

INVITE

Intro

Invitations mean a great deal in our society whether you are young or old. How many times have you been invited to be someone's friend on Facebook? Or received an invitation to a party or wedding? Or friends invite you to go to a movie or the mall? Or you get invited to get coffee or ice cream? Jesus's invitation to come along was different. We usually receive invitations from friends or family members or at least someone we know or someone with whom we have something in common.

Jesus invites everyone, and Jesus keeps inviting: disciples, the poor, the sick, the young, the old, the tax collectors, the widows, the rich, the poor, farmers, businesspersons, fishermen, and prostitutes.

Think about the most recent baptism you have witnessed in your congregation or if you can remember, your own baptism. The Holy Spirit calls, invites and makes it possible for us to receive God's grace. Sponsors present the person(s) to be baptized and we promise our support. We invite them! Remember what we say at the very end of the rite of Holy Baptism?

Let's say this together: "We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world." (ELW, Holy Baptism, pg. 231) When we say "join us" that is an invitation, right? An invitation to everyone.

Let's spend some time in our small group talking about inviting, as well as creating an invitation of grace that you can share with others.

Small Group Activities and Discussion

Grace is the unearned and undeserved gift given by God of forgiveness and eternal life. The Holy Spirit enables us to receive grace by faith. Grace is given to all. Grace is free. It's already been given to us through God's son, Jesus, in his suffering, dying and rising from death.

Ask: So what does grace mean to you?

Ask: Have any of you received an invitation recently you're willing to share?

Ask: Here's an example of an invitation to a not-so-perfect person. Will someone read John 4:7-15?

Ask: What is the invitation of grace that Jesus gave the Samaritan woman? (living water)

Ask: The story continues. Will someone read John 4:27-30?

Ask: Where's the invitation in this passage? (the woman sharing "Come and See" to everyone she meets)

Ask: Will someone read John 4:39-42?

Ask: What was the people's response?

Say: The woman invited others to listen to what Jesus had done for her and she told them about the grace she had received. Because of this woman, many people came to know Jesus.

Ask: Why is it hard for us to invite others to "come and see" as the woman did in verse 29?

Say: Just like this woman, we have been given an invitation because of what Jesus did and does in our lives. We are invited to share God's grace and invite others too.

Ask: Can you think of other stories in the Bible where there was an invitation?

(Jesus invited the Disciples to follow him, Sheep & the Goats, Holy Communion, Great Dinner Invitation)

Say: Here's another invitation from Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Say: We've talked about a lot of invitation stories. What we'd like to do now is create an invitation of grace. One way to invite others is to share your story. Think of an experience in which you felt God's love. If you can't think of an experience, think of a question or doubt. This is your story too! Take a few minutes and on a sheet of paper, draw a picture (or write words) of your experience.

Turn to your neighbor and share your story. Simply sharing our story of how God has touched our lives is one way to invite others to "come and see" the love of God.