

“Won’t You Be My Neighbor? How Do I Neighbor?”

Mark 12:28-34 (NIV)

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<https://www.cbsnews.com/video/front-lawn-becomes-a-stage-for-a-house-ridden-boy/>

Now that’s how-to neighbor! “Pay it forward.” And then the broadcaster says, “Being indebted has never felt so fortunate.”

Romans 13:8 New International Version (NIV) ⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

Yes, we have a continuing debt to love one another.

One of the teachers of the Biblical law asked Jesus, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important.”

Now when we think of commandments, we would most likely think of The Top Ten---the Ten Commandments. Which of those is most important? However, the teacher of the law knew there were many more commandments.

Jewish tradition has 613 commandments. There are positive commandments---things we are commanded to do, and there are negative commandments---things we are commanded not to do. There are 248 positive commandments. 248 is the number that supposedly relates to the number of bones and main organs in the body. And yes, there are 365 negative commandments. A “shalt not” for every day of the year.

Now which of these 613, Jesus is the most important. Jesus narrows these hundreds of commands down to the Greatest Commandment. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these

Who is my neighbor? Well, I refer you to Luke 10 and the Parable of the Good Samaritan that we talked about last week.

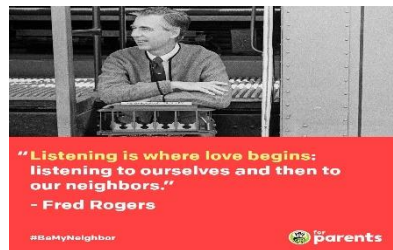
Love your neighbor, well, you might be saying, you’ve not in my neighborhood, you don’t know my neighbors. True.

We were appointed to PHUMC in July of 2010. It was the first time we did not live in a parsonage. A parsonage a house owned by the church where the pastor stays. Many years ago, PHUMC sold their parsonage and went to a housing allowance. So we bought our very first house when we moved to Palm Harbor.

Through the years we have lived in a parsonage across the street from a church, that literally had a sign above the doorbell that said, "Parsonage of X UMC." We have lived in a parsonage where when you went out the backdoor the sidewalk went to the church parking lot. In fact, the last church parsonage I lived in had 2 houses next to our parsonage that were also parsonages for the 2 associates. 3 parsonages side, by side, by side. Clergy row. Couldn't be bad in that neighborhood!!! And if you did God would get you!

Not exactly true the first house we lived in out of seminary, when I was an Associate Pastor was robbed. In fact, it was robbed while we were at church. Oh, well---there goes the neighborhood.

So, what if you do have bad neighbors? How do you neighbor to them? Let me emphasize communication. Try the best you can to get to know them---before there is an 'incident.' Seek to understand where they might be coming from. Don't make assumptions. Fred Rogers puts it this way:



However, to be honest, you may not have neighbors that just won't listen and show respect. Can you try to communicate, to be kind, to explain, to compromise? Certainly, annoying neighbors can be a problem. What little way can you show that you are listening and trying to love them? It takes God's strength and wisdom to love annoying neighbors. It may be that communication fails but is there a way you can continue to show kindness when you can. Loving your neighbor doesn't mean you see eye to eye.

Let me share the words of a song that is new to me, but was written in 2016.

For the One (Bethel Music)

Let me be filled with kindness, and compassion for the one

The one for whom You loved and gave Your Son

For humanity, increase my love

Help me to love with open arms like You do

A love that erases all the lines and sees the truth

Oh that when they look in my eyes they would see You

Even in just a smile they would feel the Father's love

Oh how You love us, from the homeless to the famous and in between

'Cause You formed us, You made us carefully

'Cause in the end we're all your children

Let all my life tell of who You are

And the wonder of Your never-ending love

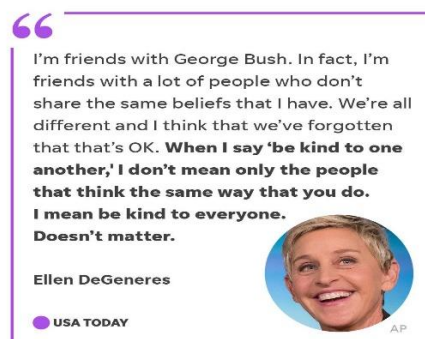
Oh, let all my life tell of who you are

That You're wonderful and such a good Father.

Last month there was a television picture that was captured that brought about a lot of national discussion.



Great comedian Ellen DeGeneres and talk show host was seen sitting next to former President George W. Bush at a Dallas Cowboys football game. Although Bush appeared on Ellen's show in 2017 they certainly have different views. Much was said about both Bush and DeGeneras because of that shot. I loved Ellen's response:



Hmm, and Jesus said to love your neighbor.

Freddy Ford, the Chief of Staff for President Bush said in a statement (to CNN) “President and Mrs. Bush really enjoyed being with Ellen and Portia, and they appreciated Ellen's comments about respecting one another. They respect her.”

Hmm, and yet they probably have different beliefs, values, and perspectives.

You mean we can love one another and not agree???? I find nowhere in scripture where Jesus did not say to love. The greatest commandment is to love your neighbor.

143

This number has a big significance to Fred Rogers. “It takes one letter to say I and four letters to say love and three letters to say you. One hundred and forty-three. “I love you.”

Mister Rogers had the same routine every day. Rogers was a creature of habit. He woke up every morning at 5:30 a.m. and started his day by reading and writing prayers for those who asked for them from him. He took a nap every day in the late afternoon and went to bed at 9:30 p.m., sleeping for a solid uninterrupted eight hours, according to a 1999 story in *Esquire* by journalist Tom Junod — their friendship is the centerpiece of the movie coming out November 22, “*A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*.”

That constant pattern likely accounted for another constant in his life: his weight. For 30 years, Rogers weighed exactly 143 pounds. In fact, he checked his own weight daily. “Every day, Mister Rogers refuses to do anything that would make his weight change,” Junod wrote in his story. “He neither drinks, nor smokes, nor eats flesh of any kind, nor goes to bed late at night, nor sleeps late in the morning, nor even watches television.”

And not only does he avoid habits that could change his weight — he literally kept himself in check. “Every morning, when he swims, he steps on a scale in his bathing suit and his bathing cap and his goggles, and the scale tells him that he weighs 143 pounds.”

And so, he kept that constant for decades, maintaining his very being in a number that equated love — and taking what the scale showed him and spreading it into every corner of the universe.



With the number meaning so much to Rogers, he, of course, integrated it into an episode of his show when “Speedy Delivery” Man Mr. McFeeley came by. Before he rushed off, Rogers said, “I’d like to give you something” and came back with a yellow piece of paper with the three digits on it.

“This is a kind of code that we’ve just found out about,” Rogers explained to McFeeley before explaining the hidden meaning of “I love you.” The delivery man replied, “I think I’ll take this home and give it to Betsy!”

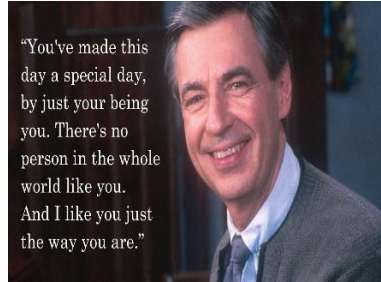
And on his way out, McFeeley bid him farewell with “143!” as Rogers replied, “143, Mr. McFeeley. Thank you!”

Afterward, he explained to the television audience, “Explaining things is another way of saying, ‘I love you.’ And coming back to visit each day is yet another way. Oh, there’s so many ways, you’ll find them. You’ll find them as you grow. Many ways to say 143.”

(from: Mister Rogers Always Weighed 143 Pounds. The Significance Behind That Number
The minister-turned-host of "Mister Rogers Neighborhood" found dual meaning in the digits that popped up on his scale every morning. ---(article from biography.com) by Rachel Chang)

Loving our neighbor=143.

Sony Pictures invited Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church to produce the faith-based study guide to accompany the movie, “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.” The film stars Tom Hanks and Matthew Rhys. In that study guide there is some words about one of Fred Rogers famous sayings. “You made this day a special day by just your being you. There’s no person in the whole world like you. And I like you just the way you are.”



The Discipleship Ministries Study Guide says this: “Mister Rogers regularly told children that they were loved just the way they were, that they were unique and special, and that they didn’t have to wait until they were grown up to be acceptable. Even with those wonderful truths, he obviously believed we were all capable of being more than children and could grow and change and become more Christ-like.

Do you know that Christ loves you just the way you are? You are acceptable, and He longs to reconcile you unto Himself. He has already taken the first step and walked all the way to Calvary. Now it’s your turn.”

Oh how *easy* it is to love.
Oh how *hard* it is to love.

But for the sake of the world should that not be what our passion should be---to love. Friends, personally I would rather err on the side of love and grace. But oh, to see all nations bow---for all the world to know Jesus. Oh may that burn like a fire in me. May there be a light and flame in my soul for everyone to see. Oh for every heart to believe. For every voice to cry out. For every tongue to confess. Burn like a fire in me. Help me to love others for Jesus. He is the hope of the earth. (based on For the Sake of the World by Bethel Music)

Oh, to really love. How do we neighbor---as God gives us wisdom and strength? How do we neighbor---realize that our God wants us to, tells us to?

John 13:34-35 New International Version (NIV) ³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Do we love as Jesus loves?

(8:05=Will you go and hold God’s people in your heart and show them love.)

(9:30/11:05=For the sake of the world---love. For the sake of the Kingdom of God=love.)