

11/16/2020 – SERVICE PROJECT: Incarnational Love

Last week we learned again that Jesus died for our sins, and we thought about what that really means. We considered that we are created for relationship, but that SIN works against us as SIN...

- POLLUTES our hearts, poisoning our relationships with God and one another,
- POWERFULLY addicts and enslaves us, even to harming others and ourselves,
- Brings PENALTY of DEATH (of relationships and more),
- And causes a PARTITION between us and God, a partition that we have built.

Then we heard that God takes loving action, becoming one of us in Jesus the Christ, taking our SIN upon God's self and dying on the cross for you and for me, overcoming SIN's effect in our lives.

With this service project, we're going to take a step in making that love and mercy incarnational (embodied in our lives, hearts, minds, and actions).

- 1) Read Matthew 18:15-35. With whom did you identify in Jesus' commands and parable? Why?
- 2) Choose one of the following exercises to do:
 - a. A COMMUNITY EXERCISE:
 - i. Go for a walk in your neighborhood, praying for the people that live or work or play in those homes, businesses, or other buildings. Ask God to pour God's love, mercy and healing of broken relationships into the hearts and relationships of those inside.
 - ii. An option to this would be all online: Meet as a small group via Zoom. Think together about people in our community and larger world who need God's love, mercy and healing of broken relationships, and then take time to pray for them (as above).
 - b. A MORE CHALLENGING COMMUNITY EXERCISE:
 - i. Make cards that share God's mercy and hope with a person presently in jail and accused of being a sex offender. Although they have not yet been convicted, chances are high that will be the result with much prison time ahead. Amidst their fear and shame, do you have a word of mercy and hope to share? For example, could you tell them that you'll be praying for them? That God's mercy and hope gives our hearts, minds, and living new creation? If so, make a card without any personal details about you (e.g., no name, no specific descriptions of yourself, your family, your friends, etc.).
 - ii. Get the cards to Pastor Steve, and after double-checking the cards, he will send them to the jail in a pastoral care package to this individual.
 - c. A VERY PERSONAL EXERCISE:
 - i. Is there someone that you need to speak with, asking their forgiveness or sharing your forgiveness?
 - ii. What is God inviting you to do at this time?
 - iii. Pray for that person(s) and make plans of next steps.
 - iv. How can your small group support you?

The implications of Jesus' death for our sins is wonderful yet also challenging in our lives. Thank you for taking at least one step in God's healing of sin's broken ways in our world.