

Week 3 March 10th

In Community with our Neighbors

Welcome and announcements.

Welcome to worship. We will not share Holy Communion in these Wednesday services. The next in-person worship will be March 21st when we will celebrate Palm Sunday one week early.

Prayer

Neighbor to all people, you call us into human communities to serve and be served by one another. Open our hearts to the needs of all our neighbors and teach us to recognize the gifts you have given each of us to use in service to others. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Isaiah 1:16-17 The vision of Isaiah

¹⁶Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Zechariah 7:9-10 The prophet declares God's mercy and love for all people.

⁹Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; ¹⁰do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

Romans 13:8-10 Paul teaches the church community

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Mark 2:1-12 A community comes together to bring a neighbor to Jesus.

¹When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking to them. ³Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone? ⁸At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves;

and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — he said to the paralytic — ¹¹I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home. ¹²And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Homily (Short message)

This year the news programs have searched to find people doing acts of kindness. These kinds of stories always lift our spirit. I remember one story of a 67-year-old woman named Belinda who is wheelchair bound. She was on the street in her electric wheelchair when it broke down. She prayed to God to send help and a young man was walking by on the way to the gym. He asked if she need help and she said yes. He physically pushed Belinda in her broken electric wheelchair home. It took 20 minutes. She forgot to ask his name but ran into his friend who had videoed the event and connected with the kind stranger. She invited the young man to church, and they are now friends.

In our bible story this day, Jesus is drawing a crowd in his home where he is healing people. The door was blocked with people so four men in the crowd took a paralyzed man and removed the roof and lowered him down into the presence of Jesus for healing.

Jesus says, "*Son your sins are forgiven.*" The scribes of the temple were critical saying that Jesus is not God to do this forgiving and therefore this is blasphemy. Jesus has undermined their authority and he also made it clear that this man was not suffering because of sin.

Jesus continues to speak to the paralytic man by saying "*Stand up and take your mat and walk*". The men in the crowd lowered the man down through the roof, laid him down in faith and Jesus raised him up and sent him out. This can be a story of helping others. This can be a story of faith that helps the neighbor. This can be a story about being with Jesus creates a better life. This can also be a story of mission.

We often say that God is doing a "New Thing." Perhaps we are the "New Thing" that God is doing. There were many obstacles presented to the man's four friends. There were too many people blocking the doorway. There were the walls of the house and the awkwardness and weight of the mat that lowered the man. Any of these could have been reasons or excuses not to help this man in need of healing. How many excuses do we make everyday not to help others? How often do we look the other way especially when the one in need is different from us in race, economic standing or just scary because they are different from us?

Scriptures both old and new tell us to love the stranger and love the neighbor by helping them. One way we can do that is to work on our own prejudices. We can learn more about the people who need our help and strive to understand their challenges. The word neighbor mean

“near-dweller.” Too many people think that only applies to the people next door or down the road. Unfortunately, only 34 percent of people over 65 and 20 percent of people younger know their neighbors in the United States. In scripture we are asked to love all neighbors, strangers in the world that God created. We all have a lot of work to do.

We are invited in this story to lower ourselves to the humble acceptance of our truth so that Jesus might see our faith in action and send us out to be and do the “New Thing” for the sake of our neighbor. Amen,

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Prayer for all our neighbors

God of mercy help us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Guide us to see those in the world that need help and support. Take away our prejudices toward people who are different from the communities that we live in. Overcome the fear that we have around people with different races and cultures. Be with all people in every country and on every continent.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of justice continue to help us see that many people in the world are oppressed, held down, looked down upon because they have black or brown skin, or because they have different language, or because they are led by a different religion, or because they are poor, or because they have been abused, or because they have mental or physical disabilities, or because they have addiction issues, or because they have different political beliefs.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion help us to be compassionate toward those who are abused by war. Help us to see that refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers are our neighbors. Help us to stop the selfish statements in our mind and hearts that if suffering does not affect me or my loved ones, it doesn't matter. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all creation and God of all humanity soften our hearts to hear the cries of our neighbors near to us and far away from us. Remind us by the power of your Holy Spirit to visit or call on

the lonely, the homebound, the sick, those in care facilities and those in prison.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community we offer these prayers to you and give thanks for Christ Jesus who teaches us to love our neighbor and seek peace for all people. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

The Creator who fashions us together with all things,

the Christ who leads us into a new beloved community,

the Spirit who holds us in the communion of saints,

one God, ✠ bless you now and always. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace, joined together in Christ.

Thanks be to God.