

Squamish United Church
Rev. Karen Millard
Lent II

February 25, 2018

Scriptures

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Mark 8:27-38

Luke 5:27-31

Neighbourhood Fear Factor

The love of God is expressed by the very ordinary, everyday embodiment of real people in real places, enacting God's agendas, not ours. We are called to be culture shapers, not simply give campaign speeches about love and peace or host events and send out mailers with a distant proclamation of the nature of God. We must also authentically embody the good news of love and peace in the nitty-gritty of life. This is the incarnation of the spirit of Christ. This is the agenda of God to which we attend. P.70 To Alter your world

This weeks scriptures challenge us to follow Christ, to pick up the cross. What does that mean for us today? I might simplify it too much but I don't lean towards the fire and brimstone, guilting people into the gospel kind of work. I don't think guilting people into love really works and I don't think that is what Jesus or God intends. Jesus died on a cross because people couldn't handle how he loved. He loved and cared for people he wasn't supposed to. He ate meals with outcasts and sinners, he welcomed them into the temples and he entered their homes. That is what it means to me to follow Jesus. Loving in such a way that it might even be uncomfortable. I did a kindness for someone this week and I had someone ask - why would you do that? This is why. They don't know I did it so I didn't do it for the glory and yet I did it because I know they are likely taking advantage of others because they are just struggling to live. You likely know by now that one of the quotes I live by is "Never look down on a struggle for life." Some days that is hard to do but each day I practice it gets a little easier.

Were you able to get out into your neighbourhood last week, for those of you who may not have been with us for a few weeks we have decided that for the season of lent we are going to work on discovering Gods call for us as individuals and church. We are going to do this by looking at the "Art of Neighbouring." For a few weeks I've been asking you to walk or drive around this

neighbourhood with intention. Has anyone had a chance to do that yet? Is there anything new that you have discovered? What about in the neighbourhood where you live?

I want to share with you a quick video that will lead us into today subject matter <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B2O1Ljvlizeid21mN1dKVUpmM2c>

Last week we talked about the importance of a name. I am the first to admit I'm not great with names. I work on it but I never mean to offend but I know what it is like if someone gets my name and I am surprised by that. It is especially meaningful to me when someone gets my name right. I will almost answer to Karen but when someone I don't know all that well calls me Karen (Karyn) there is a part of me that warms up to them. When people who know me well call me karen it doesn't feel the same warmth. I will rarely correct you unless I feel it is important in the moment. I know people can feel it is silly for me to correct but our names have meaning and there are reasons we use them or choose to keep them even if they can be hard for people to say. Last week I gave you a little handout that can help you get to know folks with compassion. You can find more on the back table. This week I'm going to give you this chart. It is a way for you to check in on how well you know your neighbourhood - really.

☆The power of story and sharing inspires us to do new things. And with that inspiration in your head, courage and conviction or belief to move forward with practice. And with practice.... Transformation. Inspiration, courage and conviction to practice.... Leads to transformation. We just watched a video of story. I wonder if anyone else has a story to share of a neighbour that has meant something to you - or something you have done for a neighbour.

I want to encourage and nurture practice for all of us in hopes that it will lead to transformation. We all have to practice if we want to get better at being a church for our community and neighbourhood. If we as Christians want to get better at this. if you want a good pianist. you practice. If you want to be a juggler.. you have to practice. If you want to be a good neighbour.....

I have become passionate about this subject. I've always tried to love my neighbour but I have come to recognize that it is so much deeper than I have ever lived out. We live in a world that doesn't teach us to love our neighbours, more often than not we are taught to fear one another.

<http://www.artofneighboring.com/6-week-interactive-small-group-study/>

So I watched this video numerous times this week because that is what I do when I prep something. I realized that there are a couple moms that I cross the path with when walking to and from school every day that never say hello. This has begun to bother me over the months but I also realized I had made some assumptions about them too. I had decided they didn't like me - I don't think I had given them any reason to but if they did they would talk to me right. (I am often guilty of that assumption - my personality type always assumes I am the problem - that doesn't always do me favours and it can make me very shy and hard to get to know because when you think you are not loveable - you are hard to love). That is up to me to change - not anyone else. So I did a few things this week and the Friday snow day gave me some great opportunities. After school our kids were playing at the back of the school with their friends. Not even each other but I decided it was time to change this story. I went and stood by those moms that don't like me (or so I have made that story in my head) and I started to chat. Now this wasn't easy for me - it took some courage but the great divine had provided a prime opportunity for me to neighbour someone that I have not been neighbouring very well. We haven't become best friends or anything but I am pretty sure that it will be a whole lot easier to say hello and offer a smile and a kind word as I walk to school with them in the near future and I even know their names now :). I was so inspired that I went outside and I kind of started a shovelling party with some of the neighbours around me. I ended up shovelling three driveways and as I chatted about the weather with the neighbour across the way and a couple doors down I noticed they started to shovel the place next door too. ☆Imagine what the world would look like if we all started to neighbour - I mean really do it. What if we just thought every day. How can I be a faithful presence in my neighbourhood today.

Are you uncomfortable about spending time with anyone on your block? Anyone you would feel strange being seen with? Why? (we are a small enough town I don't want us to answer that allowed in a public worship service) but you can answer these questions

What do you think are the main reasons people are often afraid of their neighbours? Do you have any fears or concerns about the people in your neighbourhood?

Show the home alone slide. ☆

Home Alone: Old Man Marley - grumpy old guy. Reputation that he murdered his family with the snow shovel. Kevin the main character bumps into him in various places and is fearful of him. No connection. Old Man Morley - knew his name but not endearing.

☆But then as he is looking for a safe place Kevin Sees him at church. Talks to him and finds out why he's a lonely, grumpy man. Had an argument with his son. Suddenly he's not so scary anymore. Why? Because he found out his story.

We wrongly assume that one of the greatest needs in our lives is safety. But what we need most is connection and acceptance from other human beings.

When we fear the other, our own world gets smaller and smaller. It is only when we open our homes and our lives to the stranger that we can see our world begin to enlarge

☆Transformation of our community and world will happen as people begin to participate in following the great commandment. The reality is simple we need to stop and start some belief patterns. Especially in the church - we are the people who are supposed to get this. And yet so often I hear we don't want to share our story, we don't want people to feel threatened. I have had more than a few times lately, now that we are more connected to community, people come to me and say. Oh I thought church was about.... I thought religion was about.

You are different.

Friends. I actually believe we have something to share. Christians like us are not making the news because we are not sharing our stories and we are not all that shocking. I'm not here to Condemn anyone I just want to love people like Jesus did. It's not very news worthy but who cares. We need to stop

•**Stop** believing our neighbours don't want to know love, or dare we even say Jesus; and **Start** believing that love and dare we say Jesus is already in the neighbourhood working in the lives of our neighbours

• We need to **Stop** living behind our front doors; **Start** living more outside of our doors

God became tangible to us when he sent Jesus to live among us

Similarly we want to Break down our man-made barriers by getting outside of our front door or outside of our church building walls and join God who is already present in our neighbourhood

We often hear of experiencing God by going into nature and seeing his creation. In the same way we can see how God is already in the neighbourhood and how each of us.... All of us, birds, plants, trees mountains are made in the Image of God.

We all live in different neighbourhoods... not a one size fit all. There's no program. It's a practice!

We have different gifts. Some of us are more introverted, some are extroverted. God's kindom includes all of us and all of our gifts.

•Engage in the context of your neighbourhood culture. And we need to do the same as a church.

- Credibility increases when relationships are genuine

I watched this video a few weeks ago and it warmed my heart. Neighbourhood small grant opportunities are here right now. I wonder how we might engage them. Here is a story of neighbouring that I thought you might enjoy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXX8bRF2Uh0&feature=youtu.be>