

March 9, 2025

First Sunday in Lent: "Be a Good Neighbor"

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

300 E. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Worship: 10:00 AM

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LENT: CHRIST COLLIDES

This Lent we will explore some of Jesus' parables. It has been said that the origin of the word parable is two things that collide. In many parables, Jesus intentionally means to shock by using stark contrasts, reversals of fortune, humor, and surprise endings. Often we encounter his teachings colliding with our own assumptions and what is considered the "conventional wisdom" of our world.

1. GATHERING

Prelude (Leanna)

Call to Worship (Steve)

One: Christ collides with our bias. Who will follow Christ?

Many: We will follow for sure, but we will tell you who deserves reward or punishment!

One: Jesus says, "Follow me."

Many: We will follow when our calculations are finished.

One: Christ collides with our assumptions.

Confession and Words of Assurance (Steve)

All: Loving and merciful God, we confess that we have once again "missed the target" and failed to do what you have called us to do.

One: We have not loved you with all our thoughts, words, and actions.

Many: We missed the target in what we chose to do and what we left neglected.

One: We have not fully understood your love for us, and we did not love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Many: We cling to our assumptions and insist that our point of view is the correct one.

Many: For your reign, O God, help us put a hand on your plow and never look back.

All: Guide us as we worship you the true God.

"I am a mirror to my neighbor, and in that mirror, he must see a reflection of Jesus. If that mirror is cloudy or distorted, Jesus' reflection will be so vague it will hardly be seen." — Mother Angelica

All: We repent before each other and before you, our loving God. Please help us open our hearts to your love. Help us shake free from our biases and assumptions so we may better share your peace in your world, rejoicing in your name.

(Pause to acknowledge the details)

Leader: Now hear these words of assurance: God tells us that we are created in God's image and God created us for relationship with God and each other. In this, we know that God will never break our relationship and that God's steadfast love endures forever.

Congregational Singing (Cathy)

Welcome and Passing of the Peace

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also, with you.

All: Let us offer one another signs of peace, reconciliation, and love.

"There is a law that man should love his neighbor as himself. In a few hundred years it should be as natural to mankind as breathing or the upright gait; but if he does not learn it he must perish." — Alfred Adler

2. HEARING GOD'S WORD

Scriptures: 9:28-36

25 Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?"

26 He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?"

27 He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence - and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself."

28 "Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live."

29 Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?"

30 Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead.

31 Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side.

32 Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

33 "A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him.

34 He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable.

35 In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill - I'll pay you on my way back.'

36 "What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?"

37 "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, "Go and do the same."



Sermon: "Be a Good Neighbor"

Christ Collides with Our Bias

Who is "good" or worthy in our society is seldom based upon real facts but on stereotypes created by the majority in power. So, who is the "good neighbor" in the parable of the Good Samaritan?

The one who treated him kindly," replied Jesus' interrogator. This parable is probably familiar to all, but as we know, "familiarity can lead to contempt," or to losing the essential power of the story. Let's see if we can reinvigorate the power of this parable by contemporizing it.

3. RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Congregational Singing (Cathy)

Response

Joys and Concerns

Offering & Music (Leanna)

Sending (Steve)

On our faith journey, Jesus collides with our biases to transform our thoughts and actions. Expand the reign of God! Go, growing peace!

"It's good to remember that in crises, natural crises, human beings forget for a while their ignorances, their biases, their prejudices. For a little while, neighbors help neighbors and strangers help strangers." — Maya Angelou