



WEEKLY STUDY January 14-20, 2024

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

No Time Like the Present

Our sermon series for January is: No Time Like The Present.

It's a new year with new opportunities. As disciples, Jesus invites us to a life of growth, transformation, greater purpose and deeper meaning. We are invited to get started today and be led to all that Jesus has in store for us, our families, and our communities.

Our scripture this week is: Matthew 4:18-22

"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

- 1) We are now in week two of our January theme: "No Time Like the Present." Last week Pastor Sam talked about the visit of the Magi and reminded us that they bowed down and worshiped the child Jesus. She asked, "What might change if we were to bow down and worship Jesus." This week we continue the theme with Jesus calling his first disciples. Sam talked about this important aspect of those callings: those called immediately left what they were doing to follow Jesus. I thought of a book I read awhile back entitled, "Don't Overthink It." The author told of how she would often not get around to doing something she felt she needed to do because she would overthink it. She would try to second guess anything that might go wrong, anticipate every pro and con, and then accomplish nothing because she would get caught up in the web of her own mind. I identify with the author. I do not identify with the disciples. And yet, I know the reason I may not do what I would want to do is because I create a web of thinking that binds me into doing nothing.

Question: *Who are you most like? The disciples that immediately followed Jesus? Or the author who outlined ways she paralyzed herself from action by overthinking? What might you need to do to free yourself for action?*

- 2) As Pastor Sam helped us consider the scripture, and the willingness of the fishermen to lay down their nets and follow Jesus, she said, "if we are willing to go, like the fishermen, God will use the skills, talents, and gifts we already possess for the sake of

the kingdom.” And she stated, while some may feel led to change professions, move to another place, or leave behind all their stuff, most of us may just need to be reminded that God uses us right where we are with what we have.

Question: What skills, talents and gifts do you possess? How can you envision God enabling you to use those gifts for the sake of God’s kingdom?

- 3) Pastor Sam told a wonderful story of how blessings are passed from one to another. She talked about having been sick for awhile and still not feeling well when she had to go for an echo-cardiogram. A visit she was dreading turned into a time of blessing by the technician who ministered to her during that test. The technician, Harley, told Sam we are called to be a light. And in her actions, in her singing, in the reminder to be a light, Sam left the appointment strengthened. With that strength Sam went to see one of our beloved members, Bob Little, who was in the last moments of his life. Sam recounted that time and how she was able to lean into the strength provided by Harley and be fully present with Bob in the sacred time as he transition from this life to the next. She reminded us all to use the life we have to bless others. She reminded us that we don’t have to have everything figured out to do so. We just lean into the strength of a loving God who accompanies us always.

Question: When have you been at a low place yourself and found yourself so blessed and strengthened by the actions of another that you were then prepared to pass that blessing on to someone else?

- 4) Once again, we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In Sunday’s worship our choir sang “I Dream a World” that contained words by Langston Hughes. These words provided inspiration to Dr. King for his “I Have a Dream” speech:
”I dream a world where man no other man will scorn, where love will bless the earth,
And peace its path adorn. I dream a world where all will know sweet freedom’s way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white, whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth ad every man is free.
Where wretchedness will hang its head and joy, like a per, attends the needs of all
mankind.
I dream a world.”

Question: What world do you dream? What can you do to move to the reality of the world you dream?

Prayer: Gracious God. At this time of the year, as we once again consider the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., enable us to honestly view what is going on around us. Open our eyes to inequities. Open our eyes to injustice. Open our eyes to words and actions that do harm to others. Open our eyes to acts that destroy the earth. Open our eyes to those who belittle, ridicule, and urge others to commit acts of violence. Help us consider the words Dr. King uttered when he talked of a dream for equality, justice, and love. And – even as we take note of where we continue to fall short of what you would encourage us to do – help us see and grasp onto hope. As we see violence, help us notice those who act to right wrongs. As we see injustice, help us notice those who act to welcome strangers. As we see those possessed by fear

help us to join hands with others in strength to act in spite of fear. Help us continue to hold onto the light of your love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

Weekly Challenge: This week remember in prayer the family who was baptized in Sunday's service and who joined our faith community: Ruby Wu & Don Barnes, Chloe and Louis. Each day during your time of prayer and meditation, consider how you have been able to put the past behind you, let go of worries for the future, and be fully present to yourself and to others.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)