

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 6/19/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, June 20 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those who share their faith with others. Whether parents with children, neighbors with neighbors, missionaries with people in foreign lands, or individuals in conversations with strangers, pray that the HOLY SPIRIT would equip them with words that might inspire faith in others. Ask GOD to bless those who hear the good news to open themselves up to GOD'S possibilities in their lives and be drawn into a deeper relationship with our GOD.*

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When asked why JESUS came, most people would say, “for the salvation of humankind.” And while HE indeed did come to accomplish that, much of HIS earthly ministry was spent restoring relationships. Helping people to reunite with loved ones was a central part of what HIS work here was about.

In 1943, Abraham Maslow published his “Hierarchy of Needs,” a pyramid shaped diagram that discusses the basic needs that are innate to human being. The bottom stage of the pyramid identifies our physiological needs, including breathing, food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep. The second level names our needs for safety and security, like health, employment, property, family, and social ability. The third tier lists our needs for love and belonging, specifically friendship, family, intimacy, and sense of connection. JESUS seemed to be particularly focused on this level when HE worked with the people with whom HE came in contact. (By the way, the remaining two tiers of Maslow's Hierarchy are self-esteem and self-actualization.)

JESUS recognized how much people need human relationship and a sense of belonging. HE also saw how religious and societal rules were damaging these connections for many people. Thus, JESUS spent a great deal of effort in helping to restore people to their lost relationships or pushing them to reevaluate their priorities to see relationship as being valuable and fulfilling to our life experience. When JESUS healed those who had leprosy or cast out demons (often the identification for extreme medical or psychological maladies), HE was removing what kept people from their families and neighbors. These miraculous healings allowed people who had been shunned and forced to leave their communities or who were unable to be in relationship with others to return to the familial and social groups from which they had been pushed away. Obviously, raising the dead also restored lost family and neighborly connections. And HIS challenges to people to reject wealth over people, like with the rich young man or Zacchaeus, helped them to rethink what was most important in their lives and find the real worth that comes in companionship and fellowship. JESUS was very much about bringing people together, especially in recognition of their worth to each other in GOD'S eyes.

We are blessed to be able to find this kind of connection in our community of faith. Not everyone has the family relationships that can support them. But the church can and does provide the kind of encouragement and fellowship that we need and that so many lack. More than this, when we gather with our sisters and brothers in the faith, we offer that connection to them by our presences. When I ask people why they come to church each week, of course, their first answer is, “to worship GOD.” Their second reason, though, is “to see their friends.” I think hearing those two answers would be pleasing to JESUS because they reflect exactly what HE was about during HIS time on earth. How often and in how many ways did JESUS say and show what we call the GREAT

COMMANDMENT: *Love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.* Coming to church is just one of the opportunities you have to fulfill JESUS mission in the world as well as meeting one of the basic needs that you and all people have in their lives, the need to belong.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey