



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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The Discipleship Journey *Starting the Journey*

¹⁵ *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."* Genesis 2:15-17 NRSV

³ *The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "* Matthew 4:3-4

Over the next five weeks we'll contemplate our own Spiritual journey as we try to live in the world as the Body of Christ; as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Why call it a journey? Because, Christian discipleship can best be thought of as part of our journey through life; a path we can choose to follow. We might walk many different paths through life and some of those paths will lead to places we don't wish to be. If we aren't careful our journey through life can lead us to places of harm, to places where we cause harm, to places of despair and loneliness. Our Discipleship Journey is a constant effort to discern the path through life that God would have us walk. It will involve many intentional choices and, from time to time, we will step off that path. The Good News is that Christ, and indeed our brothers and sisters in Christ, are always there to call us back.

I.

Some may question the title "Starting the Journey." After all, there are people who will tell you they have been Christians for 30, 40, 60, 80 and into 90 years. Why speak in terms of stating the Journey?

The answer is we have to start the Journey every day. Each and every day, and throughout each day, we are faced with choices that challenge our discipleship. We have choices to act or not to act in ways that proclaim our Love for God or disavow our relationship with God. We have choices to abandon our lives as Christians all together. The stories of Adam and Eve and Jesus' temptation in the Wilderness describe the experiences of Adam and Eve as they are faced with those choices and the experience of Jesus when he was faced with similar choices.

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden is one familiar to many people, even those outside the Church. It may also be one of the most misunderstood stories in scripture. Many people see it as a case of a woman being duped or deceived, of a woman leading a man astray and a story somehow involved with human sexuality.

Let me deal with the sexuality aspect of this story and get it out of the way. This story is not about sexuality. The text says that Adam and Eve, after eating the fruit, knew they were naked. Man, woman, in the garden alone and naked, centuries of people have assumed that this text was somehow about nakedness being evil or sex being evil. Actually, it doesn't have a thing to do with human sexuality. It has to do with being vulnerable; exposed. After eating the fruit Adam and Eve now knew that they were mortal; that they could die. They understood just how risky the world could be and they start to think about protecting themselves. Their effort of wearing fig leaves may not have been impressive, but it was a start. This story is not about human sexuality. It is a story about who is in charge. Is God in charge or are we in charge?

The serpent, not Satan, seems to be bored. So he decides to play some head games with Eve. The serpent knew that God had only forbidden the eating of the fruit of the tree in the center of the garden. Nevertheless, he says to Eve, *"Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"* Eve, deciding to correct the snake, repeats God's command: 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden.' Then, apparently thinking that God may not have covered all that should have been said, she adds to God's instruction: 'nor shall you touch it.' God never said a thing about touching the tree or its fruit. Eve adds to God's Command. Eve has decided to move from labor to management, as it were; she sets a new rule, "you shall not touch the tree" just as if she was God.

The snake is loving this. The snake latches onto what Eve has done and tells her that God can't be trusted. God just wants to keep her down, to run her life. Because God knows that, if she eats of the fruit, she will become just like God:

"You will not die; ⁵ for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The text might be interpreted *'knowing everything from the extremes of Good to the extremes of Evil, just like God.'* So, Eve steps off the path God wants her to walk as soon as she decides that she is, or could be, just as good as God; that she could be God's equal; could be like God.

This is too great a temptation for Eve; to be like God, to be in charge. So she eats of the fruit of the Tree. And for those who think she somehow misled old Adam, read this next line carefully:

"she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate."

Adam was right there the whole time. He could have spoken up if he wanted. But, when push came to shove, he decided that being "just like God" sounded pretty good.

God gave humankind free will. We can be, at least in our minds, just like God. We can choose to go our way, to ignore the path that God would have us walk.

III.

The Gospel passage deals with Jesus' response to the challenge to put himself in charge. Time and again the devil tries to get Jesus to take up the reins; to be just like God.

Satan first says, “God has given you great power. You can do just about anything. Right now you’re really hungry after spending all this time fasting. What would be the harm in making yourself a sandwich? Just point to some rocks here and they’ll become bread. You know you have the power.”

And Jesus knew that he did have that power. That God had given him that power so he could more effectively proclaim the Gospel, the Good News. Why not use it to feed himself? But, Jesus refuses. “Going hungry, fasting is about reminding myself that I’m dependent upon God” says Jesus. “I won’t use God’s power to feed myself. Life is about God and our relationship with God, not about what’s on the menu.” Jesus chose to stay on the path God would have him walk.

So the devil decides to play to Jesus’ ego. He takes him to the pinnacle of the Temple Courtyard. Looking down he says, “Look Jesus. I know you’re the Son of God, and you know you’re the son of God, but those folks down there, they don’t know you from Adam. But, you know God has plans for you and won’t let those plans be set aside. Go ahead and jump. God will have to send Angels to save you and, when he does, everyone will know you are God.”

But Jesus responds, “That isn’t what God has in mind for me. You led me up here, not God. God will lead me where I should be. Those people will believe or not believe based upon me doing what God wants me to do. I’m not going to test God to see what God will do.” Jesus chose to stay on the path God would have him walk.

Finally, the devil goes for the deal that the snake offered Eve. “Look, I can make it so you are just like God to all those people. All these kingdoms are mine to do with as I please and you can run them all, you can be their God. Think of all the good you could do. You could wipe out hunger, war, disease. All I want in return is your acknowledgment that you owe it all to me.

But again, Jesus chooses God. Jesus says, “That isn’t God’s plan. This is God’s world and not yours. All I am I owe to God, not to you.” Jesus chose to stay on the path God would have him walk.

Each and every day we are faced with choices about starting and continuing our Discipleship Journey. Remind yourself that, each and every day, you have a choice to follow God’s path or your own. The invitation is to let God be in charge of the Journey.

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.

*... Everyone is greedy and dishonest,
whether poor or rich.
Even the prophets and priests
cannot be trusted.
¹¹All they ever offer
to my deeply wounded people
are empty hopes for peace. Jeremiah 8:6 CEV*

Jeremiah reminds the people that even the clergy are just ordinary people, ordinary sinners. In this case, they too have abandoned God's law and teachings, offering nothing more than empty platitudes. We need to constantly check what we are taught against scripture and the understanding of the whole community. As Christians we are to constantly ask if what is being proclaimed is the Gospel. This is especially important today with the large number of clergy asserting their political views as if those views are scriptural.

⁶I am shocked that you have so quickly turned from God, who chose you because of his wonderful kindness. You have believed another message, ⁷when there is really only one true message. But some people are causing you trouble and want to make you turn away from the good news about Christ. ⁸I pray that God will punish anyone who preaches anything different from our message to you! It doesn't matter if that person is one of us or an angel from heaven. ⁹I have said it before, and I will say it again. I hope God will punish anyone who preaches anything different from what you have already believed.

¹⁰ I am not trying to please people. I want to please God. Do you think I am trying to please people? If I were doing that, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:6-10

Paul is addressing the same problem. Some new teachers have come to the Galatians, apparently declaring that Paul is not preaching the Gospel and offering different teachings. Paul insists that he is not trying to please people with his message but is trying to proclaim the Gospel.

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

May 24th: Sermon: To Be Christian You Must Believe in the Church, the Body of Christ. Christians often speak in terms of having a “personal relationship with Christ.” Paul reminds the Church in Corinth that the personal relationship with Christ includes a personal relationship with all other Christians. My texts are Acts 2:1-21 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

May 31st: Sermon: To be Christian, You Must Believe in the Holy Spirit. Christians proclaim the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To deny the Holy Spirit is to deny God. My texts are John 14:15-19 and John 20:19-22.

Worship Leader's Schedule

May 24

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**
 Pat Moran & Linda Robinson, **Greeters**
 Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Ushers**

May 31

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**
 Pat Moran & Maurice Edwards, **Greeters**
 Tommy Cotton & Herb Haynes, **Ushers**

Announcements

Please sign up to be host/hostess for the first Sunday meal. The sign-up list is on the bulletin board. It would be very helpful if each month could be filled in.

Our church will be serving and providing food at **61st Avenue United Methodist Church this Saturday, May 23**. If you are able to volunteer, please plan to be at the 61st Avenue church by 3:30 PM.

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 only three weeks 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

The Sesquicentennial celebration will take place June 13 and June 14. The committee responsible for the planning is meeting regularly and plans are moving forward. Please plan to attend events taking place during this special weekend.

May Birthdays

Tommy Cotton, Sam Richardson, Jim Winton

Happy Birthday to each of you!