

October 7th, 2018

1 - VIDEO: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

2 – TITLE SLIDE

WELCOME

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

COMMUNITY WORSHIP SERVICE

Today is our community worship service. We will be joining River City Church and Logan Street Baptist Church and worshipping God downtown this morning before the Oktoberfest Family Day begins.

IF THERE IS RAIN, WE WILL BE MEETING AT LOGAN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

THE REAL GOD SERIES

Next Sunday we will start The Real God sermon series. In this series we will spend 8-weeks looking at God, who He is, and how knowing Him affects us.

Our children and students will be engaging in the same lessons, there is family videos and discussions you can have at home. If you look at our YouVersion app, There are links to that material in there. We will also put a link on our website and add it to our Bulletin during those weeks.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR – HOSPITALITY CHALLENGE

This week we are finishing our Love Your Neighbor series. The focus of this series is practical ways that we can be loving our neighbors.

The first week we talked about hospitality. We talked about being vulnerable and inviting people into our homes and sharing a meal. I challenged you, as a Church body, to share 100 meals “in your homes” by the end of October.

Each plate up here represents a meal that has been shared in our homes and on each plate there are numbers representing how many people have been impacted.

Currently our totals are:

- Meals
- Friends
- Family
- Church
- Coworkers
- Neighbors

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Last week we talked about love. This week I want to take a quick second and look at our neighbors.

When God says, “Love your neighbor,” who is He referring to?

The Israelites thought that this meant other Israelites. They missed the point. There was actually an Israelite lawyer that was questioning Jesus on this very thing. Luke says that this lawyer was “putting Jesus to the test.”

So the lawyer begins asking Jesus about the law and what it means. Jesus then tells him to love God and love his neighbor.

LUKE 10:29

²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Who is my neighbor? This man seeks to justify himself. So he wants to hear Jesus say ... well, your neighbor is your family, friends, coworkers, fellow Israelites.

But Jesus goes into one of His most famous parables and he tells this man about the good Samaritan.

This is outrageous to an Israelite. A Samaritan (our enemy) and he is good? And what Jesus is doing in this moment is He is breaking down that a neighbor is not an exclusive group. Instead your neighbor is anyone that you have the opportunity to love.

Last year a group of teenagers was hanging out near a large pond in Florida when they saw a man that was swimming from one side of the pond to the other. The man was right in the middle of the pond when it appeared that he began to cramp up. The man began to flail his arms and scream for help.

These boys grabbed their phone and started video taping this man and screaming insults to him. They began to mock him and they literally watched and video taped him drowning. It was horrific.

Legally, they didn't do anything wrong. They do not have to legally jump in the water and try to save this man. They do not have to call for help. They are allowed to taunt, mock, and watch as this man drowns.

The one year anniversary of this event just passed and the family of the drown man was interviewed. Each one of them without hesitation said that they forgive these young men for their words, their insensitivity, and their lack of action.

Stuff like this is appalling and eye opening, but the world now isn't much different than the world then. Jesus shared this parable about a priest and a levite neglecting an injured and dying Jew and this lawyer doesn't stop him and say ... but Jesus, that would never happen. This lawyer knows the reality of the world. Stuff like this happens. They don't have to help, he is not their "neighbor," they can keep on and no one would blame them.

Jesus redefines a neighbor. Your neighbor is anyone that you have the opportunity to love.

DROWNING AND SCREAMING FOR HELP

We get this and at the same time we miss this.

I hope that each one of you are appalled at the thought that those boys would taunt, mock, criticize, and watch as this man flailed, failed, and died.

I watched the video this week. It was gross and I am sure that the family saw the video. It was a very sad look into the world we live in. Into the heart that doesn't have God in it.

As I watched the video I thought ... who in my life is drowning and flailing? Who is failing that I am not helping? Who is failing that I find myself mocking, taunting, and criticizing? Who do I just watch as they die?

I would like to tell you that I am perfect. I would like to tell you that in my life I have never had an ill thought about anyone. I would like to tell you that my heart is good all the time. But under close observation ... I still need God to continue to transform me and change me and make me new.

I have a family member that makes bad decision after bad decision. I can tell you that I am sure that I have criticized their choices, laughed at some of the foolish things they do and circumstances they get in, I have criticized their choices, I have seen them flailing in life and failing in life. I know that I have thrown a life preserver to them, I know that I have tried, but I also recognize and own up to the fact that I have not done everything I can possibly do. I have from time to time checked out and gave up on them. I to some degree have become content with the fact that they might never get it right and that they might just drown.

I am guessing you know what I mean. I am guessing you have people in your life that you are watching as they go down a road that leads to an eternal death. They are flailing and failing and you have checked out. It is not your responsibility.

I am guessing that there are certain types of people that you have already prejudged and set to the side. You couldn't imagine putting any energy in to save them because at this point they are already too far gone. Even if you jumped in the pond, you would never reach them before they drowned.

I was at a downtown community event, about 10 years ago. It was similar to the one we will be doing today. We were working a booth there for kids and we were next to a beer tent. Why a beer tent? Because that's where you go if you want to reach kids. Parents go to the tent and they leave their kids with us.

We had some kids that were with us almost all day. Their parents came out of the beer tent, stopped by our table and grabbed their kids as they began their walk home. Apparently, they lived just down the road. I talked to the parents, they had questions about the Church, and in the end said their kids had so much fun ... they thought they were going to stop by the next day and check our Church out.

I was so excited when they walked away I shared this with a member of the church. This person looked at them as they were walking down the road away from us and then looked back at me and said sarcastically, "great ... "

I was shocked. Isn't this who we are trying to reach? Isn't this our neighbor?

But see ... we prejudge, we set people to the side, and we give up on them. We almost hope that *they* won't join us.

MATTHEW

The Israelites had a name for people like this. They had a name for people that they had given up on, that they no longer allowed in their houses, people they would no longer associate with. People that they knew were living a life that was so corrupt and so wrong that it was a waste of time to spend any energy on them. People that they were so disgusted by and upset with, they didn't want to help them anyway.

They called these people tax collectors. Tax Collectors were evil and wicked. You don't see the name Tax Collector in the New Testament without seeing Sinners near it. They were evil, wicked, and not a neighbor.

But Jesus viewed neighbors differently than the Israelites. Jesus viewed the command to love your neighbor differently.

Listen to this quick interaction between Jesus and a Tax Collector:

LUKE 5:27-32

²⁷After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me."

²⁸And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

²⁹And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.

³⁰And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

³¹And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

³²I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

This is one of the coolest shortest stories in scripture

So what do we learn?

- Jesus pursues Levi. Jesus pursues the tax collector
- Levi invites Jesus to his house and Jesus' circle of influence grows
- Levi's circle of influence needs Christ

CHALLENGE

Who have you been neglecting that you need to be pursuing?

Who is your circle of influence?

How can you reach outside of your circle?