

Weekly Connector: And, We're Back!

February 8, 2018

Hello, Church!

After about 4 years of fairly consistent Weekly Connectors, it has been over 3 weeks since I last wrote you. As I entered into the new year, I focused on managing my time (His time) more effectively; somehow, to achieve better stewardship. In the process, I have had some successes and some failings. The Weekly Connector has been one of the latter. Hopefully, I will write more regularly as February moves into March and our time of celebration approaches the passion and resurrection of our King, Jesus.

I have been so encouraged by those of you who took the challenge 6 weeks ago to memorize the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7. For those who have yet to accept the challenge, remember: it is not too late. Do not miss out on this opportunity to put the words of Jesus Himself into your heart. As I have worked through the process of memorization, I have been both blessed and challenged by His words. It is one thing to read the words, but to read and speak them enough to memorize them brings His words into a brighter light and sharper focus. As we memorize, the words of Jesus somehow has to fit into the heart along with the other "stuff" we put in there. And, because of the power of His words - eternal, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, the other "stuff" will either fade or become difficult to accommodate.

For example, in Matthew 5:7, Jesus says *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."* Many know this adage as one of the Beatitudes. But, how many of us routinely put it into motion? By definition, mercy is offered to someone who does not deserve it. The same is true with grace. R. C. Sproul says it simply: "Grace and mercy are never deserved." So, when I also read that God *"crowns [me] with steadfast love and mercy"* (Ps. 103:4), I am very happy with that for if I am honest with myself, I admit that I do not deserve either.

So, if I am willing to receive mercy, then why is it so hard sometimes to be like Jesus and offer it to others? Someone cuts me off in traffic. I leave later than I should for an appointment and every obstacle short of a falling meteor gets in my way: a school bus, a slow moving truck, every stop light along the way slows me down. Do I show mercy to those who are inadvertently in my way?

I'm sure you have had someone insult you or someone you treasure. Or, a teacher grades your paper severely (at least, too severe for you!). Your boss sets you up for failure with an impossible task or project. Your kids still refuse to actively listen to you. Your spouse ignored you - again. In all these circumstances, you are the one that has to deal with the inconsiderations of others.

Yet, Jesus says that there is a strong connection between showing mercy and receiving mercy. We receive God's mercy and are blessed. In turn, we offer mercy to others and we are blessed.

Think of those who are around you; those you know and those you come into contact with. To whom should you show mercy today? A smile instead of a frown. A kind word instead of uncomfortable silence. A prayer instead of a sigh. A handshake rather than our hands in our pockets.

Do not miss this. God has uniquely placed each of us in positions of offering mercy to someone who needs it - even though they may not deserve it. And, if you do follow Jesus, then showing mercy to someone is showing Jesus to them, too - demonstrating that Jesus really is the Shepherd of your heart.

So, what are you waiting for?

This Sunday, we cross over the middle of Psalm 23 as we learn what it means to be without fear - even in "the valley of the shadow of death." There are some surprising twists and turns in this Psalm and verse 4 is no exception. Come early and join us in Sunday School at 9AM, then join us in the Sanctuary at 10AM to celebrate our Good (and Great) Shepherd, Jesus the King! Then, do not forget the business meeting that will follow soon after the service. All members are urged to attend.



Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)

I love you, Church!

Pastor greg