**FAITH365 September 2019**

**A Call to Unity**

**WELCOME:**

**Thanks for coming today and sharing in this session of Faith 365. It is wonderful to see you.**

**Let us be in the moment, to be still, to leave the cares of life to the side, if for just a moment.**

**PAUSE**

**Take a moment and go around the table and introduce yourself. In your introduction, using one sentence, tell the group what you enjoy most about the upcoming Autumn season.**

**(Discussion at table in small groups)**

**To help us become centered in the present moment, we will listen to a song of meditation. The table leader will give out the lyrics.**

**SONG OF MEDITATION**

*I want to walk as a child of the light*

*I want to follow Jesus.*

*God send the stars to give light to the world*

*The star of my life is Jesus*

*In him there is no darkness at all*

*The night and the day are both alike*

*The lamb is the light of the city of God*

*Shine in my heart Lord Jesus*

*I want to see the brightness of God*

*I want to look at Jesus*

*Clear Son of Righteousness shine on my path*

*And show me the way to the Father*

*I’m looking for the coming of Christ*

*I want to be with Jesus*

*When we have run with patience the race*

*We shall know the joy of Jesus*

**FOCUS: We are now in the third week of September; students are well into the classes and assignments in the new school year. As we think about students returning to school, the quote of the Albert Schweitzer, missionary and theologian, comes to mind: *there are only three ways to teach a child. The first is by example, the second is by example and the third is by example.***

**The sermons and parables of Jesus, his words and teaching fill the New Testament. Yet when we read and reflect on the stories found in the Bible, we see that Jesus taught by example. And taught by example. And taught by example. He walked with people; he accompanied them in their daily life; he shared daily bread and prayer and work. His disciples were united in following his example, and in doing so, came to realize that they were brothers and sisters. Even more, the example of Jesus revealed they were to be brothers and sisters to those whose lives and even faith were different. The parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus’ dining with the hated tax collector Zacchaeus and spending time with sinners were all examples of how to be a disciple.**

**We live in a challenging time; politics and world-views divide us. People become unwilling to listen and understand, even if they disagree. In our daily lives we may struggle with others over family issues or challenges that face us at work. How can we as disciples do more to create unity and understanding? What are we taking with us as we make the journey of faith?**

**Reminders: (don’t need to read word for word…just to give general idea)**

***PARTICIPATE Everyone has some wisdom; while no one is forced to share, sometimes the comment you think is not profound actually is the one that many remember.***

***BE PRESENT Make every effort to leave problems and things you need to do at the door; please turn off or silence cell phones.***

***BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE Don’t be afraid if there is silence or feel the need to say something –unless you want to—just because no one is speaking.***

***BE GENTLE ABOUT DIFFERENCES We may see things differently, but we are on the path together.***

***OUR AGENDA IS PEACE NOT POLITICS Be cautious about injecting political agenda that is not central to the conversation. No bashing of individuals, but respect always for those with whom we do not agree.***

**~Would someone be willing to read our scripture passage:**

**We listen now to this reading: Luke 10: 1-11**

After this the Lord appointed seventy[-two] others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way.

Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’ If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the laborer deserves his payment.

Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand for you.’ Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, ‘The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.’ Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand.

We will now have a discussion at our tables on the questions listed at the end of the reading. We will take a few moments of quiet and then feel free to share as you are ready.

**WHAT DID I HEAR?**

**WHAT DO I THINK IT MEANS?**

**WHAT CHALLENGE DOES IT OFFER?**

**(Discussion at table in small groups)**

**(The session leader will need to keep track of time and estimate when the groups are ready to continue.)**

**FILM:** Cesar Millan is a dog trainer best known for his television series and books called The Dog Whisperer. In recent years he began a foundation that is called Cesar Millan PACK Project. The foundation provides financial support to animal shelters and foundations engaged in rescuing, rehabilitating and re-homing abused and abandoned animals. In the official words of the foundation, it aims to “improve the health, happiness and harmony of dogs and people, while helping both species learn from and support each other.” The video we are about to watch was put out by his foundation. His explanation of the video reads, *wouldn’t it be amazing if everyone got along like this all the time? It isn’t just dogs that need walking.*

**FOR DISCUSSION AFTER THE VIDEO:**

 **(Discussion at table in small groups)**

Was there a word, phrase or image that stood out for you in the video?

Have you ever had an experience that helped you see someone in a different light? Has there been experience in your life when you realized you were more like someone than you previously thought? How did faith guide you in that experience?

Have you learned a lesson of life or a lesson of faith from an animal on your life’s journey?

We live in a time of increasing polarization; it appears that we are not always walking together. In your daily life (not nationally or globally) what are the things that create a lack of unity and understanding? How can people of faith change that in daily life?

What words of Jesus come to mind when you experience prejudice or lack of understanding; to what are we being called in those moments?

How can Christians elevate the conversation; that is, how can we move the conversation that polarizes to a conversation that seeks understanding? Putting political and social differences to the side, how do you do that in your daily life with family and friends?

In this time of national and global polarization, what keeps your faith strong, how do you maintain a vision of hope?

Milan says that in order for the pack to walk together:

*You need to have trust, respect, love. You need to be honest*

*You need to have integrity*

What makes it hard for you to have those things; what helps?

In the video, Milan observes that “animals pick up on our energy that you realize.” Have you ever picked up on someone’s energy faster than you realized? How about faith; have you every picked up (been challenged or helped) on someone’s faith?

In reading the gospels, we encounter a Jesus who walks with people in their lives, and realizes it is about understanding the psychology and energy of each individual he met. On your journey, what makes it hard to talk about your faith, or to ask about the faith of someone else? How do we break through the things that make it hard?

Jesus is direct in the gospel passage we read about what disciples are to take on the journey. What are the things we carry with us that make unity and understanding of others more difficult? Why is it hard to let go?

**PRAYER AND RESPONSE**

As we bring this time of prayer to a close, let us share the challenges we face and the blessings for which we are grateful. So we will spend a few moments now in quiet. And as you feel moved, share either a challenge or blessing you would like to bring to prayer (or both.)

**THE LORD’S PRAYER:** let us now pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Thanks so much for being here. We will continue to have monthly sessions throughout the Fall.

**The dates for the October Faith 365 will be:**

**~Sunday, October 27th from 9:45-11:15am for the morning session**

**~Wednesday, October 30th from 7:30-9:00pm for the evening session**

**Luke 10: 1-11**

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