



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



2084 Wilson Pike · Franklin, TN 37067 · 615.794.2665
Pastor Dennis Meaker: 615.794.2665 · djmeaker@gmail.com

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The Plain Meaning of Scripture

²² *Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?”*
²³ *Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. John 14:22-24 NRSV*

“Follow the plain meaning of scripture. Don’t make it complicated when it’s not. Follow the plain meaning of scripture.”

Ever hear something like that? Maybe said something like that? Sounds good, doesn’t it? Good sound advice. Just do what the Book says. The bible as road map and guide book rolled into one. The divine version of the automobile club guide. A Trip Ticket for salvation with the route carefully mapped out and points of interest noted along the way.

But is it really that simple? Let’s look for the plain meaning in this simple straight forward scripture in verse 23. “Those who love me will keep my word.”

I.

The first thing that should jump out at us is that we are called here to do something more than love Jesus. Jesus says “if you love me, you will keep my word.” In other words, according to a fairly influential authority, Jesus Christ himself, there is more to Christianity than simply professing faith in Jesus Christ. If you have professed faith in Christ, if you love Christ, you will act on that love.

I make that point first because I’m afraid it’s getting lost these days. There is instead an emphasis on accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. As personal savior. When Christians are interviewed in the media they most often speak of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Now, just to be clear, I also think that it is important to accept Christ as Lord and savior. To Love Christ. If you claim to be Christian you have made that commitment. When we baptize someone we ask if they have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. If we baptize infants, we ask the parents if they have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and ask them if they will raise the child being baptized to profess that faith love when the time comes. Accepting Christ as Lord and Savior, Loving Christ, is a starting point in our faith journey.

But, beyond that starting point is the rest of your life as a Disciple of Christ. To say you have accepted Christ as your Lord and savior, and then doing nothing about it, is like getting into a boat tied up to a dock. There you are, standing in the boat, waving at the folks on the beach, telling them what a fine boat it is, but you refuse to let the boat be untied. You may think it's a fine boat but you have no faith in its ability to carry you over the waters. If you really had faith in the boat, had accepted the boat, you would journey onto the water. Loving Christ means more than just accepting Christ as personal savior.

II.

Now, let's look at this simple little scripture passage: "if you love [Christ], you will keep [Christ's] word."

Straightforward. To the point. Simple. Right? But, what are the words we are to keep?

Some possibles might be:

Follow me/Take up your cross.

Feed the hungry.

Clothe the Naked.

Visit the sick and prisoners.

Forgive 70 times 7.

Turn the other cheek.

Love your enemies.

Invite the poor to your table.

Sell all you have and give to the poor.

Be at peace. Don't let your hearts be troubled.

Go and make disciples.

This simple little scripture passage is suddenly encompassing the Gospels. If you love me, says Christ, you will keep these words. But, truth be known, some of these words make us uncomfortable. A lot will depend upon what it means to KEEP these words.

III.

So what does it mean to KEEP these words? We know that, don't we? Plain meaning of scripture is what it's all about. But, the problem is we don't usually use the verb "keep" in connection with the noun "words." Keep words? What does it mean?

Remember where we started? Some tell us not to make the scriptures complicated. Just follow the literal interpretation. But some words have more than one meaning. What do we do when there are multiple meanings? If the bible is a road map, how do we walk down three or four roads at once?

One definition of 'keep' would be to hold them close. Not share them with anyone. Sort of like they were gold or jewels, meant to be locked away less they be stolen. Jesus says, keep my words so we write them down in our bibles and store those bibles away in deep dark spaces. We keep Jesus words from ever seeing the light of day.

I've met Christians who try and live like that, haven't you? Christians who keep the words of Christ by locking them away where they can do no harm; lock them away where they can't change a thing. Christians who never open their bibles and never listen to the words contained in the bibles. We can all agree, I think, that Jesus couldn't have meant that. Such an interpretation makes no sense. If you love Jesus and keep his words,

you can't try and lock Jesus's words away from the world. This simple little scripture passage cannot mean that.

So let's try again. 'Keep' Jesus's words. How about if the Church puts those words in the bible and worships them? A lot of people seem to favor that. We can put them up on the Altar for anyone to see, provided they come to the Church. Or we can even put the words on Courthouse walls where people can see them and worship them. When Jesus returns and says, "Where are the words I told you to keep?" we'll have them close at hand. "Right Here Jesus. Don't worry. We haven't lost sight of them for a minute. We read them all the time. Pray over them. Worship them. We even condemn others for not worshipping them. We've kept all your words, Jesus, they are right here."

Probably not. I don't think Jesus would be impressed. If that was our response, another scripture comes to my mind. "Jesus wept." If the best we can do to keep Jesus's words is to put them in books and on walls, to tell people to read them, I don't think Jesus will consider that we have kept his words. This simple little scripture passage can't mean that.

"If you love me, you will keep my words." Could it possibly be that when Jesus says that if we love him, we will KEEP his words that he really means we are to GIVE his words away? To make his words a part of our lives and to GIVE his words to the world by the way we live our lives?

Look into your hearts for the answer on this one. Consider the words we are talking about. "Forgive one another. Feed the hungry. Blessed are the peacemakers." Talk is cheap. It's easy to talk about forgiveness, but people sit up and notice when you forgive. People sit up and notice when we let go of the hate and fear and forgive what has been done to us. It's easy to talk about feeding the hungry, but people notice, and the world changes, when you do it. It's hard for someone to hear the Gospel when they are hungry, when they are starving. To KEEP, the words, "Feed the Hungry," we must feed the hungry. To keep those words we have to give those words to the world in action.

"Blessed are the Peacemakers." It's easy to talk about Peace. Almost everyone talks about peace. Hitler talked about Peace. Even Osama Bin Laden talked about Peace, on his terms. But it's quite another matter to be a Peacemaker. To take the risk of saying, "Enough hatred. Enough blood shed. Enough destruction. Too many have died. There must be another way." We keep those words by becoming peacemakers.

What do you think? I think we have a winner here. In order to KEEP the words of Christ, we need to GIVE away the words of Christ to the world with our lives. To make everything we do a testament to our love of Christ.

IV.

And, we fail. Let's not kid ourselves on that score. We fail to be the body of Christ. We fail to give the words of Christ to the world by how we live. If it was up to us, we wouldn't have a prayer. But Christ also reminds us that it isn't solely in our hands. We've been given the gift of God's Spirit. The Advocate, Jesus calls him. The Advocate for God. The Spirit that keeps the words of Christ before us; that calls them to our minds when we forget. The Spirit that tells us how to keep the words of Christ by giving them to the world with our lives. The Spirit that can enable us to live as the Body of Christ. If we will but try.

As you go through the day keep in mind this simple little scripture. This simple little scripture that tells us to keep the words of Christ by giving them away to the world. If you love Christ, you will give his words to

the world by everything you say and do. That's what spreading the Gospel means. Our lives become the embodiment of the Good News. And go also keeping these words of Christ:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27 NRSV

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Jeanne and I would like you to join us this February on a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We will leave on February 16 for nine days of Biblical discovery, returning on February 25th. We will be part of a larger group of primarily United Methodists from all over Middle and West Tennessee. This is a special tour organized by Bishop William McAlilly, the Bishop for the Tennessee and Memphis Conferences.

I first visited the Holy Land in 2000. Jeanne and I went back in 2005 and again in 2012. Before I went the first time I was somewhat cynical about the upcoming experience. I didn't think that it would have much of an effect on me. But, when you stand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or travel to the Synagogue at Capernaum, you suddenly realize that you are likely walking ground that Christ walked. When you pray among the Olive trees in Gethsemane, stand in the prison cell contained in the House of Caiaphas, or see the name of Pilate inscribed on a monument in Caesarea, the events surrounding the imprisonment, trial and passion of Christ take on new meaning; a new reality.

Brochures for the trip, including exact costs and travel itineraries, are available in my office. I'll also schedule a time this summer to share photographs taken on my previous trips to Israel and answer questions about the trip. I hope you will prayerfully consider participating in this faith building experience.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

*²⁶ Giving an honest answer
is a sign
of true friendship.
Proverbs 24:26 CEV*

We are moving into the heart of the election season when politicians will be asked many questions. That thought came to mind as I read this proverb. Honesty is an element of God's Justice. We cannot know truth and act in a just manner unless we receive honest answers to difficult questions. But, when those honest answers do not match the platforms of political parties a candidate can get into trouble even if, as the proverb says, an honest answer is a sign of true friendship. One need only take a cursory look at political news to discover that when a politician answers a question truthfully he or she can get into serious trouble with their own party. In the weeks ahead search out the truth yourself and listen closely to those politicians who dare to give honest answers.

⁵ *Those seeds that fell on good ground are the people who listen to the message and keep it in good and honest hearts. They last and produce a harvest. Luke 8:15 CEV*

The New Testament also emphasizes honesty as part of Discipleship. Here Jesus is explaining the parable of the Sower and describing the “good soil” in which the Word of God can take root.

Disciple Bible Study Opportunity

Thursday Evenings 7:00- 9:00 Beginning September 18th

Disciple Bible Study is a 32 week study of the bible from Genesis to Revelation. It has guided many people to a deeper understanding of scripture and their faith over the years. Many in the Church have completed this study.

We have enough people to begin a Disciple Bible Study. We will begin on September 18th. There is room for additional people. If you have considered undertaking a study of the bible before, this is a wonderful opportunity. If you have taken the study before but would like to repeat it you are also welcome. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please contact Rev. Meaker.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God’s Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

September 14th: Sermon: Don't Forgive, Get Even. Not the best advice, but it seems to me that it is the way the world works. Perhaps we need to be more intentional about challenging that? My texts are Romans 14:1–12 and Matthew 18:21–35.

September 21st: Sermon: Wages. Few parables challenge our world view as much as the parable of the workers in the field. My texts are Philippians 1:21–30 and Matthew 20:1–16.

Worship Leaders Schedule

September 14

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

September 21

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Pat Moran & Linda Robinson, **Greeters**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Ushers**

Announcements

The women of the church will meet **Tuesday, September 16 at 6:00 PM.** One of the agenda items will be discussion related to the proposed fundraiser, “That’s My Pan.” Samples of the product will be available for your inspection at this meeting. This link <http://www.thatsmypan.biz/frtn10177/> will take you to the website they have set up for us if we determine to do this. This is a new technology since we last did this fundraiser in 2005, almost 10 years ago. Dinner will be provided at the meeting. Please plan to attend.

The **Administrative Council** meeting which was to take place this Saturday, September 14 has been rescheduled. This meeting will take place **Saturday, September 20 at 9:00 AM.**

Please remember to return your rocket banks, spare change or any monetary donation. Your donations will be used for the **'Imagine No Malaria'** campaign. We will be sending all of these funds through UMCOR to fight this treatable disease. Special boxes will be at the front of the church and in fellowship hall to accept both your donations and your rocket bank.

The “Companions in Christ” Sunday school class is studying a series, **“Dare to Dream.”** This study will help us discern God's dream for us and how we live it out prayerfully and spiritually. We are creating a “God-Sized” mission for ourselves. Please join us. You will be enriched spiritually and you will enjoy the fellowship and commitment of others.

A brand new sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board so that you can sign up to help with **Sunday School.** This activity is so important to the children of our church and is so very rewarding.

September Birthdays

Millie Fly, Elva Beard, Joann Harper, Jessica Bauguess, Wanda Folds, GL Jones, Bill LeCates

Happy Birthday to each of you!