



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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The Discipleship Journey

God Walks With Us

...⁷ He called the place Massah^a and Meribah,^b because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” Exodus 17:1-7

We are on the Discipleship Journey, and God walks with us. But, do we really believe that? That is the crisis of faith confronting the people of Israel in this text from Exodus.

The people of Israel have come to a place that doesn't seem to have any water. And they immediately start asking the question, “Is the Lord among us?” On one hand, this is a very curious question for the people to ask because, during their wanderings in the wilderness, the people could always see a physical symbol of the presence of God. During the day they were led by a pillar of cloud. At night, they were led by a pillar of fire. In a sense they could **see** that God was always with them.

More than that, this wasn't the first problem to arise on the journey. The first came at the Red Sea. The people had their backs to the sea and Pharaoh's army was closing in. They complained to Moses, “Where is God? Did you bring us out here to die?” And then God parted the sea, blocked the progress of the army while the people crossed and, after they had crossed, destroyed Pharaoh's army.

Next the people came to a place that had water but it was poisoned. They said, “Where is God? Did you bring us out here to die?” And again, God made the bitter water sweet and clean.

Then they were in the wilderness and running out of food, and the people asked, “Where is God? Did you bring us out here to die?” And God rained down manna from heaven, the bread that sustained the people on the wilderness journey.

And now it's, “Where's the water, where is God, did you bring us out here to die?”

^a That is *Test*

^b That is *Quarrel*

See the pattern? When things are going well it's easy to believe in God. When things are difficult, when fear clouds our sight, we find it hard to believe that God is still with us. Time and again God's presence was affirmed for the people of Israel and time and again, when faced with crisis, when overcome by fear, they doubted the presence of God. The people decide to test God. There are, in effect, saying "If you are here God, prove it by bringing us water and then we will believe."

We test God the same way, don't we? We say, "If you are really there God, prove it by bringing me healing." Or "If you are there God, prove it by saving me from this situation I'm in." Or, "If you are there God, prove it by giving me what I need." Testing God comes naturally to us. We do it all the time.

The beginning of faith, I think, starts with the belief, the deep understanding, that God is always with us. That there is nowhere we can go and not be with God. My favorite Psalm 139 contains this passage:

*7 Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you. Psalm 139:7-12 NRSV*

Wherever we go, wherever we are, we are never outside the presence of God. When our fear starts to overtake us, when the doubt clouds our sight, we need to remind ourselves that, no matter what happens, we are not alone. God is there. We are on a journey, and God walks with us always.

II.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 5:1-11, takes this idea of the constant presence of God a step further. Paul begins with God's Grace, God's unconditional love that fills creation. God's unconditional love is available to everyone no matter who they are and no matter if they have faith or not. Go back to Ps 139. God is always there and God's love does not depend upon us first loving God. Paul then proclaims that God has offered us special access to his grace through Jesus Christ:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2 NRSV

God brings a special Grace through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Through Christ, God has acted to reach out to humankind and open our lives to the justifying and sanctifying Grace of God. God did this through the atoning sacrifice of Christ:

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Romans 5:6-8 NRSV

Each week we repeat these words as we confess before God. “Christ died for us while we were still sinners. That proves God’s love for us. In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.” Understand, it is not me that is granting you forgiveness, nor you granting me forgiveness. This is a proclamation of the Gospel. It is like the headline in a newspaper. “In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.” Finally, Paul proclaims:

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But **more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.**

Through Christ we have been reconciled to God. This is God’s Gift, offered without price. But, while this is a gift offered without price, it is a gift that must be accepted through faith.

Think about it in this way. Have you ever known someone who was estranged from a member of their family? Some old dispute had torn the two apart and one of the parties refuses to reconcile. No matter how many overtures are made, the one family member refuses to forgive, refuses to accept the love offered. That is the way some people relate to God. God’s love is always there, always available, but some people will refuse to accept the love of God. Those on the journey of Christian discipleship have, through faith, accepted that love. Paul speaks of this as the ultimate reconciliation. God, knowing all there is to know about us, through our faith in Jesus Christ has forgiven our sins and accepted us as we are. We need only acknowledge our need for the Love, the Grace, of God.

Conclusion

The journey is often difficult. But the Gospel, the Good News, is that all along the road we walk with Christ; we walk with God.

One Hundred and Fifty Years Living As The Body of Christ

As many of you already know, we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of Trinity UMC on June 13th and 14th. People are already beginning to work on the celebration but we need your help. Please talk to Cheryl Wilson, Nancy Conway or Jeanne Rybolt about ways that you would like to help and to see if they have tasks that you hadn’t considered. The 13th will be the Fish Fry and there will be many opportunities to contribute to that effort. Charles Wilson has placed sign-up sheets in the Church with a listing of the areas needing workers.

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.

*²³ The LORD says:
Don't brag about your wisdom
or strength or wealth.
²⁴ If you feel you must brag,
then have enough sense
to brag about worshiping me,
the LORD.
What I like best
is showing kindness,
justice, and mercy
to everyone on earth. Jeremiah 9:23-24 CEV*

How often do we read of those bragging about their strength, their wisdom or their wealth? Those who proclaim that they have acquired all they have through hard work never seem to consider the blessings they started with, not the least of which is being born healthy in a good family in this nation. See Deuteronomy 8:11-20. What God desires is kindness, justice and mercy, things that remain in short supply.

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? ² For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, ³ and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? ⁷ Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? James 2:1-7

James reminds the people of our tendency to defer to the wealthy by reminding us that God does not desire us to make those distinctions. God does not judge by the wealth we collect but how that wealth is used and by how we treat one another.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons are 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

June 7th: Sermon: To be Christian, You Must Believe in God's Love for the World. "God Hates ____." Fill in the blank yourself. Whatever you write will reflect your belief about the nature of God but will also go against the predominate message of scripture. God loves the world. My texts are Luke 2:8-14 and John 3:16-17.

June 14th: Sermon: To be Christian, You Must Believe in the Resurrection. In the First Century or the 21st Century, this is still a difficult belief. How can we believe in the resurrection? My texts are Isaiah 25:6-9 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-20; 54-56.

Worship Leader's Schedule

June 7

Linda Robinson, **Liturgist**
Mike & Renee Fetting, **Greeters**
Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Ushers**

June 14

Houston Hartsock, **Liturgist**
Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**
Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

Announcements

The 2015 church directories are finished. Copies of the directory are available on the back table. We have enough directories for each family to have one copy.

Please sign up to be host/hostess for the first Sunday meal. The sign-up list is on the bulletin board.

The Catfish Supper is scheduled for June 13 from 4:00 to 7:00 PM. This event is a little more than a week away. Volunteers are needed to create a successful event. A list of tasks is located on a sign-up document on the back table. Please review the list and sign up for what you can do to help. **A bake sale is taking place at the same time.** Please make plans to contribute baked items for this fund-raiser. Please plan to bake treats that can be packaged easily. Please make your friends and neighbors aware of this event and encourage them to come to enjoy great food and fellowship

Our Sesquicentennial celebration will take place June 13 and June 14. You will want to be sure to attend church Sunday, June 14.

June Birthdays

Lynn McGill, Jo Cotton, Mike Fetting, Richard Stevens, Nancy Conway, Kenneth Stevens, Larry Eastwood, June Pollard

Happy Birthday to each of you!