

Children’s Moment

Hello, girls and boys. Esperanza and I pray for you and your family. We love you and we appreciate you. Thank you for sending pictures of your sprouting plants. This week, we received pictures from Priscilla and her family. We also received pictures from Andrew & Sarah. Good work! If you send a picture update, we’ll be happy to post it.

We’re coming to the end of this series of lessons, but we have a long way to go with our plants. So keep on going!

Esperanza and I thought we’d share what’s happening and give you an idea of what will be next. First, let’s check in with Esperanza.

How are we doing? The plants are getting bigger. That means they can be outside longer. They want more sun and water. Just like you, when you go. They all grow at their own pace, in their own way, just the way God made them.

Let me show you what’s next. Here are the tomato plants today. In a few weeks, they’ll grow up to look like this tomato plant. See how tall and big it is? It also has a blossom, which is where the tomato fruit will grow. But it’s still only a young plant, like you are young people.

When it grows a little bigger, we’ll transplant this young tomato plant into a big pot. And we’ll put this wire mesh around it. I know it looks strange and kind of scary, but it’s actually good for the plant. You see, tomatoes are heavy and it’s hard for the plant to stand up with all of the fruit. So it leans on the wire. That helps the plant grow straight and tall. It helps keep pests, disease and mold off the leaves. The plants is healthier and more fruitful.

Here's a picture of one of our tomato plants last summer, just to show you how big it will get. Amazing, isn't it? We're just like this young plant. As we grow, we'll find ourselves in new places, like new schools. We'll discover there are rules. In the Bible, they're called commandments. When we learn them and rely on them, they help us to live healthy lives. Jesus' commandment: love each other.

Will you pray with me?

You are invited to be part of Sunday School online. Visit us at www.coronaumc.com/childrensministry to sign up.

Message: “Restored Souls & Fresh Fruit”

I have something special for you this morning. Nicole Cater shared a bit of her story. [*I encourage you to watch the service.*] Thank you, Nikki, for sharing your story. It is moving and touching. You and Shaylee are the fruit of the Holy Spirit and a blessing to those who have invested in your life. We are so very grateful to have you as part of our church family. You make us better. God is good!

What’s your story? Each of us has a story to tell. It’s a story of how we came to know Jesus. It’s a story of how God is working in, with and through us. It’s the story of our why: Jesus makes our lives together better in every way.

I’m grateful for the presence of God in my life, my household, in this community of faith and in the community where we live each day.

I know you are as well. I hear it when you share your stories. God is blessing us. God has planted us where we are to bear fresh fruit. That’s how the world changes and is restored; one soul, one household, one community at a time.

God makes wonderful promises. Earlier, we read the promise God made to Jeremiah during a time of war and conflict, when things looked bad for the people. God promises to restore the covenant that was broken when the people turned away from God and embrace wrongdoing, knowing they were doing so. Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

Paul affirms God’s promise telling us when we believe and follow Christ, “*You show that you are Christ’s letter, delivered by us. You weren’t written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. You weren’t written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts*” (2 Corinthians 3:3, CEB).

Paul goes on to say, “*This is the confidence that we have through Christ in the presence of God. It isn’t that we ourselves are qualified to claim that anything came from us. No, our qualification is from God. [God] has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not based on what is written but on the Spirit, because what is written kills, but the Spirit gives life*” (vv4-6).

God is doing a work in, with and through you. When we gather and share our experiences of God, we hear about how God is at work in our midst. All of our stories weave together, binding us to one another and, most of all, binding us to Jesus. That’s what gives life meaning. It’s what gives us hope even when things seem they couldn’t get any worse. It’s what gives us a reason to get out of bed. It gives us a purpose. We come together in the tapestry of life, today, tomorrow and each day, for all of eternity.

This is the benefit of transplanting. As we come to the end of this sermon series, let’s revisit our spiritual journey of the last five weeks.

We began with the image of potted plants in a nursery.



They stand, side-by-side, yet they aren’t connected together. They don’t share the water and nourishment that gives life. They are grouped together, but they are alone. This is a metaphor for the past year and the way things were before. Whether we are isolated physically, mentally or spiritually, life alone is limited, restricted and not what it could be.

The antidote to trauma, grief, loneliness, despair, frustration and any number of trials is to know Jesus and to be part of a community who loves him. Communities have roots. They pray for one another, serve one another, help one another, care for one another and love one another. Communities weep and celebrate together in a chain reaction of connectedness. You can’t tug on one member without others feeling it. In this way, we share and bear our burdens. We know and are known when we are connected in spirit. It’s all about relationships.

Being part of this kind of community, a community based on trust and love, means taking a positive risk. That was the next step on our spiritual journey. We reflected on a question:

What kind of risk will you take for Jesus?

Following Jesus isn't safe.

If we're going to follow Jesus, we will take risks. We may put our comfort, reputation, safety or financial security at risk.

Yet, the more we trust Jesus, the more we pay attention to him, the more we will be empowered to take risks for the sake of God's kingdom and for the people he has entrusted to our care.



Transplanting is taking a positive risk. When we leave behind what we know and are comfortable with, that's taking a positive risk. It's not easy. Pruning is needed. We have to give up habits, behaviors or practices that aren't healthy for us, spiritually, mentally, emotionally or physically. We have to admit we're vulnerable – to ourselves, God and others. It's scary.

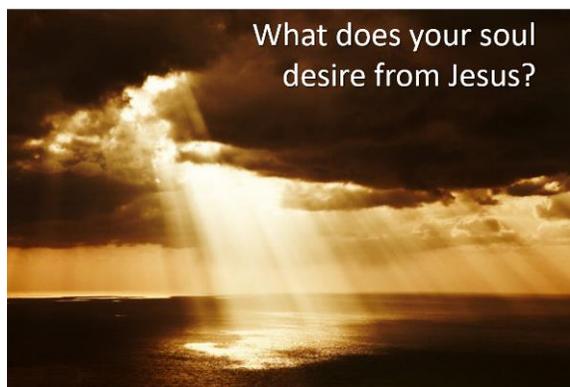
There's one, big thing that balances the risk: God is with us.

God Almighty prepares the road. Jesus shows us the way. The Holy Spirit nudges us onto the path and gives us the energy we need every step of the way. Paulk reminds us, “*You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children*” (Romans 8:15).

Once we're transplanted, we're faced with newness and change.

We aren't used to the new environment. We aren't sure how our needs will be met. We don't know the boundaries. Our soul is awakened and it's hungry and thirsty. This led us to another question:

What does your soul desire from Jesus? Our souls want to connect to the source of life: God. Our will wants to align with God's will. We want to know what we think and feel has meaning. We want to know



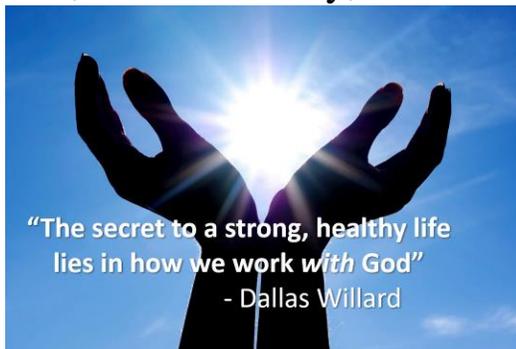
healing is possible for our body, mind and spirit. We want to know what it’s like to be in a relationship where we’re loved and accepted for who we are, not for what we do. We find this in Jesus.

Living a new, spiritual life means finding new ways to be fed.

After all, our newly awakened soul is craving spiritual food. Nourishment comes in many ways. Any time we spend time with God is good. We can do so in prayer, reading scripture, caring for others and worshipping together. It also includes walks in the park, on the beach or trails, enjoying God’s creation. Some of the deepest times are when we are present at bedsides and baptisms, gravesides and weddings. God’s grace is available at any moment. Reach out and receive it.

Last week, we reflected on things that are hidden in plain sight.

Our soul, the hidden, spiritual side of us, is the greatest of these. We discovered that “the secret to a healthy life is found in how we work with God in all aspects of our soul.”¹ The dimensions of our soul – our will, mind and body, are what make us real people. Embracing our



spiritual selves is part of being whole, having a full life.

We see our outer being as a reflection of our inner being.

If our soul is troubled or conflicted or malnourished, then that is reflected in our outward life. That’s true for good or

for bad. Our skills, experience and circumstances are influential, but they play a much smaller role than our soul does.

It’s important for us to tend to our souls, as a person, as members of a household and as member of a community of faith in a larger community.

When our souls are tended, they are healthy. Others will take notice. They will come seeking what we have. We can care for them and tend them, inviting them to join us on our spiritual journey with Jesus. When we do, lives will be changed, disciples will be made, and all of us will be made better together. I give thanks to God for the

¹ [Dallas Willard / Personal Soul Care \(dwillard.org\)](http://dwillard.org)

lives that have been restored and the fresh, new spiritual fruit we see each year in our congregation. God is good.

So we have arrived at this step on our journey. It’s an end of a sermon series, but it’s not the end of our journey together. Wherever you may be, whatever your circumstance is, no matter whether you agree with what we say or not, you have an opportunity.

You can choose to be transplanted or not. Jesus is inviting you to take a chance by accepting his love and grace. All you have to do is believe in him and ask for forgiveness and you will be saved.

I invite you to pray with me ...

Jesus, I’m ready to take a chance. I want a full life. I believe in you. Please forgive me for all the ways I’ve done wrong. Come into my life and transplant me. I pray this in your name, amen.

If you made this prayer, welcome to the family! We are glad you have joined us. We would love to hear your decision so we can celebrate with you. We would also like to help you find a small group or class where your soul can be nourished. Please contact us at CoronaUMC@gmail.com. Praise God and welcome home.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (CEB)

The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant with me even though I was their husband, declares the Lord. No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my Instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. They will no longer need to teach each other to say, “Know the Lord!” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 (CEB)

Happy [Blessed] are those who trust in the Lord,
who rely on the Lord.

They will be like trees planted by the streams,
whose roots reach down to the water.

They won't fear drought when it comes;
their leaves will remain green.

They won't be stressed in the time of drought
or fail to bear fruit.