

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

September 25, 2022 "What is praying, and how can I be better at it?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing, and you can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Fall is here and we have several things planned to the end of the year. Our children's program is growing and we're still tweaking ways to love on them well. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can see all that through our brand new website, upgraded app, and social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. If you're joining us online, we appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Recap.

Okay, Sunday was a different experience, but we wanted to show how it fits into the entire theme of renovating your faith. We'll go into the specifics in the next section. A quick recap first. We talked about the process of renovating your faith, (in some circles it's called Deconstruction). Basically it's having the courage to pull out our beliefs, hold them up to the light of scripture. And look for things we may believe, hold to be true, but are actually areas we are spiritually blind. This is kind of a tough process, but it's so necessary to keep our relationship with God fresh and alive. We then talked about God, and came to the realization that we have to use words to talk about God. But words are so limiting. And will come from our own experiences rather than the nature of God. So, we learn to know and experience God from those places that words just can't do justice. Then last week we talked about the purpose of scripture, and how to read and interpret it. There were several tools we included that could help us navigate the complexities and context of scripture that would make it make more sense to us. All of this is available in the past episodes.

III Sunday.

We ended this series with a two part message to talk about the future of NCC and what we want others to experience when they participate in anything here...especially worship. We kind of wove in the idea of prayer. But not as a specific discipline, or something God told us to do. But as a way to meet God directly. To find from God what we need. You also heard our hearts about the future of NCC, and what we believe and hope should happen in the Sunday morning worship experience.

How could you describe 'prayer' as something more than just telling God your needs?

What would you want and hope for when you meet with God?

Where do you struggle in connecting, listening to, understanding what God wants for you?

How can NCC help, be a place, to meet God?

There were two scriptures used. The first scripture was the backstory or set up, for the three famous parables that Jesus would then tell that highlighted what his ministry was about. And the second one was Jesus clearing the temple talking about the purpose of gathering together.

Read **Luke 15:1-2**, and **Luke 19:45-48**, then we'll pull some truths from it.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What does it say about religious leaders and what they valued?

What does it say about what Jesus valued?

What does a “house of prayer” mean to you?

Message part 1.

In this part of the message we used the above scripture to talk about what we want the future for NCC to look like. NCC has always been a place that valued and encouraged diversity. It has set NCC apart from most of the other churches of that day. However, what diversity, and inclusion, meant 30 years ago is different from what it means today. And in order to continue to be a church that truly embraces diversity, modeling what we saw in the life of Jesus, the definition of diversity must change also. It was obvious that Jesus was severely criticized for hanging around people the religious leaders didn't think were worthy of God's love. 30 years ago people of color and whites worshipping together was blazing a new trail. It's not so much today. NCC must be a place that continues to love others, ALL OTHERS, more than it cares about what religious puresets believe.

So, what does that look like today?

What would a church, in 2022, soon to be 2023, look like if it practiced the same radical inclusiveness that Jesus did?

What criticism would NCC have to accept to look like Jesus?

Message part 2.

After having communion, the second message was hearing from the staff what worship could look like if we made it more about experiencing and meeting God than putting on a program. We want people to be able to have moments of praise and worship. We want people to be able to hear scripture preached and interpreted. But if we just generate content for people to consume, then we are just creating consumers and not disciples. We are called to make disciples. People who choose to actively walk the path of becoming followers of Jesus. That means creating an inviting, welcoming environment for everyone, and not just running a show. But opening up space for everyone to meet God personally. Where they are, what's happening in their life, and what they need. So...

What do you need?

What are you looking for?

What would give you hope, encouragement, the strength and desire to go on?

IV Challenge.

Not a whole lot of specifics in this message. We were sharing our hearts, what we want and hope for NCC for 2023 and beyond. And how we would love for each of you to be an integral part of this wild and wonderful journey. If you want a nice, neat, clean, smooth ride just doing 'church'. This most likely is not the place. If you're good with an often wild and unpredictable journey, this may be your place. We're going to experiment, try different things, trust God, and not our own cleverness. Scripture shows God likes, loves, to take his people on journeys beyond their imagination and also beyond their own abilities. But it's a journey that radically changes people's lives. And your leaders are up for that. This is a big deal, important enough for us to do everything we can to help everyone...the doubters, questioners, seekers, and those of you who have been doing this awhile have a moment with God.

How would you like to be a part and join us on this journey?