

A Matter of the Heart

Generosity as an Instrument of Abundance

November 15, 2020

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6.19-21)

Opening

Greet one another and agree on confidentiality and agree to practice sacred listening as everyone shares from their own unique experiences and sacred stories.

Time of Centering

Get comfortable in your seat with your feet flat on the floor with your hands laying on your lap letting go of tension throughout your body. Take a couple of slow, deep, cleansing breaths. Relax your jaw, face and shoulders. Take a few moments in silence to rest your mind and focus on your breath. It is the breath of God within you.

Bring to mind something you are grateful for and allow that gratitude to flow from your heart throughout your body as a prayer of blessing to God.

Take a few moments to briefly share your gratitude with the group.

Spiritual Practice

Lectio Divina means divine reading and is a spiritual practice using scriptures, poems or quotes. **Invite someone to read John 5:5-13 below from *The Message* out loud. Listen, using sacred/ Reflective listening, for a word or phrase that touches your heart or stands out for you.**

When Jesus looked out and saw that a large crowd had arrived, he said to Philip, "Where can we buy bread to feed these people?" He said this to stretch Philip's

faith. He already knew what he was going to do. Philip answered, "Two hundred silver pieces wouldn't be enough to buy bread for each person to get a piece." One of the disciples – It was Andrew, brother to Simon Peter – said, "There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this." Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took the bread and, having giving thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish. All ate as much as they wanted. When the people had eaten their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather the leftovers so nothing is wasted." They went to work and filled twelve large baskets with leftovers from the five barley loaves.

After a few minutes of quiet, invite someone else from the group to read the scripture out loud a second time. Invite a person from the group to read it a third time. Then, if you are comfortable, share with the group what emerged for you through the practice of Lectio Divina.

Discussion based on Sunday's Church at Home Message

God gives us a **peace that passes all understanding** - even when we are caught in the storms of life. This peace is beyond what we can conjure up on our own by breathing deeply, counting to ten or any other things we might try.

It is the most outrageous blessing of abundance when we sense peace and well-being at the most challenging moment possible.

Ask a member of the group to read the following story.

Pastor Larry shared the story of the Spafford family. Horatio, a prosperous Chicago lawyer, was making shrewd investments in properties along Lake Michigan. He and his wife, Anna, were blessed with four daughters and a son, and living comfortably in the Lakeview neighborhood on the city's north side.

Then a series of tragedies struck. First, the Spaffords' four-year-old son died of scarlet fever. A short time later, the great Chicago fire of 1871 caused extensive damage to the properties that the Spaffords owned. The economic downturn of 1873 dealt a further blow to Horatio's business interests.

In late 1873, needing a break, the family decided to travel to Europe.

Needing to stay in Chicago to resolve some fire-related zoning problems, Horatio sent Anna and the girls ahead on the S.S. Ville du Havre. On November 22, the ship was struck by an English vessel in the Atlantic and sank quickly.

Anna, who stayed afloat by clinging to debris, was one of only 47 people who survived. Her four daughters drowned. When she reached Cardiff, Wales, Anna sent her husband a telegram: "Saved alone."

The grieving father hastily traveled to meet his grieving wife. As his ship passed the area where his daughters had died, Horatio, a devout Christian steward, wrote the hymn "It Is Well". The first verse says, "...when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well with my soul.'

Questions

1. Have you witnessed a person experiencing the peace that passes understanding during tragedy or loss? Have you experienced this yourself?

If you have not had that experience, can you imagine what the peace that passes understanding would mean to you during a time of loss?

2. Sometimes we forget our own stories of abundant peace, providence, or an amazing turn of events when we were losing hope. Remembering and recounting our stories of grace remind us that abundance does reside in our midst.
3. If you are willing, share your story of amazing grace.

Action Step

You have used the spiritual practice of Lectio Divina and considered how the peace that passes understanding is the most outrageous blessing of abundance. Out of your time together, and with what you have shared with one another, consider one action step that you can take this week to put your faith into action. Take a moment to share your one step with your group.

Prayer

Lift the requests of the group members, as well as prayers that will assist you as you put your faith into action.

Crossroads Events

Sunday Evenings at the Labyrinth

Each Sunday through December 20, from 6–7pm, Crossroads is offering a time to walk the labyrinth. This is a time of deep reflection, of honoring our personal losses, (jobs, relationships, security), as well as our precious friends and family who have passed away. The labyrinth will be lighted with blue lights and hosts will

be present to direct you as you step onto the path. The labyrinth is located on Crossroads property behind the fenced play area.

Register <https://www.crossroadsnova.org/labyrinth-on-sunday-evenings>

Annual Thanksgiving Day Run is Virtual!

Keep your tradition streak alive and run with us on Thanksgiving Day or sometime throughout the holiday weekend! You can do so from wherever you will be spending Thanksgiving!

Choose to join us at the traditional time and day - Thanksgiving Day, November 26 at 8:15 AM from your own front door and use our RaceJoy technology to "run together" with friends, and family! Or take advantage of the ability to sleep in on Thanksgiving and choose to run anytime through the holiday weekend. November 26 - November 29!

We know you struggle every year deciding if you should do the 10k, the 5k or the 2k, well this year, you can do them all! Choose to run our virtual Thanksgiving Feast challenge which offers ALL the distances! This challenge will have you working off your second (and third) helping in no time!

Register [here](#).

To live as Jesus lived is to understand that Jesus modeled the character of God. Generosity is at the core of our spiritual inheritance.

Good news! God is especially fond of each one of us. Pass it on.