



Easter Sunday 2023

What If...

We altered typical values to proximity values?

Programs → Presence

Worth is not measured by the number of participants but how we are present to one another in that space.

Activity → Effectiveness

Value is not measured by how many activities are held, but how we are transformed. Effectiveness happens when we are invited to be guests and stand with our hosts in proximity.

Strategic Plans → Mutuality

Strategic plans are created by those in leadership to guide activities. Mutuality lets other peoples' needs dictate the plans.

Overtures → Listening

Overtures ask something of the other. Listening requires understanding the longings and needs of the other. Overtures can be made from afar but listening demands closeness.

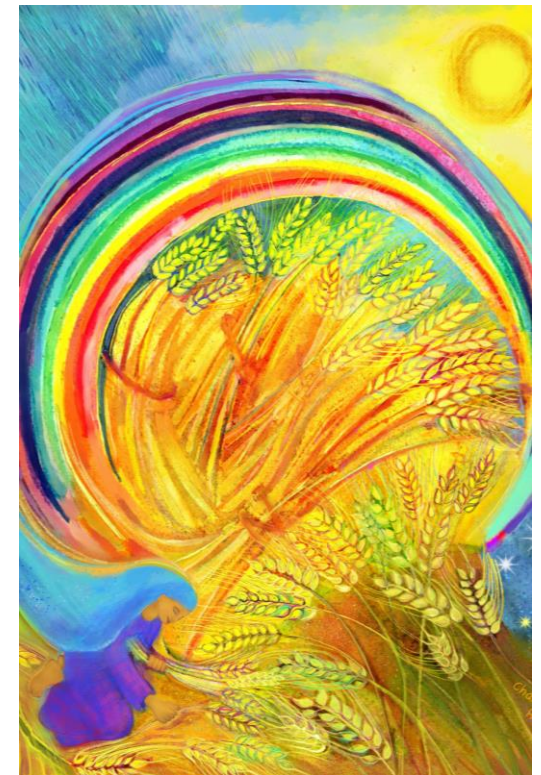
Hospitality → Belonging

Hospitality puts us in control; belonging is a sense of wholeness through compassion which cannot occur without proximity.

What If...

We participated in God's economy by embodying proximity?

In Mark 14 a woman put perfume on Jesus' head. The disciples chastised her, they could have used the money she spent and given it to the poor. Jesus says leave her alone because she has done what she could in the moment, while they can and should always help the poor. The disciples are right to care for the poor. But they miss the relationship and proximity. The woman is not sinning but ministering. She takes a great risk, and she serves Jesus who was poor in spirit. Sin is a lack of proximity to God. Lack of proximity to others can lead to sins of bigotry and prejudice. Love of God and neighbor attends to both. Perhaps our generosity is about more than loyalty to the church in which we worship. Perhaps our faithfulness calls us not only to ensure that our neighbors (the strangers, widowed, orphaned, poor, oppressed) have what they need by gifting our finances. But that we would also enter opportunities of proximity to the least of these and thereby participate more fully in God's economy.



"Ruth Gleaning" by Chana, Judaic Art Prints

Good Gleaning

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God."
- Lev. 19:9-10

*New Providence Presbyterian Church
Stewardship Brochure 2024*



Christmas 2022

Bible Study: God's Economy

Jesus: The Embodiment of Proximity:

If Jesus were to choose the essential passage of the Bible to express our faith, you would anticipate he would select John 3:16. Instead, Dr. Ryan Bonfiglio argues that Jesus would likely choose Isaiah 61:1-4. This is the passage he reads in Luke 4:16-21 when in the synagogue. Jesus said: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* Then Jesus boldly pronounced, *Today the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*

Significant Foundations:

Exodus: 22:21-22: *You shall not wrong or oppress a resident stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan.*

*Pledge Cards are due by
Loyalty Sunday, October 22,
2023. Join us for worship &
lunch following.*

Exodus 23:10-11: *For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.*

Leviticus 19:9-10: *When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of the field or gather the gleanings of your harvest...you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God.*

These passages reveal for us the nature of God's economy, in which 'our inalienable rights' as we often consider them, have no place. What I mean to say is, for the people of God, these passages did not just encourage generosity, these were mandated practices meant to protect 'the least of these:' poor, widowed, orphaned.



NP Fall 2022

For God's faithful, there was mutual exchange, human *agency*, dignity. Everyone had to glean at some point because someone's fields were always fallow. There was proximity in harvesting alongside one another. Everyone sought each other's success. And in the year of the Lord's favor, debts were canceled. Jesus proclaimed the good news of deliverance by mirroring *words* in Isaiah 61.

Remember, if you will, that Ruth gleaned. And in her proximity to Boaz's household, she found protection for herself and Naomi. Ruth was not only Jesus' ancestor, but was in fact a poor, widowed stranger.

When Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, to demonstrate the importance of loving God and neighbor, we find that the unexpected Samaritan was the good neighbor because he came near to the injured man...he was in proximity to the man and that is how he came to be compassionate to the stranger.

