First Fruits First Love Your Neighbor as Yourself August 1, 2021

‘*Love your neighbor as yourself*’ is the second of the two all-encompassing commandments proclaimed by our Messiah Yeshua. The first is to ‘Love the Lord your God’ with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength - everything you have within you. There is no commandment greater than these.

These two mandates highlight our life’s purpose. The first half directs us upward toward the Spirit of God, our Father. The second half speaks to our mission field here on earth. Our call to witness the love of God starts close to home. It starts with our neighbor.

“Neighbor” can be thought of from a variety of perspectives. Usually, when speaking of missions, we envision a distant location in need of spiritual insight. We go because the light of God’s Kingdom compels us to bring the reality of His truth to the nethermost parts of the world.

But there is a more literal interpretation of “neighbor” too easily overlooked. Our neighbor is most often someone in our immediate vicinity: Right behind the fence. Right across the street. Right around the corner.

Unlike third world nations separated by oceans, our personal close-at-hand territory is equally our mission field. In this place we are familiar with the occupants. We sit with them at luncheons and sporting events. Our kids marry their kids. We shop in the same supermarket.

This also means we learn more about them. Often times the reports aren’t favorable: “Did you catch the news that Sally got a divorce?” “Did you hear William got arrested?” “Did you know their daughter Suzy was caught using drugs?” We quickly discern a lot of hurting people nearby.

Have we allowed our familiarity, even our mutual appreciations or apprehensions for sports, fashion, or culinary habits to become lukewarm? Do we separate ourselves from certain neighbors with opposing political or spiritual values?

We have significant influence with neighbors. Often, we have years together. Yeshua reminds us that our witness to the ones close by is of primary importance. By sharing the promise of God’s Firstfruits, we breathe life into loneliness, hope into homelessness, and faith into fear.

Most days we have numerous opportunities to love our neighbors as ourselves. Let’s not let the time go by without expressing the love that God has entrusted to us to share in the midst of a broken world. It starts next door.