

June 2, 2020  
All the Prayers of God's People

Today's prayer is one for the future of SOPC based on our mission statement:

*"Loving our neighbor, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ"*

Loving our neighbor is one of the most simple and basic commandments of scripture, beginning with the first followers of God, Leviticus 19:18; "Forget about the wrong things people do to you. Don't try to get even. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

The concept of loving our neighbor is so pivotal to God that it shows up throughout the gospels and epistles (Mark 12:31, Matthew 7:12 and 25:40, 1 John 4:21, Romans 13:8-10 to name a few). Not only is it our commandment, but it is the human calling which shapes this earth and the people in it to begin to resemble the Kingdom of God. We don't love simply because we are told to, it is deep down in our human nature, given by God, and edges us just a little more towards a Divine world here on earth.

What, though, does loving our neighbor look like, especially during Covid 19 and times of violence? One of the most difficult parts of our recent events has been the lack of hands on ministry work in our small corner of the kingdom at Seven Oaks. It is hard to "love neighbor" when we cannot utilize the physical aspects of mission as we would do normally. So, in the Spirit of Pentecost, perhaps the answer for our church is to pray over and "reimagine" what loving our neighbor looks like here and now.

For example, the world Jesus inhabited here on earth was full of opportunities to love neighbor, he only had to reimagine how he could be with that person in that moment. When Jesus reached out to the lepers in his midst, he was practicing loving our neighbor. For us, wearing a mask is perhaps the same practicing loving our neighbor as we are protecting both them and us in love.

When Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery, he forgave and requested that she sin no more. For us, loving our neighbor might also look like forgiveness but also working in the Kingdom here on earth to make sure it happens no more! This is particularly true in terms of racial deaths and violence in our world.

Loving our neighbor, for Jesus, looked like eating at tables with sinners and ill-reputes, breaking bread together. For us, perhaps loving our neighbor means working so that bread is even available.

Loving our neighbor, for Jesus, meant taking time to stop and pray in order to go back into the neighborhoods and be touched, be called upon, to be in ministry. Perhaps loving our neighbor at this particular moment truly is about stopping to pray, that we too, will be ready for whatever comes next.

Loving our neighbor is part and parcel for loving our God. Through the church (the people of God), we participate in this loving. So, as we prepare and reimagine how we are being called to love our neighbor, let us begin with a prayer that we will be able to see by the power of the Holy Spirit just how we can be in this ministry now and in the future.