|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mark 10:6-9 + 13-16Acts 2:43-47  | Connections | Pinelands – 9am – 24/09/2023Thornton – 10:30am – 24/09/2023 |

The **HUGE Redwood trees** in **California…**

are the *largest living things* on earth

and the *tallest trees in the world.*

Some of them are over ***100 meters tall…***

and some more than ***2,500 years old.***

You would think that trees that **large…**

would have a ***tremendous root system,***

reaching down tens of meters into the ground.

**But** that is not the case.

Redwoods have a very shallow root system. (ave – 2m deep)

The roots of these trees are, however…

***Intertwined, Interlocked,***

Tied in with each other and other ***tress around them.***

***SO,*** when the storms come and the winds blow…

The Redwoods stand firm…

 Because they are ***BOUND TOGETHER***

 Below the surface

With an ***interlocking root system…***

They support and sustain each other.

They need one another to survive… ***SO DO WE!***

**In Society** we would call that support unit… **A FAMILY.**

*(****OR*** *those closest to us)*

People there to… **Hold us** when… we ***hurt.***

 **Encourage us** when… we ***are down.***

 **Nurse us** when… we are ***sick.***

 **Cheer us** on when… we ***play.***

 **Celebrate** when… we ***succeed.***

 **Nurture** us as… we ***grow.***

In our **FAITH…**

**God** has given us **His Church** to be our **SUPPORT SYSTEM.**

Through Christ… We are bound together in **COMMUNITY**

 We belong to each other.

This is our **God-given** **SUPPORT SYSTEM.**

Also known as… The **FAMILY** of God.

So both our FAMILIES in society and the FAMILY of God…

 Meet a **crucial NEED** in our lives…

 **NEED** for… **CONNECTION…**

 **CONNECTIONS** are  **ESSENTIAL.**

**CONNECTIONS** **are the essence of life.**

**Your body’s organs, muscles, and bones…**

only work because **they’re connected.**

 If they were **not connected…**

they would not function and ultimately die.

In the Community / Family… if we are **NOT CONNECTED…**

Then we become… ***Attenders… not Members***

 ***Spectators… not Participators***

 ***Consumers… not Contributors***

The **result being…** *(not connected)*

We never grow in our Faith or in our Relationships…

 We **MISS…** the **ESSENCE of LIFE.**

**We need CONNECTIONS.**

**Rick Warren** put it this way…

***“You were created for relationships.***

***We have this longing for belonging.***

***That’s why loneliness is so painful.”***

Right at the **BEGINNING** of **Creation…**

 The very first thing God said was… ***“NOT GOOD”***

Was for man / people to be alone.

You were made for **CONNECTIONS** to God and to other people.

**When you’re NOT connected, LIFE is EMPTY.**

**CONNECTIONS teach us to love.**

That’s why when Jesus was asked ***what mattered most…***

he said, ***“Love the Lord you God with all your heart, soul,***

***mind and spirit and love your neighbor as yourself.”***

And the **only way** to learn that is through **relationships…**

In the world and in the church.

**We can go on and on…**

 **CONNECTIONS…** help us understand life.

 **CONNECTIONS…** empower us.

 **CONNECTIONS…** teach us.

**CONNECTIONS…** keep us growing

**CONNECTIONS…** increase our confidence

**BUT…**  Here is the **BIG one**…

**We Have To Learn How To CONNECT**

That’s why God sent Jesus, to do what we could never do.

Jesus is the **CONNECTOR.**

 **Jesus** *Connected us to God.* *(expand)*

Demonstrates God’s Love for us…

 From Birth – Cross - Pentecost

 Reminds us of available Grace and Forgiveness

 Accepts us no matter what

 **Jesus** *Connects us to others.* *(expand)*

 Call to… Forgive and Serve

 Love and Community

Throughout Scripture… We see the ministry of Jesus…

 **CONNECTING with people…**

 **CONNECTING people…**

**In our Mark Passage…**

Speaks of how we are connected in **MARRIAGE…**

 Family…

 Do not disrupt family

 So many people know the **‘Dis-Connect’**

that comes in broken relationships / families

 leads to… ***Hurt,***

***Pain,***

 ***Fighting,***

 ***Dis- content***

**SO…** Opposite to what **God wanted or intended for us.**

**Jesus…** **Connects people** with the **CHILDREN…**

 Do not loose out on your relationship…

with your Children.

**Jesus…** **Reminds people** of their **relationship with GOD**

Using the Children in his midst as an illustration

**In our Acts Passage…**

Will you notice one phrase…

Vs 44… ***“the Believers continued together in close fellowship.”***

It wasn’t easy to follow Christ in the 1st century…

Times were tough and persecution rampant.

But they were bound together into a **Community…**

because they needed each other for support and strength

if they were going to remain faithful to Jesus.

It isn’t easy for us **Today…**

to follow Christ and truly live for Him…

We face so many obstacles in our desire to live for Jesus.

***Discouragement, Temptation,***

***Sin, Apathy,***

***Failure, Doubts,***

***Rejection.***

**However,** God has ***not left us on our own…***

He has given us each other.

**Our Church Family.**

Vs 44… ***“the Believers continued together in close fellowship.”***

The community of Apostles and Disciples…

 Did amazing things in the first century…

 They changed the world…

 ***WHY?...*** They were **CONNECTED**

 **WE… Need to learn to CONNECT**

 To Forgive and Love,

To Serve and to Share,

To Accept and Respect…

 To Live in Community

**PINELANDS…**

**Vision Statement:** ***Pinelands Methodist Church strives to be a***

 ***loving community serving God.***

**Our Visioning for 2024…** **4 Focus Groups**

 **OUTreach, INreach, DEEPreach, ECUreach**

**NOTICE…** It is all about ***CONNECTING…***

 *Connecting with God and with Each other*

**There is…** STRENGTH in being… CONNECTED

 COMMUNITY in being… CONNECTED

 CREATIVITY in being… CONNECTED

**There are…** RESOURCES in being… CONNECTED

 **TOGETHER** we can do great things for **God !!**

**Just like** the **Redwoods of California…**

 As **big** as they are…

 As **small** as their root system is…

 Their strength comes from their roots

 Being **CONNECTED** to all the roots

 Of the trees around them.

We need to **Stay CONNECTED** to **Each Other and to GOD**

**READINGS**

***Mark 10:6-9+13-16***

But in the beginning, at the time of creation, ‘God made them male and female,’ as the scripture says. ‘And for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.’ So they are no longer two, but one. No human being must separate, then, what God has joined together.”

***Jesus Blesses Little Children***

Some people brought children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples scolded the people. When Jesus noticed this, he was angry and said to his disciples, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.” Then he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them, and blessed them.

***Acts 2:43-47 Life among the Believers***

Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.