

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday July, 5 2020 "All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten" "The Giving Tree; a lesson in sacrifice".

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to watch the live stream service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it. Whether you're still joining us online or in person, we love and so appreciate your presence. We still are your church family and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Sunday.

Sunday we began a new series called: ***"Everything I need to know I learned in kindergarten"***.

First, we have to admit this is from a famous book by Robert Fulghum that just encapsulates life truths in simple stories. I can't recommend this book highly enough. Second, we are using this title, because more often than not, the greatest and most impacting truths we have learned are the ones we were taught when we were children. But we let becoming an adult override what we know are better ways to live.

And to 'fix', (a horrible word we know), the ills of our culture, sometimes we just need to return to those truths we learned as children, and put them into practice in our daily lives.

Sunday we began with the children's book, ***"The Giving Tree"*** by Shel Silverstein. A familiar book by an author many of us love. Without retelling the entire story in the book, I recommend getting the book or watching the YouTube video that retells this story. You can view that video in the message. It's based on an understanding of selflessness, sacrifice, giving of course. And frames it in the story of a boy and a tree. So, let's talk about the nature of selflessness and what it means to actually give.

How do you understand and see selflessness, sacrifice?

What inhibits or stands in the way of people, including yourself, practicing selflessness?

Share a time you experienced someone being selfless, sacrificial?

The scripture we used is a fairly familiar story of the feeding of the 5,000. Even if you have very little history or experience with the church, you've probably heard this story before. It's told in all four gospels, (different accounts and versions of the ministry of Jesus), and each with a little different information. We used two of the accounts to paint this broad picture of this story. So read **Matthew 14:13-21**, and **John 6:1-14**, (it won't take long at all), to get a feel of this story.

So, what jumped out to you about this story?

Did you see anything new or different?

How did you understand selflessness in light of the boy sharing his lunch?

Let's look at the specifics of this story, and see what it takes to live a life of selflessness and sacrifice.

1. Compassion. The first idea is referenced in the description of Jesus when Matthew said; "*he had compassion on them*". Sacrifice begins with the growth of compassion within us. Compassion is the ability to actually feel and experience what someone else is, and is the cornerstone of selflessness.

So, how do you understand and define compassion?

What are barriers for you in feeling compassion for someone else?

What has helped you push past those barriers in being compassionate?

2. Responsibility. The second thing Kal pulled from this passage, is Jesus told the disciples to "*go feed the people*". They had seen Jesus do all sorts of miracles, and knew that Jesus had the power and means to simply produce enough food for everyone. But Jesus was telling them it was their responsibility to meet people where they are, in their need, and to go take care of that need.

How have you seen in the church or in your own practice of faith, a tendency to ask God to meet a need rather than stepping up and meeting it yourself?

And then from both the book "*The Giving Tree*", and from this story of the feeding of the 5,000, Kal hit three truths about how we can understand and practice living sacrificially and selflessly.

1. Know what you have to give. You can only give what you have. The tree gave really small things at first. Leaves, shade, a place to hang out. It was a tree so it gave 'tree things'. To live sacrificially you have to know what you have to share. This will require some effort and work to know what you have you can share sacrificially and selflessly for the betterment of others. If you don't know what you have to share...then that's your first step. And your "*five loaves and two fish*" may feel like a small sack lunch, but the difference it can make could be world changing.

2. Know what you have is yours to share and do good. What you have was meant to be shared. Trees are beautiful, remember Joyce Kilmer, and do so much good. But the good is in the tree giving up what it has for the benefit of others. We all have gifts and abilities that do no good, nor provide any true happiness if we keep them to ourselves. In order to experience true happiness, and fulfillment, we have to be willing to share...sacrificially.

3. What you sacrifice and share are 'seeds'. We have to move past our culture's value that sees sacrifice is an investment with a known R.O.I. an exchange of services. We know true **sacrifice is an act of faith.** We may never see the fruit of our selflessness. Our culture loves stories of sacrifice, selflessness, primarily because it's not the way our society works so those stories stand out. So when we give of ourselves it's with the realization that there will be good, but we may not see it.

III Challenge.

Lastly we know that real sacrifice, living selflessly, infuses a community with the DNA that will not only make it a place you want to live, but ensures the survival of that community in the future. And that true sacrifice moves a group of people forward into the future they want to live in.

So, what one or two things could you do selflessly that would grow the type of world you want to live in?