

Squamish United Church  
Rev. Karen Millard  
Lent 1

February 18, 2018

Scriptures  
Genesis 9:8-17  
Mark 1:9-15  
Mark 12:28-34

### **The Lenten journey to the Art of Neighbouring**

Today's scriptures are all about following God's direction. They give us examples of times when people stopped and listened and took notice of where God was taking them on the journey of life. We hear how God covenants with us and makes a promise to always be there - we are even called to remember that every time we see a rainbow in the sky.

This lent I want to encourage all of us to make a practice of pausing from time to time, of stopping to notice the beauty that surrounds us every day in this place. At the same time notice the places that need some light and whenever you can be that light, offer shalom. God has promised to help us along the way. We see that in the beginning of Jesus' ministry. When tempted in the desert Jesus knows God is with him because he has felt his spirit and presence. He has heard his voice naming Jesus as beloved at his baptism.

Lent is often a time of preparing for baptisms and redirections. The word lent actually means Spring - it is about the time of regrowth and rebirth, new life. It is the time where we prepare and remember the ministry God is calling us to. That is why we are going to spend some time in the next six weeks trying to work on and discovering just that. What is God calling us to? What does it mean to covenant with God and follow God's direction? What is the great commandment? Love the Lord your God with all your Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength and love your neighbour as yourself. These next weeks are going to be about discovering the way to do that.

☆Last week I asked people to take time in this week to walk around this neighbourhood. Did anyone get a chance to do that? If so what did you notice?

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'[a]; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'[b]"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

I wanted to replay a video for us that we watched a couple weeks ago and then I'm going to ask us some questions. "The Call" <https://vimeo.com/117428367>

“It’s not instant, its a journey but it never starts unless you know their name.” What do you think? What stood out for you? What do you wonder about?

I have another video for us let’s see if any of you can relate to “The Time Barrier” <https://vimeo.com/117428368>

Imagine yourself with the time it would take to be a great neighbour.

What are the things you would have to sacrifice to make that a reality?

Why would it be worth it?

What could change in your life or in your neighbourhood?

This week I want to invite you to take notice in your neighbourhood.

Now when I say neighbourhood most of us have two of them as I think about our opportunities.

One neighbourhood is the neighbourhood of our church.

The second neighbourhood is the neighbourhood in which you live.

We actually have a bit of an advantage in Squamish because it is a small enough town that we can create life-giving opportunities in both and not have too much work.

I want you to imagine with me that this week and this lent is the beginning of our ministry. I want you to look at our church, our ministry and our space with Compassionate seeing: Fresh eyes on the places where you live, work and go to church.

☆This is an opportunity to get to know our BIG Why. What is God’s dream for us. We need to start there. We need to remember who we are and what our purpose is before we start just launching into busy work. How are we going to Host Gods dream for the world? We have to discover what the story of our place might be inviting us to. We don’t have to create a new story there is already a story here. The spirit is already alive, God is already at work. How will we join in? What if our why was Shalom? Offering peace, love, fullness of life to everyone we meet our of every program we do? We can’t just witness God’s dream we have to live it.

We will never reach God’s dream if the church building or even the worship service is our WHY. How does our faith life intersect with the needs of our community?

☆In the next weeks we will hear me talk a lot about Faithful Presence because I think that is exactly what we are to be about. I will get into that a whole lot more in the weeks to come but for today.

Here are some recommended practices.

1. Be curious and practice noticing small things.
2. Explore the history of your place. *What are the social, political and economic forces that makes this into the place it is today?*

3. Engage in issues of local concern. Follow the local news. Attend city council, police and chamber of commerce meetings. Get to know your local political representatives.
4. Go on a beauty walk, then create something to mark the beauty you notice.
5. Adopt a positive redemptive mantra for moving through your neighbourhood.
  - *Show me where Your glory is displayed in this place and among these people.*
  - *Help me to think Your thoughts and feel Your feelings.*
  - *May Your Kingdom come and Your will be done, here and now as it is in heaven*
  - *May Your peace and prosperity be on this place and the people I see*
6. Walk around your neighbourhood with a child, a pet or someone who doesn't live there - you will see through different eyes.
7. Make yourself available. Put your phone away. Remove your ear buds and sun glasses. Slow down and talk to people. Spend time in your front yard or on your front step.

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**Vertical Living specific:**

1. Lean into the awkwardness of elevator silence - make eye contact and acknowledge presence of others; initiate conversation or just a "hello" intentionally.
2. Bring cookies or treats to downstairs neighbour when you accidentally wash a bunch of dirt onto their deck below. Turn mistakes into opportunities.
3. Prop your door open to the hallway.
4. Knock on doors to borrow things instead of running out to the store (eggs, sugar - all the cliches).
5. Sit in the lobby to read books.
6. Progressive dinner on your floor.
7. Utilize common area for meals together and other gatherings
8. Books and slippers(book club)

This week as we enter into the lenten journey to the art of neighbouring let me encourage you to be a faithful presence in this neighbourhood and in the neighbourhood in which you live.