

Call to Worship

Our God, stops in love, refusing to move past pain and despair, bending over to help, and gather the wounded in arms of concern. **Our God confronts the fast-moving flow of life that leaves behind the cries of others and the silences of the lost. Come, let us praise this God.**

Prayer of Invocation

Stop us now, Jesus Christ, stop our racing thoughts and plans, and bring us quietly toward your will for us as we pray and wait to know who we are and who we could be. Come, Holy Spirit, pause with us and be truly found among us. Amen

The Word Luke 10:25-37

A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to gain eternal life?" **Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?"**

He responded, "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.*" **Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."**

But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" **Jesus replied, "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death.**

Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way.

Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way.

A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. **The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him.**

The next day, he took two full days' worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, 'Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for any additional costs.' **What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?"**

Then the legal expert said, "The one who demonstrated mercy toward him." **Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."**

Living the Word

"A thousand blessings upon you!" That's not something you hear every day... that is unless you were present in the New Richmond church office when the IT guy, Michael, was about to leave. He offered to all who were present, as his parting shot: 'A thousand blessings upon you!' It was a little quirky, but it also offered to us the potential of a great day and week ahead of us.

I believe it began as a simple "God bless you!" and has grown from there to thousands and on occasion even millions, always delivered with a smile. No matter the quantity, I always knew that he wanted me to have a good rest of the day, and the thought of it and of him, still makes me smile.

We both would part with a good feeling. He knows what it is to be blessed by blessing others. I'm not asking you to consider doing the same as Michael. You each have your own ways of blessing others and then feeling blessed yourself.

Once again the greatest example comes from Jesus. He came to bless all of us through servant-hood. Here is what author, Max Lucado says about Christ's servant-hood: "Jesus came to serve. He let a woman in Samaria interrupt his rest, a woman in adultery interrupt his sermon, a woman with a disease interrupt his plans, and one with remorse interrupt his meal.

Though none of the apostles washed his feet, he washed theirs. Though none of the soldiers at the cross begged for mercy, he extended it. And though his followers skedaddled like scared rabbits on Thursday [shortly after the last supper], he came to search for them on Easter Sunday.

The resurrected Lord ascended to heaven only after he'd spent 40 days with his friends – teaching them, encouraging them...serving them. Why? It's what he came to do. He came to serve."

The Apostle Paul didn't get his feet washed with the other disciples. Paul came sometime after Christ's death and resurrection. Yet when he encountered Christ's work and became a strong follower, he echoed Christ's words by saying:

"By working hard, we must help the weak. In this way we remember the Lord Jesus' words: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

Christ commands us not only to believe but also to act on the basis of our beliefs. We are not only to worship God but also to work with Christ in God's world. The Christian faith is active, not passive. Christians are those who actively respond to the world as Christ has responded toward us.

So, how can we apply this example to our lives? By putting others first, considering their needs before our own. Looking for ways to serve and bless others.

Love is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away. Love is something if you give it away you end up having more. It's just like a magic penny – hold it tight and you won't have any. Lend and spend it and you have so many, they'll roll all over the floor, for - Love is something if you give it away you end up having more.

I have a challenge for you this week. Find three pennies today or tomorrow and put them in your right pocket. Every time you do something for someone else, move one penny to the left pocket. See how long it takes to get all three moved.

Move them back and forth, one at a time and keep track of how long it takes you to make the exchange, I am not sharing this with you so you would be encumbered by their weight. If keeping them with you is a burden, then put them in a loose change jar and be done with it.

I offer this to you in the hopes that it will make you realize how many opportunities you have in a day to bless others, how many times in a day you do bless others and a reminder to find the blessing for yourself as you bless others. I am going to carry mine, if for no other reason than to be aware of all of the blessings happening around me in my life and that I want to follow Christ's example every day, serving others before myself. Now we turn to the story of the Good Samaritan.

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Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?"

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Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."

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As he often did, Jesus answered with a story. "A used car salesman was driving from St Paul to Eau Claire to deliver a newer looking vehicle to get it on the lot for sale. On highway 94, just before the Roberts exit, he could tell something was wrong with his right front tire, so he took the exit and found himself in a series of roundabouts. He got around the first one and even the second one, but as he started down the decline to the stop light he pulled over no longer able to control the car.

He got out and opened the trunk for the spare and a tire iron to change it. A car pulled up behind him and as he approached the now flat tire someone came around the car and said he would help. But instead he took the tire iron and hit him across the back knocking him down against the car in pain. He emptied his pockets and just to be mean, he let the air out of the rear tire before he disappeared.

All the while and continuing after, traffic hadn't slowed as semi truckers turned left for gas and McDonalds, not paying any attention to the car parked along the road. Cars filled with riders went by on their way to the Park-n-ride anxious to pick up their cars and go home from work. No one stopped. Then a group of four motorcyclists in black leather jackets with ominous symbols on the back whizzed by.

But at the stop light they looked back and turning around returned to the car by the side of the road. One guy helped the man to the grass and gave him some water to drink while two others changed the front tire and the fourth guy pumped air back into the rear tire. They then took him down to the gas station keeping check on him and the car, paid for and shared McDonalds with him as he no longer had his wallet and escorted him all the way to Eau Claire as they were on their way to a rally in Milwaukee.

Jesus said: Which one of these three groups was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?"

Then the legal expert said, "The one who demonstrated mercy toward him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

As we are reminded of who has blessed us and who we are blessing, be it sharing a smile, ten thousand blessings or some time and care and McDonalds, we begin to acknowledge who Jesus was and who we are called to be as followers of Christ. We don't need to go looking to be blessed by others, but we will find our blessings in unexpected ways and places.

The saddest thing is that the good Samaritan story could be retold over and over in different ways in our world and like a semi trucker headed for McDonalds and a break or 9-5er on their way home, we are moving so fast focused on our own needs, that we miss the opportunities to bless others. At least we aren't as pathetic as the priest or rabbi who moved away from the scene after seeing the needs...Lord, help us not to be selfish...

This week three girls from the Milwaukee area got lost while camping in Wyoming. I received a Facebook post from a pastor friend down there that he was on his way to the chapel to help continue a prayer vigil the church was doing until the girls were found.

After four days the lost the girls were found, saying it was their faith that kept them going. I don't have to ask my friend, because I know he feels blessed that the girls were found and that he helped by holding them with God in a safe place until they were found. If you pray for three people in need each day, you would be moving your pennies with no problem.

It isn't always easy to know how to bless someone, but we are called to try. I want to share with you words that *Mother Teresa was so moved by that she hung them on a wall in her orphanage in Calcutta.*

They were written by Dr. Kent Keith, who wrote the book

Do It Anyway: The Handbook for Finding Personal Meaning and Deep Happiness in a Crazy World:

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered; *Forgive them anyway.*

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; *Be kind anyway.*

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; *Succeed anyway.*

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; *Be honest and frank anyway.*

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; *Build anyway.*

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; *Be happy anyway.*

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; *Do good anyway.*

Give the world the best you have and it may just never be enough; *Give the world the best you have anyway.*

You see, in the final analysis, it's all between you and God;
It was never between you and them anyway.