

Graphics and Audio Notes

- There **will** be a sermon starter video.
- There **will** be notes and / or scripture to show on screen during the sermon.
- There is a United Methodist Student Day video which will be played near the beginning of the worship service.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR EXPERIMENT

Text highlighted in this way have a slide prepared to be on screen.

Text highlighted in this way are a reminder for Andrew during delivery.

Text highlighted in this way are direction for Andrew during delivery.

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about celebrating abundance in our life, neighborhood, and congregation.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because God's abundant love is for all, and we too often forget to celebrate and look for the good.

What is the good news?

The good news is that God always looks at us like the father in the parable – with deep, abundant love.

What are the next action steps?

You are invited to look for things to celebrate in your life, your neighborhood and our congregation.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the final sermon in a series on neighboring. It utilizes material from NeighboringMovement.org

Last Sunday after Pentecost / in Kingdomtide [White]

November 26, 2017

Christ the King / Reign of Christ Sunday

Luke 15:11-24

United Methodist Student Day [offering]

Preaching Target Word Count: 1,400

The Good Neighbor Experiment - Celebrate Abundance

First United Methodist Church of El Dorado

Metadata

Topics

- Change Lives
- Grow
- Share
- Transformation of the World

Sermon Books of the Bible

- Luke

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, neighbor, neighboring, celebrate, celebration, abundance, love, grace

Sermon Audio at 9 a.m. Worship

Sermon Audio at 11 a.m. Worship

Sermon Video

Promo Text / Series Introduction

Love your neighbor is a simple guide to living from Jesus, yet sometimes we struggle to live this way in our actual lives. During this worship series, you will be invited on a journey of spiritual formation, engaging your actual neighbors where you live and together we will begin to experience what it means for our congregation to be a good neighbor. Invite a friend to join you for worship at First United Methodist Church from October 22 to November 26 for The Good Neighbor Experiment.

Worship Planning Notes

Hook

- Jesus invites us to love our neighbor. Let's figure out how to do it together.

Objectives

- Spiritual formation
- Engaging our neighbors
- Being a good neighbor as a congregation

Tie-Ins

The Good Neighbor Experiment Practice Group

Sermon Titles, Scripture and Notes

Date	Sermon Title	Scripture Text	Notes
October 22, 2017	Why Neighbor?	Mark 12:28-34	
October 29, 2017	Community by Design	Acts 2:37-47	
November 5, 2017	Humble Servants	Matthew 23:1-12	Guest Preacher, Andrew Present All Saints Day Daylight Savings Time Ends
November 12, 2017	Asset Mapping	John 6:5-13	
November 19, 2017	Intro to Spiritual Formation	Galatians 5:22-23	

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November 26, 2017	Celebrate Abundance	Luke 15:11-24	United Methodist Student Day
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Luke 15:11-24, CEB

Luke 15:11-24, NRSV

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Invitation to Reflection

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Gifts and Assets

Design

Free to Fail (Joy)

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Abundance is a Choice, not a Reaction

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Christ Offers Abundance

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Example: Prodigal Son in Modern Church Context

Gathering of Church Leaders

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Introduction

Luke 15:11-24, CEB

¹¹Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. ¹²The younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the inheritance.' Then the father divided his estate between them. ¹³Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living.

¹⁴"When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country and he began to be in need. ¹⁵He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, but I'm starving to death! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands.'" ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. ²¹Then his son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his servants, 'Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! ²³Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting ²⁴because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Luke 15:11-24, NRSV

¹¹Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" ²⁰So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your

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son.' ²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Response to Scripture

One: The word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

Abundance is a Choice¹

Abundance, like all of the neighboring ingredients, is a choice.

One of my colleagues in Wichita shares a story about making that choice.

Example: Worship Service Launch - Coach vs. Volunteer

He had been assigned the task of creating and launching a new worship service. The church had hired a ministry coach to help guide the process. They would meet by phone and video calls.

Experience with Coach

It seemed that every call would go the same way: The coach would ask pointed questions in an effort to get my friend to think differently or work more efficiently. This version of coaching isn't unusual, it also is not abundance focused. It was like the coach had a giant list of all the things which my friend lacked and highlighted them every single week.

A few months into the coaching contract, he felt drained, ineffective, and terrified. He was certain it was only a matter of time until his church was going to find out how bad he was at his job.

Invitation to Reflection

Have you ever felt like that? Maybe at work, with a supervisor or co-worker?

Maybe you don't need anyone else to focus on what you lack?

Perhaps you do this on your own...

Pause

Experience with Volunteer

My friend found that he had a different experience with his volunteers. One in particular was committed to seeing abundance. There was a particular conversation in which he was feeling rather gloomy about their efforts. The volunteer started pointing out some of the work we'd done and then said,

"There is a lot of good in this struggle."

These words and this moment sunk deep into his memory.

She was choosing abundance, when all he could see was scarcity.

In that moment, this volunteer had offered the face of Christ and in it, abundance.

¹ Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Block 1.5 Intro to Spiritual Formation

Invitation to Reflection

Have you ever had that kind of experience? At work, at home, here at church?
A chance to focus on joy, hope, optimism, and contentment.
This is the stuff of neighboring well.

Pause

The Good Neighbor Experiment

The sermon today is part of The Good Neighbor Experiment worship series. During this series, we are focused on the simple guidance from Jesus to love our neighbors – the actual people that live next to us. We are part of a national neighboring movement which was started in Wichita by colleagues in The United Methodist Church. This sermon and series have been developed using their content from NeighboringMovement.org.

Transition

Abundance is one of the neighboring ingredients that we have been considering during this worship series.

Neighboring Ingredients²

I want to remind you of the neighboring ingredients we have been considering during this series with a few words about each one.

Abundance

Abundance

Neighbors view the world with abundance over scarcity. The markers of abundance are joy, hope, optimism, and contentment – seeing the good in people and in events.

Gifts and Assets

Abundance

Gifts and Assets

Neighbors believe that all people have skills, talents, and assets. When we share our assets, we experience wholeness and the community gets stronger. In a world that usually focuses on needs, neighbors point to assets.

Design

Abundance

Gifts and Assets

Design

² Adapted from The Good Neighbor Experiment Leaders Guide: Session 1.1 Why Neighbor?

Neighbors design their homes, calendars, and relationships to create space for other people. Neighbors adjust their routines and rhythms to make neighboring the path of least resistance.

Free to Fail (Joy)

Abundance
Gifts and Assets
Design
Free to Fail (Joy)

Neighbors approach failure with joy. Failure is informative and helps shape what comes next. Neighbors are unafraid to try new things because they are free to fail.

Spiritual Formation

Abundance
Gifts and Assets
Design
Free to Fail (Joy)
Spiritual Formation

Neighbors prioritize their spiritual health so they can build healthy relationships with others. Spiritual formation helps us operate as people who are loved unconditionally, and who love others non-coercively.

Relationships

Abundance
Gifts and Assets
Design
Free to Fail (Joy)
Spiritual Formation
Relationships

Neighbors value meaningful relationships knowing that community is essential for health and happiness. This ingredient is essential, and for some people it will be the easiest and most obvious, while for others it may feel the most awkward.

Celebration

Abundance
Gifts and Assets
Design
Free to Fail (Joy)
Spiritual Formation
Relationships
Celebration

Neighbors celebrate often with gratitude, inviting others to join when possible. Celebration produces joy and aids us in the ability to be free to fail. Celebration recognizes abundance and encourages future experimentation.

Transition

You don't need to feel responsible for fully understanding all of these ingredients. As we conclude this series today, my invitation is to focus on just a few of these ingredients at a time, as you seek to love your neighbors.

Today, we focus on abundance.

Abundance as Spiritual Muscle Memory

Abundance is a Choice, not a Reaction

Abundance isn't something you do in reaction to the events around you, abundance is a choice you make in the midst of the events around you.

It is not foolhardy, it is hope.

Key Quote: Krista Tippett on Hope

In *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* by Krista Tippett she describes Hope this way:

.....
I define hope as distinct from optimism or idealism. It has nothing to do with wishing. It references reality at every turn and reveres truth. It lives open eyed and wholeheartedly with darkness that is woven ineluctably into the light of life and sometimes seems to overcome it. Hope, like every virtue, is a choice that becomes habit that becomes spiritual muscle memory. It is a renewable resource moving through life as it is, not as we wish it to be.
.....

Christ Offers Abundance

It can be easy to feel gloomy about the state of the church today with decline prevalent across our state, the nation, and declining worship attendance here at First United Methodist Church. However, these words from Krista Tippett are a reminder that Christ offers something different – abundant life

We Choose Hope

We are able to live into something different when we choose hope.

We can choose hope by naming and celebrating the abundance that we see in each other and our neighbors. When we are blinded by scarcity there is never enough, yet with a mindset of abundance there is always plenty!

.....
Pause
.....

Transition

So, how do we kick the scarcity habit?

Scripture: Kicking the Habit

One great way to kick the scarcity habit and form abundant spiritual muscle memory is to celebrate. Consider the father of the prodigal son in the passage of scripture today. Against all odds he chose to celebrate with an abundant party when it seems that this was a time for scarcity!

Example: Prodigal Son in Modern Church Context

Gathering of Church Leaders

Let's put this story into a modern church context.

Imagine a gathering of church leaders where someone gets up and goes over the statistics of our denominational decline. Imagine those church leaders feeling unappreciated for their work and deflated by the scarcity in the room. The feeling in the room matching the voice of the older son when his father tells him about the party for his younger brother.

Key Scripture: Luke 15:29

We hear his words in Luke 15:29:

"He answered his father, 'Look, I've served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you've never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.'"³

Worship at a Small Congregation

Now, imagine a worship service at a small congregation that in many ways embodied the decline described at the gathering of church leaders.

One of the lay people in the congregation stands during worship and begins to list the talents and giftedness of the children in their church. The room was light and hopeful. It didn't matter that there were only 5 kids, because each one was beautifully made and helped shape the unique tapestry of this congregation. The tone matched perfectly the voice of the father when he hears his son has returned.

Key Scripture: Luke 15:22-24

We hear these words in Luke 15:22-24:

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate."⁴

Transition

So, how do we do this as a congregation?

How do we do it in our own lives?

³ Luke 15:29, CEB.

⁴ Luke 15:22-24, CEB.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that God always looks at us like the father in the parable – with deep, abundant love.

Pause

Call to Action

It may not feel like there is much to celebrate in your life right now, or maybe, for you, the abundance that exists is crystal clear. My invitation for you, in your life and in your neighborhood and for us, as a congregation, is to look for things to celebrate. It's like a treasure hunt!

There may be lots of dirt and grime to scrape away, you may be accustomed to seeing gloom and doom, there may be very challenging circumstances, yet I guarantee that abundance lives in your life, in your neighborhood, and in our congregation.

Invitation

When you find it, don't hold it for yourself!

Abundance grows when you share it with others and
the source of all our abundance is in Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I am sorry for all the times in my life when I mess up.

And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.

Forgive me of my sin and all that I know is wrong.

Thank you that you died on the cross and rose for me.

I trust you with my life.

Help me receive your forgiveness.

Please fill me with your Spirit and help me to follow you.

In your holy name, Amen.