



OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, we thank you for this gathering of our small group and the ways in which you are working through us. As we settle into our time together this week, we ask you to guide our conversations, our thoughts, and relationships. We offer up to you everything that feels weighty or distracting. We ask that you pour out on us your deep peace, which you offer freely. Multiply our time together and help us to pursue you daily. Amen.

COMMUNITY

Time to build relationships: mix + mingle!

- + Did something specific resonate with you from the sermon or worship service?

- + If you couldn't attend, ask others in your group what stood out to them.
(Note: Links to both video and audio versions of previous sermons can be found at www.standrewmethodist.org/podcasts.)

- + Where did you see God's presence in your past weekend?

SITUATION

One of the greatest signals to Jesus' human relatability is his willingness to "be real" with his disciples in the ministry to which he called them. There are moments in his preaching when Jesus lays out what the hard reality of life following him looks like... and it isn't always pretty. But there are plenty of worthwhile things in our own life that aren't always pretty – right? For Christians, "ministry" isn't limited to being ordained... but rather, it is for each one of us. This is why Jesus prepares his followers, through his preaching, that there will be moments of difficulty. There is a cost that comes with discipleship. There is no sugar-coating way around it. We follow Jesus and practice being truth-tellers about the story of our faith that is founded in the reality that God sent his Son to earth in order to begin the redemption mission of God's that includes modeling for us a way to live that honors God, then dying on the cross to atone for our sins and was raised on the third day in glory by conquering death. That is the story, the reality, that we tell as Christians. And it is a massive one, that invites all sorts of responses from others. As Jesus preached to his followers, he brought a message of assurance for us all...that in our ministry, we must prepare ourselves to face whatever comes our way. When we rightly focus ourselves on serving God, it may seem to the world that we are "losing ourselves". We need to focus on the one thing that will always remain: God. In his loving and enduring strength, God will sustain us and calls us to charge forward with unwavering dedication to this story. The story of Jesus. The story of true love.

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

- + What does it mean to be a "disciple"?

- + Understanding the Gospel is key to being willing to endure the cost of following Jesus. In the scriptures today, how does he make this clear to his disciples?

- + What does Jesus mean when he says, "they do not know the one who sent me"?

- + Is this week's preaching theme comforting in any way? Why or why not?

- + Why is the context of the passion week (Jesus' days leading up to the crucifixion) important for the preaching he gives in John 15?

PRACTICAL LIFE QUESTIONS

- + Are you surprised by what Jesus tells his disciples (and us) in John 15? Why or why not?
- + What does Jesus mean when he says “chosen you out of the world” in John 15:19?
- + What is hard about being a Christian in 2023... in what ways is there a “cost” to following Jesus?
- + Who around you inspires you to live out your faith with boldness?
- + What comes to mind when you hear “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul”?

GROWTH

Journal Prompt

Jesus, I want to bear fruit this week so that your light within me can be evident in a world that so desperately needs your Spirit. Help me to be aware of the fruitfulness of this next week. You are the True Vine and I commit to remaining rooted in you, Jesus.

Calling Prompt

God is inviting you to participate in his ministry by answering the unique call on your life. How can you actively respond to scripture and God's presence this week?

Closing Prayer

Let's prepare for the week ahead, shaped by our time together today.

Gracious God, we trust that you go with us in the week ahead. We are changed each time we gather to learn more about you and your Word. Please give us boldness to proclaim your good news in the coming week and bring us back safely together again in this community. Amen.