WWJD: Jesus Teaches

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – October 11 2026

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Readings: Micah 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Mark 4:1-20 CEB

Reflection: Psalm 119 CEB

Call to Worship: Come, for God has sown his word among the people like seeds. We open our hearts up so that we may grow by faith, learning what Christ teaches. As we come to worship, we ask ourselves: What would Jesus do? He would speak the truth with wisdom, so we come as those ready to teach and to learn!

Prayer: Blessed God, we gather before you in prayer. We seek your love and your grace to be with us in our lives on this day. We come together to ask of ourselves what it is our Savior would do. We come to worship with a Spirit of truth and light as we come together as your people. We celebrate the Father that watches over us, helping us in our daily lives. We celebrate the Son, whose great love for us was demonstrated on the cross. We come to celebrate the Holy Spirit, whose presence we welcome into our lives so that your holy grace may continue to work within us. We pray you will help us to welcome everyone into your loving care. We pray you will help us to share your grace with a world in need of mercy and care. Help us to see the good in each other and to be the good we wish to see. May you continue to teach us what is right and good so that we may continue to grow in wisdom. May you continue to challenge us so that we may grow in faith. Help us to sing your praises this day, Lord. May we gather in the peace and love that you offer us each and every day. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 119

> *33 Lord, teach me what your statutes are about, and I will guard every part of them. 34 Help me understand so I can guard your Instruction and keep it with all my heart. 35 Lead me on the trail of your commandments because that is what I want. 36 Turn my heart to your laws, not to greedy gain. 37 Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things. Make me live by your way. 38 Confirm your promise to your servant— the promise that is for all those who honor you. 39 Remove the insults that I dread because your rules are good. 40 Look how I desire your precepts! Make me live by your righteousness. (Psalm 119:33-40 CEB+)*

We read the words of Psalm 119 and hear how God will teach us what it is we need to know. That we should be eager to learn and eager to teach what we have learned. That we should strive to be more like Christ in how we share God's word with others. Do you seek to learn and grow with God? Do you seek to live like Christ? Who can you lift in your prayers this week? Who can you help with your service? We should always ask ourselves: what would Jesus do?

Prayer: Most merciful God, we seek your grace and your mercy as we gather together. We turn to you in prayer with the joys and concerns that we have in our lives this day. We pray for the strength to do what is right and to walk in the way of salvation. We ask ourselves what Jesus would do so that we may strive to be more like our blessed Savior. We pray that you will grant us wisdom so that we may learn to think and act more like Jesus every day. May you

know the prayers we have spoken aloud and the prayers of our hearts. We pray you will be with us in the good, the bad, and the unknown. Help to remember your love is with us in our laughter and in our tears. May we know your grace in our sorrow and in our rejoicing. Let your steadfast love and faithfulness guide us all the days of our lives. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading is from Micah chapter 4 verses 1 through 5.

> ***4*** *But in the days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of the mountains; it will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it.* ***2*** *Many nations will go and say: "Come, let's go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob's God, so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths!" Instruction will come from Zion and the Lord's word from Jerusalem.* ***3*** *God will judge between the nations and settle disputes of mighty nations, which are far away. They will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war.* ***4*** *All will sit underneath their own grapevines, under their own fig trees. There will be no one to terrify them; for the mouth of the Lord of heavenly forces has spoken.* ***5*** *Each of the peoples walks in the name of their own god; but as for us, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and always. (Micah 4:1-5 CEB+)*

Our second reading is from 2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 14 through 17.

> ***14*** *But you must continue with the things you have learned and found convincing. You know who taught you.* ***15*** *Since childhood you have known the holy scriptures that help you to be wise in a way that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.* ***16*** *Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character,* ***17*** *so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good. (2 Timothy 3:14-17 CEB+)*

Our final reading is from Mark chapter 4 verses 1 through 20.

> ***4*** *Jesus began to teach beside the lake again. Such a large crowd gathered that he climbed into a boat there on the lake. He sat in the boat while the whole crowd was nearby on the shore.* ***2*** *He said many things to them in parables. While teaching them, he said,* ***3*** *"Listen to this! A farmer went out to scatter seed.* ***4*** *As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path; and the birds came and ate it.* ***5*** *Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep.* ***6*** *When the sun came up, it scorched the plants; and they dried up because they had no roots.* ***7*** *Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked the seeds, and they produced nothing.* ***8*** *Other seed fell into good soil and bore fruit. Upon growing and increasing, the seed produced in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of one hundred to one."* ***9*** *He said, "Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!"* ***10*** *When they were alone, the people around Jesus, along with the Twelve, asked him about the parables.* ***11*** *He said to them, "The secret of God's kingdom has been*

given to you, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables. [12] This is so that they can look and see but have no insight, and they can hear but not understand. Otherwise, they might turn their lives around and be forgiven. [13] "Don't you understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? [14] The farmer scatters the word. [15] This is the meaning of the seed that fell on the path: When the word is scattered and people hear it, right away Satan comes and steals the word that was planted in them. [16] Here's the meaning of the seed that fell on rocky ground: When people hear the word, they immediately receive it joyfully. [17] Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. [18] Others are like the seed scattered among the thorny plants. These are the ones who have heard the word; [19] but the worries of this life, the false appeal of wealth, and the desire for more things break in and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. [20] The seed scattered on good soil are those who hear the word and embrace it. They bear fruit, in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case sixty to one, and in another case one hundred to one." (Mark 4:1-20 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week in our "What Would Jesus Do?" series, we think about the way that Jesus teaches. When we think about the way that Jesus teaches, it teaches us something about learning, about wisdom, about understanding, and about how we can share that knowledge in the way that we teach others. It is important that we understand these things because teaching is an incredibly important part of how we do things as Christians. Being able to learn and grow is essential to our faith. But if we don't understand the way that we learn, we will struggle to be able to teach. I think it's important that we understand these things when we think about what Jesus would do because teaching was a very large part of his ministry.

We see that in our gospel reading from Mark. One of the ways that Jesus teaches is that he teaches in parables and encourages people to listen. That people need to pay attention. When he teaches the parable of the sower, he is painting a picture of learning through the idea of scattering seeds. The parable is using this imagery to make it relatable. Because when you teach in parables, in some ways it makes it easier to learn, and in some ways it makes it harder. What I mean by that is that when you teach something in parable, if you don't understand the imagery that's being used, you may struggle to understand what the parable is teaching. Jesus is giving a parable, and we get some explanations to why he does this. One reason is that it is meant to get people to think more deeply. It's to encourage people to ask questions and to truly strive to gain understanding. Because if he just told it to people straight out, they may not learn anything. They might hear it, and it could go in one ear and out the other. The reason he calls on people to pay attention is because if they can understand the parable that he is giving, then it is building the groundwork for them to understand more complicated issues of faith. Because one of the things that I have come to understand over the years is that there is always going to be a more complicated issue waiting just around the corner. And the more deeply I can understand the faith issues of now, the better equipped I will be to teach and to learn about the faith issues of tomorrow.

Because we do deal with a lot of difficult things. Because of that, it's important that we strive to be able to learn and to teach. Jesus teaches because he wants people to have a greater understanding of faith. Because when you have that kind of understanding, you can

share that kind of faith. That is what we hear in our reading from Micah. We hear that the nations will gather and say “Come, let’s go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob’s God, so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God’s paths!” People come to learn, and to learn, someone has to be there to teach. It's a rather endless cycle, because every generation teaches the next. But it's so that we grow in understanding and wisdom, so that we can work together, so that we can understand each other. Because learning about other people is a big part of what we do as part of our faith journey, because it's how we understand God better. Jesus teaches others so that they can understand more deeply what it is God is asking of them. In Micah, we hear about that as the way that people embracing God's message turn to peace, because they understand what God wants. That they no longer take up sword against each other. They learn how to walk with God, teaching the peace that Christ gives us. I think it's important that we learn how to share that peace. Because teaching is not an easy thing. It means that we have to be willing to learn, to understand, and then find a way to communicate it with others. I have known plenty of people that can understand something but can't always teach it. But Jesus finds a way to be able to share his message with others.

One of the ways he does it is by listening and by sharing things that people can understand. We happen to have one of the greatest resources we could possibly ever have to be able to help teach faith, and that's the Bible. In 2 Timothy, we hear about how “Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.” Now, I included this because the Bible being there for us to be able to use as a way to teach is incredibly important. It gives us the framework we need to be able to teach the lessons that we have been called to teach. We are equipped to be able to share the knowledge we need to share to be able to demonstrate God's love. We have ready examples waiting for us to use. That we have been given a toolbox with every tool we could possibly need to be able to teach others about faith. That is an amazing blessing to have. When we teach, we have to think about the way Jesus would do it. What would Jesus do? Jesus would find a way to make faith relatable. He would take a difficult subject and he would find a way to make it something people would understand.

One of the difficulties I think we have sometimes is that we look at scripture and we don't think about how to teach it in a way that makes sense today. And I say that as somebody who sometimes struggles with trying to be able to help people understand some of the concepts that are behind the stories we have in the Bible. When we look at the way Jesus teaches, he teaches with parables. We see that when we look back at our reading from Mark. After Jesus is away from the crowd the disciples want an explanation of the parable of the sower. They didn't fully understand. They're meant to ask these questions. Oftentimes, I feel the disciples are our stand-ins for these stories because we can relate to their confusion, to their questions, to their worries. In this one, we can hear that they want to know what the parable means. And so, Jesus goes into detail explaining this parable of the sower. He talks about the way that the seed scatters, that the seed falls on the path, that the birds come and eat it. That is the people being scattered who hear it. And when it falls on rocky ground, people hear it and they receive it joyfully. But because they have no roots, it only lasts a little while. The rocky ground isn't a good place for it to hold and faith falls away. Thorny plants are like people whose worries overtake them and the appeal of wealth and the desire for more chokes out the word. But when the seed scatters on good soil, we understand it is people who hear it

and embrace it and bear fruit. The disciples can be seen as those who are striving to bear good fruit. They hear the word and they put it into practice. Jesus teaches them all of this so that they have a fuller understanding of what it is he is trying to say. And when he teaches in these parables, it also makes it that it's easier to teach.

Something that I have learned from doing work with kids is, if you tell them something, they might remember it. If you tell them a complicated story, they might pay attention. But if you tell them a story they can repeat, they will teach it to others. That's one of the things that I thought about when thinking about the way Jesus teaches in parables. That if the seed is going to be scattered on good soil, it has to be seed that can take root. That's where the parables come in. When we ask what Jesus would do, we hear that he teaches in a way that engages the listener. In a way that gives people something that they can hold on to. Because I think that this parable not only is about the listener, but I think it's about the way that our words take hold as well. Jesus tells parables so that people can hold on to that wisdom. Because it isn't that he needs them to understand something for a quiz. Jesus is giving people the knowledge of salvation and wants them to be able to not just know it, but to teach it themselves. That's one of the trickiest things that I think we face as Christians today is finding ways to make the word relatable. Because sometimes we hear a story from the Bible and it is confusing. And because it's confusing, we pass over it. We skip over the more complicated things hoping somebody else will know it. I think that if we are going to be like Christ, we need to think of ways that we can turn those difficult stories into something relatable so that we can understand them better. That we can turn them into new parables. Because one of the important things is that we often think there's only one way to teach, but there are so many. The way that we help others to learn is by finding how to reach them and then putting in the work to be able to transform our knowledge into something someone else can learn and teach themselves. Because what Jesus is constantly doing throughout the Gospels is finding things in everyday life that people can relate to. These people relate to seeds being planted, so he talks about planting seeds. He points to the things around him. Mountains and fig trees. The language is couched in the jobs that they hold. Fishermen and shepherds. Builders and craftsmen. If we are to teach, we have to learn to transform the word so that it is in language that people understand and be able to embrace, and that they in turn can teach it.

Because when we think about the way Jesus teaches, that is what he is doing. He is enabling people to be able to ask difficult questions and to understand. And when he enables people to understand, he gives them the tools they need to be able to teach it themselves. So that people learn about God's love and God's grace. That it is not knowledge meant to stick with just him. It is knowledge to be shared. When he transforms the word into parables, it is so that we all learn and grow together and can teach. Because every moment of teaching starts with learning. If we can teach things in a way that helps others to memorize it, remember it, and be able to share with others so they can teach as well, that is being Christlike. So, I pray that as we think about these things that we do and the way that we teach scripture and salvation, and the way we teach about God's love and the way that we teach about Jesus, and the way that we teach about the Bible is not just repetitive, but transformative. Because we should be able to teach in ways that transform hearts and lives, the way that Christ has touched ours. So, I pray that we can think about that question, what would Jesus do? And remember that no matter what, no matter how, Jesus would find a way to teach. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – WWJD

Our series has us looking at what we think Jesus would do. After all, if Christ is the example we are to live by, shouldn't we ask what he would do? Each week we explore a different way that Jesus interacted with people so that we can learn to be more like him. We will explore how we can welcome others, how we share, how Jesus taught, and the way that he still challenges us to day. We should always be willing to go back to that simple WWJD: What Would Jesus Do?

9/27: Jesus Welcomes

10/4: Jesus Shares

10/11: Jesus Teaches

10/18: Jesus Challenges

Neoga Grace UMC
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Toledo UMC
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Worship 8:15am

Etna UMC
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Worship 9:30a

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