

Ministry of Presence

Last Sunday in worship, we looked at the first of several Bible stories where Jesus connected with people in meaningful ways over meals (Luke 5:27-32). In that story where Levi, the tax collector, hosted Jesus and his tax collector friends, we tried to understand why the Pharisees were grumbling and asking Jesus' disciples, "Why does he eat and drink with *those people*?" One of the takeaways I invited you to discover and put into action is **the ministry of presence**. In other words, the ministry of being with people in their space, as an embodiment of the presence of Christ in their lives. We also refer to that as the **incarnation** of Jesus.

I challenged our congregation to take that powerful, life-changing presence out into the world, in particular to our public schools during these chaotic times. I was very pleased that we had a great turnout for the impromptu prayer walk last Sunday afternoon around the Orrville City Schools campus. I know that God showed me a few things that I hadn't noticed before and I'm over on the campus almost every day. I hope that those of you who went on the prayer walk will tell others about your experience praying.

I've also heard some very helpful reflections from a number of you as you've wrestled with the idea of God being present IN you. Please know that it blesses me to know that you're thinking through your faith and what it means to put it into action. I certainly don't claim to have it all figured out, but that shouldn't keep us from taking steps of faith in God's direction.

This Sunday, we will continue by looking at another story where Jesus was present at a dinner party (see Luke 7:36-50). This time, a Pharisee was the host, Jesus was the honored guest, and someone unexpected shows up. I encourage you to read it ahead of time to get the most out of our time in worship. You might ask yourself, which character in the story best exemplifies the radical hospitality of a host?

Lenten Blessings,

Pastor David Rittgers