

Daily Bread: Nourishment and Info from Your Pastors
April 28, 2020

Devotion: 3 Rules & 2 Commandments

Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)

36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

When John Wesley began the “Methodist Society” in 1739 England, he did NOT intend to start a new denomination. His intention was to use this “society” of “born again” (as we’d say today), passionate Christians to revive the Church of England (what we call the Episcopal church in the U.S.). When asked what the membership requirements were for the society, he responded with what United Methodists call the Three General Rules. They were:

1. Do no harm.
2. Do good.
3. Attend upon the ordinances of God. [Bishop Job changed this rule to “Stay in love with God” in his book *Three Simple Rules*; I prefer to translate it as: “Imitate Jesus.” Either way, in Rule #3, Wesley lists things like: worship, reading scripture, learning, serving, giving, praying.]

Now, put on your detective hat and ask the question: Why did Wesley establish these three rules to distinguish the Methodist Society members from the other members of the Church of England?? Apparently, the other members had no qualms in doing harm nor did they go out of their way to do good. Finally, it seems like the non-Methodist Society folks put a low priority on worship, prayer, Scripture, service, and spiritual growth. History bears this out; for the more he preached the necessity of all Christians doing no harm, doing good and imitating Christ, the more churches he was kicked out of – until there were no churches within miles of London in which Wesley was allowed to preach. It seemed people loved Jesus, just not enough to make changes in their lives.

In Matthew 22, the person who asks Jesus which is the greatest commandment, wasn't a curious onlooker. He was a Pharisee; part of a group of Pharisees bent on trapping Jesus. Jesus' answer doesn't surprise either the Pharisees or us. But, it's what he adds that does. "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt. 22:40). Jesus recognized that in an effort to obey the 366 commandments found in the Law and Prophets (Old Testament), we must always remember that obedience of those laws must express love of God and love of neighbor. If the enforcement of a law or commandment creates a situation where you are not loving neighbor, then you need to remember that all the other laws depend (hang) on these important questions: 1) Does what I'm doing show a love for God?; 2) Does what I'm doing show a love for neighbor that is equal to the love I have for myself?

All of this is to explain why Bishop Haller has strongly recommended that in-person worship not happen until June. Yes, we're commanded to worship. But, we know that in-person worship places the high risk persons in some danger. Impatience on resuming "normal" worship is understandable. It's also understandable that those who are vulnerable to adverse reactions to COVID-19 will either feel excluded (if they choose to stay home) or endangered (if they choose to go).

In the interest of "doing no harm" and loving neighbor as we, ourselves, would choose to be loved, Pastor Leila and I are not intending in resuming in-person worship immediately. Instead, we want to research and discuss with church leadership the best way and time to resume worship. Given today's news that over 500 new cases have been discovered in the last 24 hours, we pray you understand our hesitation.

We promise we will keep you informed as this process unfolds in the coming days. We value your prayers, your support and your suggestions as we attempt to hold in balance faithfulness with sincere compassion for those who may be endangered by re-entering normalcy too soon.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Jon

jdisburg@gmail.com

(641)680-7464

Info:

- **Don't miss the parade!!** The care facilities in Humboldt have organized a parade that will drive by the South Care Facility, North Care Facility, Hospital, and Springvale. They invite anyone interested in being a part of the parade to meet at the ***High School parking lot at 12:40 pm on Thursday, April 30.*** The parade will be led by a police escort and will leave the parking lot at 1 pm. Folks are encouraged to decorate cars or make signs.
- How about a resource that teaches a little history of the United Methodist Church while including some humor?? Check out the cartoons and messages at wesleybros.com. Each cartoon addresses a unique aspect of the United Methodist tradition and is followed by a longer historical and theological explanation.
- **How is our Facebook worship recording being received??** Over the past 4 weeks, our "reach" (total views) has averaged just over 800 other Facebook accounts. Using the Facebook "guesstimates" equations, we believe our "attendance" (people who watch all or most of the service) is usually between 200 and 300. Also over the past 4 weeks, we have viewers from 8 other states who watch our service. One in 10 of those who watch the service are there because one of our members shared the Facebook page with their friends.
- **We need your feedback and suggestions!!** As we enter the final weeks of isolation and social distancing, we want to ask some key questions concerning what ministry will look like once this "phase" is over. Here's the first key question we'd like you to consider: Should online worship be offered every week? If so, should it be live? Please email your responses to jdisburg@gmail.com and ldisburg@gmail.com.
- **How to experience worship at Faith UMC this weekend.** Our worship service will be available on the Faith United Methodist Church page on Facebook and our church website beginning 5 pm on Saturday. We will also have the service broadcast on KHBT at 10:30 am on Sunday morning.