

Squamish United Church
Rev. Karen Millard

January 28, 2018

Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Mark 12: 28-34

The Art of Neighbouring

Isaiah 58:9-12 - The Message

A Full Life in the Emptiest of Places

9-12

“If you get rid of unfair practices,
quit blaming victims,
quit gossiping about other people’s sins,
If you are generous with the hungry
and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,
Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness,
your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.
I will always show you where to go.
I’ll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—
firm muscles, strong bones.
You’ll be like a well-watered garden,
a gurgling spring that never runs dry.
You’ll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew,
rebuild the foundations from out of your past.
You’ll be known as those who can fix anything,
restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate,
make the community livable again.

The last time I came back from my class in Seattle I made a video in an attempt to capture the spirit of hope for us and our community. It is a reminder of where we have come from, where we are going and more importantly what we are called to. I thought about playing it again now but I think I will play it at the very end of our service because I wanted to share with you a couple other nuggets I’ve come across.

I’ve been on a bit of a journey in the last year. This journey has taken me to new places of excitement and energy. It has made me believe in this Centrepoint project we have created as a church to connect with community in more ways than ever before. In the next weeks and months I am going to share with you some of the fun, loving neighbour connecting projects my classmates and I are doing but let me share with you a couple of projects my friend Barry has done - mostly because they have nice video’s with them.

<https://www.facebook.com/letsmovevancouver/videos/1787202268177476/>

(As you see some of the photos during this message you will see some of the things found within the parishes that we visited - ways churches were joining with their neighbours - some easier than others but most beautiful messages).

Samuel Wells in his book "The Nazareth Manifest" wrote.

"While there is a place for working for, working with, and being for, it is being with that is the most faithful form of Christian witness and mission, because with is both incarnationally faithful to the manifestation of God in Christ and eschatologically anticipatory of the destiny of all things in God... A being-with approach generally assumes that the whole point of creation was that God would dwell with us terrestrially in Jesus and eternally in heaven. Consider the shape of Jesus' life. The incarnation presupposes that it was not enough for God simply to be for us. God is always for us, but that is an inadequate way of understanding God's purpose in making us and the world. God's purpose is to be with us."

☆And if God's purpose is to be with us then intrinsically our call is to be with one another. To love our neighbour more completely. That is the great commandment. We live in a world that balks against this - we live in homes with four walls and we drive cars that encapsulate us on our way to work, school and even our social activities. If we don't want to, we might not have to meet the person next door - let alone a neighbour down the street.

☆Frederick Buechner writes "If we are to love our neighbours, before doing anything else, we must see our neighbours. With our imagination as well as our eyes, that is to say like artists, we must see not just their faces but the life behind and within their faces. Here it is love that is the frame we see them in."

As followers of Jesus in our neighbourhoods, the Spirit will often guide us down unexpected routes of transformation. The process of our growth and revelation is not bound to the church building or structured places of theological training or spiritual enlightenment. Growth happens on the street, in the marketplace, in cafes, parks and homes. Growth can come in interactions with people of all different walks of life who share the place we call home.

Here is another example of that from my friend Barry - this is what they did in their neighbourhood with the help of a Vancouver Foundation for a Canada 150 grant on it and this is what they did.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gc_fpjUw96s&feature=youtu.be

So I have begun to dream and wonder what would it look like if we as Christians and we as church began to truly neighbour.

<https://vimeo.com/117428367>

I invite you to join me on this journey as a congregation as we together begin to discover “The Art of Neighbouring” This year for the Lenten season I will offer a study group. Either Sunday immediately following church or Tuesday evenings. Please let me know which would work better for you and we will pick the time that is most convenient for the most people.

Fierce Hope Video - February Birds <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOO3RWwpRNI&feature=youtu.be>