**I was looking for a sign, all I got was an address**

**The Word**

Read together Mark 12:28-34

**The Big Idea**

You are not far from the kingdom of God if you know the right answers, but you are part of it when you start doing it. We are called to love God and love our neighbors and we need to be intentional about both. Jesus, along with Paul and James might just say that "loving our neighbor is where the rubber meets the road” in our faith journey.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. When considering the Greatest Commandment, how do you articulate your pursuit of loving God and loving your neighbor?
2. Why do you think God put your at your specific address? Have you seen opportunities or met people you feel God might be wanting to bring about his redemption?
3. What are ways the culture is isolating your neighborhood? In what ways have you bought into habits that are isolating. With the statistics mentioned on Sunday (1 out of 2 people are experiencing loneliness and its healthier to smoke 15 cigarettes a day than be lonely) and Jesus call to love our neighbors, how might you view you street differently?
4. On Sunday we talked about Grace in Action as a discipleship journey of service. Following Jesus’ commands will, in turn, make us more like him. What if the stranger next door is a mercy of God to accomplish that very thing in your life? How might this play out? Have you seen this already in your life? If so, share with the group.

**Digging Deeper**

Read Galatians 6:7-10. Focusing especially on verse 10, How might we treat believers different than “all people”? Are we ever called to love or serve someone less?

**Sermon Outline**

FAITH IN ACTION - Act out what you believe.

Grace in Action: The Grace / Mercy / Love that we offer to those around us / Unmerited Favor. Not because they deserve it but because God first loved us.

**Grace In Action** is a discipleship journey OF SERVICE where we grow as we are loving others.

Goal is to see loving our neighbors as an essential part of our relationship with God.

**Neighbor (DF)** The Bible defines neighbor as “the other” or the “every” in everyone. There is no such thing as a non-neighbor.

In the end, a neighbor can be defined as much more than the people who live next door, but it can never be defined as less. Today, although the definition is broad, let us **specifically look at those we are called to that share our same street.**

**Greatest Commandment**

“Love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your should and with all your mind and with all your strength.

The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

LOVE GOD. (My observation is that the Western Church has focused on this and rightly so) We as believers know that Loving God doesn’t just happen by accident. We are a relationship that we nurture. We have to put things into our life to draw closer to God.

We shape our lives around these practices.. (its counter cultural, its even hard)

But then we get to the Love Our Neighbor.

And we don’t share the same fervor. We don’t share the same conviction. Its almost optional. I’m not a people person, I’m not gifted in evangelism. Or we just complain, “Its too hard.”

But **these** are the most important commandment. v31b

So why do Paul and James seemingly hone in on just one commandment:

**Galatians 5:14**

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

**James 2:8**

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.

## **Isn’t that what Christ did?** The message version of John 1:14, says,

## The Word became flesh and blood,    and moved into the neighborhood.We saw the glory with our own eyes,    the one-of-a-kind glory,    like Father, like Son,Generous inside and out,    true from start to finish.

## He left Heaven (the nicest gated community ever), and moved into our neighborhood. When we didn’t want him, he initiated and brought a redemptive relationship. He pointed the way in order to bring Glory to the FATHER.

**Good Samaritan Story**. The set up and the conclusion of the story are very similar to our Greatest commandment scripture:

—Luke 10:25-29, 36-37

 What must I do to inherit eternal life? That was the question.

 The expert answers correctly (twice) Jesus says DO this and you will live.

 TRIES TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF (like we all do)

 The one who was the neighbor had the heart posture of Mercy on the man.

 Jesus says, Go and do likewise.

This is our Faith IN ACTION - Showering Grace/MERCY on those we have the opportunity to serve. Isn’t wasn’t enough to know the right answers.

**\* Neighboring is where the rubber meets the road of our faith.**

Mark 12:33 - To love him with all your heart, and with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. (intrinsically linked)

(ISOLATION)

In the garden, the first neighborhood, Satan came and Isolated Adam and Eve from God. Then he Isolated Adam and Eve from each other. Isolation is our weakness.

If he isolates us, he wins. We cannot love or be loved.

The Surgeon General is worried about how Isolated the US population is. In 2023 the government came out with a brief called, “Our epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation.”

The brief says that the study (pre-pandemic) puts 1 in 2 adults reported experiencing loneliness. The highest rates are among young adults!

Good news for smokers. Its better to smoke 15 cigs a day than be lonely according to the report.

Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk for premature death by

God has a plan, he has placed the body of Christ into all kinds of different neighborhoods in order to make connections and love those who are next door.

A home group just told me that they realized the street they meet on had 5 widows. FIVE! So they came up with a yearly calendar of touchpoint to show love to them. Valentines day, mothers day, Christmas - ect.

Another person at Grace realized they had 3 widows on their street. What an amazing opportunity to show Grace in Action.

**Let’s not wait till tragedy strikes to love our neighbors.**

**Resources:**  [GIA Page](https://www.gracefellowshipchurch.org/mission-outreach/grace-in-action/), books, “Placed for a purpose: a simple and sustainable vision for loving your next-door neighbors - by Chris and Elizabeth McKinny

**Intentional Posture:** humbly,

**Create Connections**

* Pray
* Get to know their names / stories
* Be available - let them know you are there. You can’t force a relationship, but you can let them know you are there.
* Be a better listener

 David Augsburger writes, “Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.” Jonathan Chatraw adds, “Of course we need to speak and make appeals for the gospel, but listening and hearing people out—in a culture where people feel like they have to get their points out before they get cut off—can plow the ground for gospel conversation.”

* Break Down Barriers - extra grace and extra kindness, care for them.

 Grace Families share a neighbor - grump old man - loved a old man.

* The “art of receiving” is incredibly important. It’s kind of like the art of being needy when it comes to neighboring.

**Honorable Hospitality**

* Your house is a Gospel Weapon. Bring people in, share a meal.

 We offer hospitality within the context of knowing Jesus as both our greater host and our potential guest. The grace we experience in receiving Jesus’ welcome energizes our hospitality while it undermines our pride and self-righteousness. The possibility of welcoming Christ as our guest strengthens our kindness and fortitude in responding to strangers. -Christine Pohl

* Or the front yard? This could be one person, two people or the whole neighborhood.Bring honor to your guests.

**Community Centered**

 Share what you are doing, invite others into the process. Let neighbors meet neighbors, this does not hinge on you. Get other believers involved. Break the epidemic of loneliness and isolation. Invite them to to Bible groups in your home, or tea parties. Create connectedness.

**Redemptive Relationships**

God isn’t sending us to be nice neighbors, but intentional neighbors that bring redemptive relationships and community. Look and pray for ways to bring Jesus into the conversation.

LOVE GOD / LOVE NEIGHBOR

1. Initiate
2. Serve
3. Cultivate

PARTNERSHIP: Our Love of neighbor comes through the empowering spirit as we look to serve and love him through the service of those who he has put around us. We glorify him in all we do.

**Brant’s Story (page 141 of Unoffendable)**

**Mark 12 Verse 34** Jesus told the teacher of the law, “you are not far from the Kingdom of God” because he had answered correctly, but knew he hadn’t done it yet. Just like In Luke 10 as he answered the expert of the law, “Go and do likewise.”