

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 8/26/18

Monday – Read Mark 10:13-16. **Children are important in the kingdom of God.** In a time when many adults viewed children as the lowest of the low, Jesus elevated children to a place of importance in the kingdom of God. Jesus welcomed children and demonstrated God's love to them. *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* began in 1968 during a time in our nation when children were not valued. Between 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court required every state to legalize abortion, and 1985, the debated tail end of Generation X, the abortion rate wavered between 20 and 30 percent. The end result is 29 million fewer people in Generation X. During this time, Fred Rogers had a radically different view of children. He treasured them, made them feel wanted, and demonstrated God's love to them. Who are the children in your life? Ask God to help you demonstrate God's love to them.

Tuesday – Read Genesis 1:26-27, 31 and Psalm 8. **God Made You Good.** God made you good. It's true. In fact, God made you very good. That's the truth we find in Genesis 1, but it's not the message we receive in many experiences. You may have been told you that you were not good, but God says that you are very good, and these verses say that both men and women were made in the image of God and are equally valued and loved by God. Mr. Rogers spent his life telling children and adults that they are special. At a graduation speech, he said, "What that ultimately means, of course, is that you don't ever have to do anything sensational for people to love you." As you pray, look at yourself in a mirror and try to see yourself the way that God sees you as a precious child made in the very image of God, and then pray these words, "Father God, thank you for making me good."

Wednesday – Read John 1:10-13; 3:16-17. **For God So Loved the World.** God loves us first. We Methodists call this prevenient grace which is the grace that comes before. God loves us just because God is good. Jesus makes it very clear that God's leading edge is grace and love. Jesus came into the world not to condemn people but so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection demonstrate to us the depth of God's love for all people. Mr. Rogers said, "Love is at the root of everything: all learning, all parenting, all relationships—love or the lack of it." How have you experienced the love, grace, and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ? As you pray, thank God for loving you and ask God to help you share God's love with the people in your life.

Thursday – Read Psalm 139:1-18. **God Knows You and Loves You.** King David came to understand that God knew him intimately. We can hide nothing from God. God knows everything about us including the good and the bad; and yet, God still loves us. We cannot escape from God. It is God who created you, and before you were born God had a plan for your life. How does it make you feel to know that God is with you every step of the way throughout your entire life? Read Psalm 139 again, but this time read it as a prayer to God.

Friday – Read I John 3:1-2, 11; John 1:12; and Genesis 1:27, 31. **We are children of God.** Mr. Rogers was known to say, "I like you just the way you are." He told children that they did not have to do anything extraordinary to be loved. He was not talking about entitlement. He was teaching children one of the central beliefs of our faith that everyone has inherent value. All people are made in the image of God, and God has created us to live as God's beloved sons and daughters. This is why we refer to the Church as the family of God. How does it make you feel to know that God loves you as God's own son or daughter? How does this change the way you view the people who frustrate you? Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the way God loves you.

Saturday – Read Mark 12:28-34. **Won't you be my neighbor?** Jesus said that one of the two most important commandments is to *love your neighbor as yourself*. A neighborhood was a place where at times that you felt worried, scared, unsafe, would take care of you, would provide understanding, safety. That's what the neighborhood was for Fred Rogers. Our neighborhood begins in Nichols Hills and stretches to the surrounding neighborhoods from John Marshall High School to North Highland Elementary School. Mr. Rogers said, "Well I suppose it's an invitation, 'Won't you be my neighbor?' It's an invitation for somebody to be close to you. I think everybody longs to be loved, and longs to know that he or she is loveable, and consequently the greatest thing that we can do is to help somebody know that they're loved and capable of loving." Think about your neighbors. How is God calling you to love your neighbor? Ask God to give you an opportunity to invite a stranger to become your neighbor.

Lectionary Readings: I Kings 8:1-11, 22-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69.

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