

Read “Together”

July 15, 2018

Our Savior’s Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Labuhn

As part of our “Together” summer series, we’re taking a look at Reading “Together.” Why reading? While reading can help us to escape our daily lives, it can also help us to feel connected to the world in which we live. Through various kinds of genre, it can evoke emotion and enable us to grow as people. And as Christians, when we read the Word of God, reading does even more. Because reading God’s Word helps to challenge and build our faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. It connects us with God as we learn about His will for our lives and with others as we come together to discuss God’s Word.

Early in the beginning of His ministry, Jesus went to worship and read to those who had been assembled. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him and he read the first couple of verses from chapter 61, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” After that He sat down and said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Today, we heard the Word of God also read in our worship. In the reading, a lawyer tried to test Jesus by saying “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” So Jesus said to the lawyer, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” Meaning how do you interpret Scripture so that you might have eternal life? The lawyer answers by saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with

all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” To which Jesus said that He has answered correctly. And yet, as sinners we know this is impossible to do perfectly. So, the lawyer wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Now a parable is a short fictitious story meant to teach a principle in a way that the hearer comes to understand on their own. Reading throughout the Gospels, Jesus often taught people about God through parables. Jesus, replying to the question, “And who is my neighbor?” shares one of the most well-known parables of the New Testament, the parable of the Good Samaritan. So that all who hear and read this parable would come to know that God expects us to do good, not just to those living close to us, but to all people.

I recently read a story of some friends who had finished enjoying a barbecue dinner together. The guest wrote about their time together. “As the coals from our barbecue burned down, our hosts passed out marshmallows and long roasting forks. Just then, two fire trucks roared by, sirens blaring, and lights flashing. They stopped at a house right down the block. All of us raced out of the back yard, down the street, where we found the owners of the blazing house standing by helplessly. They glared at us with looks of disgust. Suddenly, we realized why...we were still holding our roasting forks with marshmallows on them.”

After reading God’s Word, God knows that loving our neighbor isn’t always an easy thing to do. In fact, too many in our world, it seems impossible, even ridiculous, to even consider helping our neighbors in need. The need around us seems too great and we’re too busy to get involved. Too many of us, in this world if you cannot help yourself, then you might as well be left for dead, because no one wants to be tainted by their problems. We have enough of our own. As it is, too often we ourselves feel like that half dead man who has been striped, beaten and left alone in his sins.

But when we read between the lines, the Good News is that like the Good Samaritan, Jesus does have compassion for those who are in need. Those who are still considered enemies. He gives Good News to the poor. He gives liberty to the captives and sight to the blind. For through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, by grace through faith, we receive the Lord's favor. No longer are we that man left for dead on the side of the road. It's by his stripes that we are healed. And being found in Him, He makes it possible for us to be fully restored and have eternal life.

It's this mystery of Christ that St. Paul talks about in our Epistle reading. Paul knew that this mystery would and still does baffle many in our world today. Maybe that is why so many of his letters are included in Scripture, so that they might be circulated and read together in churches with other believers. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, this strengthens our faith, enabling us to look beyond our own life situations to help those who are in need.

There's a story of a dad who wanted to read the newspaper, but he kept being interrupted by his little daughter. Finally, he picked up a magazine and tore out a sheet that had a map of the world on it. Tearing it into several small pieces, he gave it to his daughter and said, "Go into the other room and see if you can put the pieces together." Much to his surprise, after a couple minutes his daughter returned with the map taped back together. He asked her how she had done that so quickly. "Oh," she said, "on the other side of the map was a picture of Jesus. When I got Jesus in His place, then the whole world came out all right."

Since its beginning, Our Savior's Way has gathered together to read God's Word. As a result of the mission and ministry of our church, we have helped those in need especially through our benevolence fund. Yet we have also helped many parents and children in need through one of our largest ministry areas, Open Arms. Through our Open Arms Christian Child Development Center, parents know that their children will be in a safe, and loving environment. Yet, this is also a place where children can read and hear the Good News of Jesus. This in turn provides them the opportunity to minister to their parents at home

as well as others throughout the world. This morning, Leeanne who works at Open Arms and is a congregational member, shares with us her thoughts about reading together. Let's take a look at the video that's been prepared.

While many of our small group bible studies have taken a break during the summer months, still there are several that are still meeting. If you would like to know about how you can gather together to read and discuss God's Word, I would encourage you to take a look at the bulletin to see which ones are still meeting during the summer or send an email to Pastor Peterson. Otherwise, visit the "Small groups" webpage under the "Connect" heading on our website. There are many groups that meet throughout the week so that you might study and read God's Word together, grow in your faith and share with your neighbors in need of Good News.