



Divine Appointments

Message Notes, March 18, 2018

Luke 10:30-37, Acts 8:26-38, John 4:4-26

We all have three concentric circles of influence:

- Family and friends
- Neighbors and associates (“the public square”)
- Strangers we encounter

This week our Harvest series turns to strangers, although that term isn’t quite right; “neighbors yet to meet” may be more accurate. Some of these are perhaps people we cross paths with on a regular basis (such as your bank teller, for example), but just haven’t taken the initiative to engage with yet. Be attentive! Perhaps God has a “divine appointment” in store.

Today, we look at three harvest stories, three divine appointments. These stories are powerful in their own right. They don’t need to be cluttered with detailed explanation. Take time to read each one. Use your imagination. Put yourself in the story. *Be* the characters – what would you be feeling and thinking? What would you wrestle with in your mind as you consider stopping to help the injured man on the road? What are your reflections as you recover in the hotel bed after your rescue? What soulful yearnings do you have as you identify so intimately with the pain and isolation of the one who suffers in Isaiah 53? How does your heart stir as this captivating passage is revealed to be the Messiah Jesus? Imagine your startled guardedness when Jesus reveals the trail of broken relationships in your life? Can you sense the compassionate heart of Jesus, longing to give you living water?

Luke 10: 30-37 – Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan

- This is not so much a story to answer “who is my neighbor?” but rather, “What does it mean to *be* a neighbor?”
- Jesus punctuates his dialogue with the man with the charge, “Go and do likewise.”
- Central principle: See and respond.
- The heart of the harvest call, the key to being salt and light is to see people and then respond with kindness.
- The priest and the Levite embody two obstacles to seeing and responding that we too contend with:
 - Busyness and hurry! We so value time and productivity that we don’t see people.
 - Self absorption. We can be so concerned about our roles, reputations and comforts that we don’t see.
- A third challenge is introverted personality. Many of us are introverted and don’t engage easily in spontaneous conversations. This is surely a challenge, but not a “pass.” We all can find ways to engage in divine appointments.
- David Holt gave inspiring testimony of his recent divine appointments – in a restroom and on a shuttle ride. The connection with these “strangers” have blossomed into ongoing friendships in which Jesus is being revealed!



Acts 8:26-38 – Phillip’s divine appointment with the Ethiopian Eunuch

- This powerful, wealthy Egyptian official is searching for truth, for the true God. As he pores over the scriptures in Isaiah 53, he longs to know, “Is Yahweh the God for me?” God sees this eunuch’s longing heart and He responds by sending Phillip to explain the scriptures to him. And right then, right there, the eunuch believes and is baptized!
- Central principle: God sees first. God is already at work. He goes before. He is the Lord of the harvest.
- We can move into encounters humbly and naturally, with confidence. We don’t have to make something happen. God is at work. We simply see, respond, listen and share. The Holy Spirit reveals, awakens and leads the hearer.

This leads into the final central principle: Jesus causes people to see.

John 4:4-26 – The woman at the well

- Jesus models for us the crossing of social and racial barriers to engage another. He models getting beyond intellectual, theological debates to connect with the heart of a person. Where they are truly thirsty. He reveals that God will speak to us for others. He will give us insights for them – if we will prayerfully listen to Him (and also patiently listen to the other person).