofah gourds. Personal gardens like this one come to mind when reading today's Scripture. "You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it." God is a loving gardener who waters the furrows of our lives abundantly, softening us with showers and blessing our growth. For many of the gardeners in this community project, the plants are children who receive rich blessings of compost, water, supporting stakes and cages. It's a peaceful place, and this Scripture attributes all the beauty and bounty of the land to God's activity. It's an easy connection to make. May we all know a place where the struggles and hardship of the world can momentarily slip away while weeding and watering calmly under a setting sun.

Prayer

Dear God, You visit me daily with life-giving water and bless my growth with your love and kindness. Thank you for your many blessings. Tend me as if I am a garden that can overflow with nourishment for this world. May I produce many good things so that all people know they are loved by you. Amen.

Action

Create colorful markers for gardens and flower pots using wooden slats and eco-friendly paints. Decorate with words from this Scripture such as bounty, richness, blessing, abundance, joy, then place the markers in spaces where they acknowledge the goodness of God's earth.

Saturday, July 11, 2020

Mark 10:13-16

<https://tinyurl.com/y7uhfkjk>

Ponder

Little children often are far more open to loving those who are different from them than are adults. I once saw a drawing of this scene from Mark 13 that had a variety of children scattered around Jesus listening to him and loving the attention he gave. By variety, I mean in height, age, gender, even ethnicity. Looking at that drawing in Sunday school, many of us around the room agreed we would have liked being one of those children being blessed by Jesus. I certainly liked how he became indignant when the other adults tried to keep the children away. Jesus championed the children. He prized their innocence and devotion. And the children all seemed to like each other and get along in that drawing. It was the adult disciples who were meddling and promoting drama. Insert a big sigh of self-reflection right here. How many times has this adult been the source of tension in a situation that needed no interference from me? Apparently, I'm not the only adult guilty of such transgressions. One of my daughters just told me of a new rule being enforced by her youth soccer league this season. Namely, parents who yell at the referees will be arrested. Honestly, that won't be a problem for me, even when I don't like a ref's call. But sadly, I've been to games when many of the parents would have been cuffed and led away if this rule had been in effect then. Approaching any endeavor, competition or situation with the openness of a child might sound naive and too simplistic. But I think Jesus wants us to do just that. Leave our own brokenness behind, along with sour memories of long-ago wrongs on our own soccer fields of life. May we all approach the seasons ahead with the openness and love of a child.

Prayer

Dear God, With the eagerness of a child, I seek your love and mercy. Forgive me when I set my own wishes in front of your hopes for me. Help me to affirm your love and compassion to the children around me. Amen.

Action

Read a story to a child, and listen as the child talks about what the story means to them.