

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: Into the Woods

Sermon: 2-4-6-8 Who Do We Take For Granted?

Romans 1:8-10 (NIV)

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Acts 20:1-3a (NIV)

When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months.

Luke 22:14-15 (NIV)

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

Sermon

I don't know about you. But I really really really want to go to a movie. Don't even care what movie. I'll go to another Alvin and the Chipmunks movie if I have to. I don't know about you, but I really really want to go and sit down in a restaurant and have a normal meal. Don't even care what restaurant. I'll go to Billy Bob's Cup of Lard Emporium if it means to sit down and eat in a restaurant. I don't know about you, but I really really want to go to a baseball or basketball or football game. Don't even care what game. Just let us do something normal. Something together. Something. Maybe I didn't appreciate all of those things I took for granted. Today's sermon is about appreciation.

To appreciate means to value something or somebody highly. Since we've had to be separated from people, having things like zoom or distanced gathers have helped to make our separation more bearable. I'm sure when local businesses started opening up people appreciated them more than ever. When we're separated from something or someone we appreciate their value more. However, we shouldn't have to be separated from them in order to show more appreciation for them.

So what do we need to appreciate? We need to appreciate things. Of course, Jesus said not to store up treasures on earth and seek ye first the kingdom of God, so we might think that it's wrong to enjoy our material possessions. But that's not true. The point is we shouldn't put our trust in money or make the pursuit of material things our priority in life. But that doesn't mean we can't enjoy them. We see here that God gives us things for our enjoyment. We can take pleasure in the material things God blesses us with.

It's fun to get something new. When someone gives you a gift you get excited. Or if there's something you've been saving up for and you finally get it you enjoy it. That's not wrong; you don't have to feel guilty about that. God wants you to enjoy it. We give, we spend, we save. You have to do all three to have a balanced life. But we need to make sure we appreciate these things. Have you ever seen people who weren't appreciative of anything. They didn't take care of it or treat it as special. Not that we're supposed to worship material things, but we are supposed to take care of them and show that these things are important to us.

When we do this we show that the person who gave it to us is important. Sometimes the gift isn't costly but it's valuable to us because we value the person who gave it to us. So we show our appreciation for the gift mainly because we appreciate the gift-giver. We recognize the care and thoughtfulness of the person who picked it out and gave it to us.

We need to do that with what God gives us. Even the everyday things. It might be easy to overlook the need to appreciate things like the clothes on our back, roof over our head, food on the table, a car that runs, a job to go to, etc. But we should stop and take a minute to be thankful for these things.

I said earlier that we appreciate things more when we have to go without them. It's easy to lose appreciation for the everyday things like food and shelter but if we were hungry and homeless I'm sure the appreciation would come back quick. We take for granted that our car starts every day when we leave for work until the day it doesn't start. We complain about our job until the day we're let go.

God may need to send us a message if we fail to appreciate the blessings he gives us. It's ok to enjoy material things but it's important to show appreciation to God and others for the material blessings we have.

2) We need to appreciate people. Sometimes people don't feel appreciated. They do for others or go out of their way for someone and receive little thanks for it. Instead of being appreciated they feel taken for granted. So it's nice when people extend appreciation for the things you do or what you mean to them.

This is top of mind for me because this is the time of year we have our annual Appreciation Dinner here at church. And Covid put a stop to that. Yes, many of our programs are put on hold, and some opportunities to serve are on hiatus right now. But many of our volunteers have kept on going. This church runs on volunteer power. Thank you to all of our volunteers who make this church what it is - we could not be here doing what we do without you. I look forward to a time when we can more formally give you thanks.

It's nice to be thanked. I always appreciate a thank you card for a wedding, or a celebration of life, or just because. One reason we might not receive appreciation is because the things we do are routine. When something is done on a regular basis it tends to get overlooked. We don't thank someone for doing the dishes, the laundry or mowing the lawn because these things are mundane, regular chores. But what if they didn't get done? How long would it take before someone appreciated them? Recognize and be thankful for the routine things people do for you. Show gratitude in your family. In your workplace. In the line at Fred Meyers. To the gal pumping your gas.

Fun fact: The word appreciate is not in my Bible. But the synonyms grateful and thankful are. Interestingly, the word grateful only appears once and that's in Romans 16. When Paul is talking about people in his life. How did our passage put it today? I give God thanks because of you. Wow. Imagine telling that to your dentist.

Even in Jesus' last moments on earth, at the Last Supper. He didn't take the opportunity for another sermon. Or another teaching moment. Or a victory lap or everyone say how great I am. But I loved the simplicity: When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." The next couple of days are not going to be good. But I am glad I am with you. Simple as that. You are people that I appreciate, and it makes a heart glad to be surrounded by people that you care about.

And of course, we need to appreciate God. Just as we can take things for granted, we can take people for granted, we can also take God for granted. How? When I talked about our need to appreciate things, I said how exciting is it when we get something new. But what happens after a while is the newness wears off and we're not as excited about it as we were in the beginning.

In my first point I talked about having appreciation for the material things God has given us but we also need to thank God and show appreciation for the things money can't buy. These are the more precious things. God's love, salvation, the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the spirit, wisdom, understanding, Jesus' friendship, etc. There are many hurting people in the world. They're looking for love, joy and peace but are finding only vain substitutes.

What are you grateful for? Who are you grateful for? How do you show it? Perhaps you've heard this cheer before: '2-4-6-8, who do we take for granted. No, that's not how it goes. 2-4-6-8, who do we appreciate?' Not that we need to formulate a good, old-fashioned cheer but maybe we could show some of that same enthusiasm in letting people know how much we appreciate them.

Be a grateful and appreciative person. And maybe I'll see you at the next Alvin and the Chipmunk movie. God help us all. And the family of God said, AMEN!

Intro: Filmed at Hillendale Park

Children's Time: The Fisherman and his wife story

Prayer:

We think we know so much, O God, and with our meager knowledge we presume to judge others. We arrogantly announce our own righteousness without a compassionate thought. We proclaim your word when it suits us and often only to those with whom we want to associate. We shut others out because of our faulty judgment and our blindness. There have been so many times in which our humble help would have been a blessing to someone, but we have placed our comforts before serving others. Help us, merciful God, to again listen to you. Help us to truly open our hearts to you. Quiet our hearts, Oh God, that we may listen to what is truly important. Rest your spirits, Oh God, that we may find peace in our struggling. You are our God, the God of all creation, the God of power and love, whose mercy is offered to us. Help us to learn that you alone can heal us and fix those areas in our lives that are wounded and twisted. Help us to understand that you alone can offer to us a new way of life through Jesus Christ. Remind us again that as we remember the names of people and situations that concern us, praying for your healing touch, that the same touch is offered to us in Jesus' name. Lord, we need to let go of our control issues and place our trust wholly in you. Now and forever. Thru your prayer we pray...

Offertory:

Welcome to the Offering, our chance to give back. As United Methodists, we support many ministries, within the church, outside the church, at home and abroad. Our church is a part of the Oregon Idaho Annual Conference, a collection of around 180 churches and ministries in our two states. That is broken down into four Districts, we are in the Cascadia district, stretching from Astoria to John Day; around 40 churches. Our District as a committee called the, (and it's an outdated name, we're trying to come up with something better), the Cascadia District Church Extension Society. What is the Cascadia District Church Extension Society, I hear you ask. An offering is asked from each church, something like \$1.50 per member. And what does our district do with this offering. In the past year, we have started and supported two Hispanic Ministries in our District. We are now helping churches with limited or no technology get the resources to do what we do. We have converted a campsite into homeless shelter. We have helped build a parsonage for a church out in the wilderness. Began a preschool collective in Bend. Provide loans and grants to everyone of our churches. We are extending (extension), the reach of each church to try new things, reach new people. Proclaim the Glory of God. You help make all of this happen with your offering. Thank you, thank you. Thank you. I'll put a link on our Facebook page of a short video of what we've done this year. God bless.

Closing: Filmed at Hillendale Park.