



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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I'm Not Good Enough

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.
1 John 3:2 NRSV

I am not good enough! Ever say something like that? Ever have thoughts like that? I suspect that we all have had such thoughts from time to time. Sometimes such thoughts consume us, like rust attacking a piece of equipment. Slowing it down. Making it unable to work properly. If you experience that, if your steps are slowed by such feelings, if you are frozen in place by the belief that you are not good enough and can never be good enough, consider the text above. You are a child of God, and, through Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Let's start out with a little honesty. Sometimes there are excellent reasons that we don't feel we are good enough. We have acted in ways that hurt ourselves or others. Even if we have not been caught, we know that God knows. We are like children waiting for the parent to realize what we have done. Those around us may not know our sins, may not even consider our sins all that bad. But we know them. We see the faces of the people we have hurt. We see the effects of our sin in our own lives. And we know that God sees them as well.

And, every time we hurt one another, every time we turn our backs on one another, we are also denying God. That is part of what the writer of 1 John is trying to get across:

8 Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8 NRSV

Choosing a life of sin is a rejection of God's gift of grace in Jesus Christ. When we hurt one another, we reject the power that God gives us to live as the Body of Christ. When we hurt one another, we deny Christ. And, sin always matters. If we don't confront it, and turn it over to God, it festers and grows like any infection.

I was once meeting with some other pastors discussing problems taking place in a colleague's Church. That church was torn by internal dissention, constant bickering and hateful exchanges. One of the pastors noted

that the church in question was created some years ago by people engaged in ‘white flight.’ It was formed by people who wanted to keep the Church from becoming integrated. It was created to have a place where white people wouldn’t have to worship with people of color. It was created, in other words, in sin. And many years later you have to wonder if it is not un-confronted sin that is continuing to fester and grow in that Church, spinning off more hurt and dissention.

If we are Christian, we have to take sin seriously. We must be willing to confront our sin.

But, taking sin seriously does not mean rejecting the power of God to deal with our sin. Sometimes our feelings that we aren’t good enough aren’t about the sin we committed. They reflect a belief that God could never love us. That He could never forgive us. It is to those feelings that the above scripture is directed.

‘You are a child of God,’ says 1 John. A Child of God. Think for a moment what that means. We have all been children. If you have been a child of loving parents, parents who reached out to you, took you in their arms, comforted you and loved you, taught you in love and kindness, then these words should be of great comfort. Think about that love you have known from your parents and understand that the love you have known is a mere shadow of the love that God holds for you. Just as you were loved by your parents, you are loved even more by the one who created all there is.

If you had the misfortune not to know loving parents you can still take comfort in the reality that the love you dreamed of having is a gift from God. That God loves you more completely, more openly, than any human parent ever could. And it is not a matter of being good enough. It just is. It is the gift we could not earn, but only accept. You are a child of God.

And, as the risen Christ tells the Disciples, the Gospel, the Good News is that through him, through Christ, your sins are forgiven. If you will confront the sin in your life, the power of God to forgive is sufficient. If you are willing to confront the sin in your life, turn it over to God, to live in response to the grace that God gives, God’s power of forgiveness is greater than your sin. By ourselves, we are not worthy. God’s love makes us worthy.

One of the most powerful symbols we have of the forgiving power of God, of God’s love for us, is the Lord’s Supper. When you are invited to this table you are told that Christ welcomes all who repent of their sin. Repent means to turn your life toward God, to confront the sin in your life and turn it over to God. I have had people say, “I am not worthy to take communion.” And that is true. No one is. What is offered at the table is grace; the free gift of God’s love. If you are willing to confront the sin in your life you are welcome to the table. If you are willing to accept the Love of God for you as a child of God, you are welcome at the table.

The next time we celebrate communion, listen closely to the words of the communion liturgy. Hear the invitation: Christ welcomes all who repent of their sin, not all who have mastered their sin. Listen to the words of the confession as you pray them and accept those words as your prayer. When you are invited to confess in silence, confront the sin in your life. Place it before God and claim the forgiveness that is offered through Christ.

Lastly, when you gather at the table, accept in your heart the grace that God offers you. The power of God to go into the world as a Disciple of Jesus Christ. The power of God that enables you to be the Body of Christ. Remember, you are a Child of God.

Why a Christian Flag?

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Ex 20:4

In a recent bible study we discussed the Christian flag in the Sanctuary. The Kingdom of God parables from the Gospels are often given an interpretation of describing the “Church Triumphant,” the Church “conquering” the world. Some see the Christian flag as representing the hopefully peaceful “armies” of Christianity conquering the world. Yet, it is difficult to reconcile the idea of conquest with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the idea of the church conquering the world has led to some of the most monstrous acts in Christian history.

Flags, as used though-out the world, have historically represented nations and ideologies. The Nazi flag not only represented Germany of the 1930s and 40s, but also came to represent the concept of Nazism and white supremacy; the superiority of the so called Aryan race. Many groups continue to display the Nazi flag today for that reason. The American flag, for us, represents not only our nation but is a symbol of liberty and freedom. Some in the world, however, view it as a symbol of imperialism. Christians might see the Christian flag as a powerful and positive symbol while people of other faiths see it as a symbol of threatened dominance.

The Christian flag is a curious creation. According to sources with the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship and elsewhere, the Christian Flag was conceived a little over 100 years ago. As it happens, a Methodist was involved in its creation. The Christian flag was soon adopted by many other denominations and is displayed in many churches and schools to this day.

In addition to being involved in creating the Christian flag, a Methodist pastor even wrote a “pledge of allegiance” to the Christian flag. That pledge went:

*“I pledge allegiance to my flag and the
Saviour for whose kingdom it stands; one brotherhood
uniting all mankind in service and love.”*

Other Christians have adopted a pledge that more closely resembles the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States:

*I pledge allegiance to the Christian
flag, and to the Saviour for whose kingdom it
stands; one Saviour, crucified, risen, and coming
again with life and liberty to all who believe.”*

Neither effort seems to me to offer anything superior to the affirmations of our faith as contained in the historic creeds of the Church such as the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed. It is also troublesome to be offering “allegiance” to a flag and Christ instead of Christ alone.

Despite its widespread use, the Christian Flag is a symbol that remains troublesome for many. The symbol of our faith is the Cross. The Cross reminds us of God’s love that reached into our world and of the sacrifice of Christ. Yet we do not worship the Cross and we do not pledge allegiance to the Cross. We worship God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and not the Cross itself. For some, the Christian flag looks suspiciously like an

idol that has no place in our worship. Many are also bothered by the flag's connotations of imperialism and dominance that still haunt the history of the Church.

From a pastoral perspective, I'm indifferent to the display of the Christian flag in the sanctuary. I would never suggest that we include the Christian Pledge of Allegiance as part of a worship service but I do not promote the removal of the flag either. I acknowledge that many people find it a familiar part of the worship setting and would not wish to see it removed. But I also believe that we should always be willing to examine and question how we practice our faith. What we say and do in worship is meant to express our deepest beliefs about the nature of God and the salvation of the world.

This Man

We are excited to announce that we will be presenting the original musical "This Man, A Musical Fable" at Trinity on Palm Sunday evening, March 20, 2016. There will be an initial meeting for those interested in participating on Sunday, Nov. 22nd at 4 p.m. with regular rehearsals to begin in January. All are welcome and needed!

Thursday Morning Bible Study

Our Thursday morning Bible Study meets on Thursday mornings between 10:00 and 11:30. Everyone is welcome to attend. It has been my practice to allow the group to decide what parts of the bible they wish to study. We have concluded our study of Mark and have begun a study of Matthew.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

⁷Descendants of Jacob, is it right for you to claim that the LORD did what he did because he was angry? Doesn't he always bless those who do right? ⁸ My people, you have even stolen clothes right off the backs of your unsuspecting soldiers returning home from battle.

⁹You take over lovely homes that belong to the women of my nation. Then you cheat their children out of the inheritance that comes from the LORD.

¹⁰Get out of here, you crooks! You'll find no rest here. You're not fit to belong to the LORD's people, and you will be destroyed. Micah 2:7-10 CEV

Time and again in this series, from Genesis to Micah, it has been shown that God cares about individuals. God cares when we hurt one another or are indifferent to the suffering in our midst. So it is that Micah chides the people on behalf of God for mistreating their veterans and cheating those least able to protect themselves. We may not have stolen the clothes off the backs of our veterans, but many of them wander the streets homeless. Is there some reason we do not believe that God cares for them? Is there some reason that we do not believe that God expects us to act to help them? How about the tens of thousands who, through no fault of their own, are driven into bankruptcy because of inadequate or unavailable medical insurance? Do we think God does not care about them? Do we really think that God excuses us when we refuse to help them?

²⁶ If you think you are being religious, but can't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and everything you do is useless. ²⁷ Religion that pleases God the Father must be pure and spotless. You must help needy orphans and widows and not let this world make you evil. James 1:26-27 CEV

James re-iterates the message of Micah. Our faith is not solely about belief but about life. How we live each day, how we relate to others, is of importance to our faith and to God.

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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.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Mac McAfee	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Erin McKibben	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

November 15, 2015: Sermon: From Disaster, Hope. The nature of life is change. Sometimes that change is disastrous. But, even in the darkest times, there is the hope of new beginnings. My texts are Hebrews 10:11–14; 19–25 and Mark 13:1–8.

November 22, 2015: Sermon: Is Christ Our King? Since 1776 We Americans have never been very comfortable with the idea of Kings. How comfortable are we with Christ as King? It is Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday in the liturgical year. My texts are Revelation 1:4b–8 and John 18:33–37.

Worship Leader's Schedule

November 15

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

Ken and Jan Strait, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

November 22

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Hal & Rachel Newman, **Greeters**

Ushers

Announcements

The “**Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ**” Sunday School class is studying, “**Jesus, Apprentice.**” We have extra books and extra chairs if you would care to join our class. **The class begins promptly at 9:45.** All are welcome to enjoy this time of learning and fellowship.

Birthdays

Cheryl Wilson, Ensley Mason, Betty Haynes, Ken Strait, Brooks Crowell, Ross Crutcher.

Happy Birthday to each of you!