



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 Discipleship Journey *There Is No Map*

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him... Genesis 12:1-4 NRSV

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night... John 3:1-2

If this is a journey, where is the map; the document that tells us where we're going? The bad news is that there isn't a map. The good news is that we don't need one. You see, what's called for is commitment to the journey itself.

Consider first the story of Abraham. According to the text at the end of chapter 11, Abraham and his wife (Abram and Sari) are living in the land of Haran, well north of the land of Canaan. They lived with Terah, Abraham's father. Abraham was married to Sarah but they had no children and were already in their 70s. Sarah's child bearing days were over. Abraham's and Sarah's life could be called comfortable, but barren. Abraham's line would die with him.

God calls Abraham to give up everything of importance in his life except his wife and begin a journey: *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.*

Give up your country, give up your family and give up your father's house, the only home you have ever known. Give all this up and start on a journey to a land I will show you. And, in exchange, God promises benefits; but look at those promises closely. They are promises that Abraham will never personally experience: "I will make you a great nation." Well, that takes time, probably centuries. Abraham will never see it happen. "I will make your name great." Again, that takes time. In this day and age it is possible to become well known, and possibly even universally regarded, almost overnight. In that place and time such notoriety took time to accomplish. "And in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed." Again, we can assume that will take some time. Abraham has no realistic hope of ever realizing the benefit of any of these promises. In the end, he commits to the journey because God calls. Is it surprising that Paul, writing a thousand years later, used the

example of Abraham as an example of stepping out in faith; as an example of how a Christian Disciple should step out in faith?

4 What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Romans 4:1-3 NRSV

One United Methodist pastor expressed it this way: *"Abraham does not have, in terms of personal realization, all the promises of God. But he does have the God of all the promises."* God did not give Abraham a map, but God did call Abraham to commit to the journey. And Abraham did.

II.

In John 3:1-17, it seems that Nicodemus is also perceiving a call to set out in a new direction; to set out on a new journey. We are told that Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews. We are told in another passage that he was among the higher officials of the Temple. Outwardly, he apparently has a great deal in terms of position. And, since wealth and power often accompany position, it is not unreasonable to assume that he had those as well. Yet there is reason to believe that he is not satisfied with his life, that he is seeking something more.

You see, Jesus was teaching in the Temple every day. Presumably Nicodemus could have gone to him at any time and had this conversation. And yet the text tells us he comes to Jesus by night. John associates night and darkness with ignorance and unbelief. Nicodemus apparently senses that Jesus has something to offer that he does not have, that Nicodemus needs, but he is afraid of being seen with Jesus. So he comes to him at night.

Nicodemus acknowledges Jesus as an equal. He calls him rabbi, teacher, and acknowledges that he at least has the sanction of a prophet of God because no one but a true prophet of God could do the things that he has done. But Nicodemus stops there, apparently unsure what he is seeking from Jesus.

Answering the unasked question, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must take his life in a new direction; that he must be born again, of water and the Spirit. Not unlike God telling Abraham to give up country, family and home to follow God, Jesus tells Nicodemus that those things that he cherishes; position, wealth, power, are not of the spirit. They are the earthly things and they are holding him back:

¹¹ "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? John 3:11-12 NRSV

Jesus invites Nicodemus to commit to a journey of faith that means accepting and believing in Jesus as the Son of God. That will mean turning his back on much of what he values, and the rewards are not immediately perceivable. Jesus doesn't tell him where his journey will end, only that he is called to commit to starting a new life based upon the Spirit instead of those things Nicodemus has always treasured.

III.

We are called to commit to a journey, but we are not given a map. We aren't told where the journey will lead. But, we are told one more thing by both of these stories. We are told that the purpose of this journey is to share God's Love for this world.

One of the promises made to Abraham is that, through him and his family, God will bless the world. Not just the people of Israel, but because of Abraham's commitment to the Journey the world would be blessed. This first happens in Genesis 12, but is repeated throughout Genesis:

¹⁷ The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? Gen 18:17-18

¹⁸ and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice. Ge 22.18

...and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." Gen 26:4-5.

...and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Ge 28.14

God's ultimate purpose in calling Abraham was to bless the entire world.

And likewise, when Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus about the need to be born again, to believe in him as the son of God, Jesus speaks these words:

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. John 3:16-17

God's purpose in calling us to commit to the journey is not just our personal salvation. As important as that is to us, and to God, God's purposes are greater than that. God is seeking, through our commitment to the Journey, the salvation of the world.

Conclusion

We are called by God to commit to a journey. A Journey of faithful living as the Body of Christ. We aren't told the destination we are moving toward, not told when we will arrive, we are not given a map. But we are assured that the commitment to the journey is part of God's plan of salvation for the world. Because Christ was not sent to condemn the world, but to bring it salvation.

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.

⁴*Jeremiah, all your friends
and relatives
tell lies about you,
so don't trust them.*
⁵*They wear themselves out,
always looking for a new way
to cheat their friends.*
⁶*Everyone takes advantage
of everyone else,
and no one will admit
that I am God. Jeremiah 9:4-6 CEV*

Jeremiah is sometimes called the reluctant or sad prophet. Jeremiah loved Jerusalem and his people. He did not want to bring news of impending doom. But Jeremiah was not called to speak words of comfort to Jerusalem but rather warnings of the calamity that was going to fall and could not be stopped. Part of Jeremiah is God explaining to Jeremiah why the city will fall to the invading Babylonians. According to God, Jerusalem had embraced the concept of self-gratification. God was not at the center of life; each individual had placed themselves at the center of life with their welfare first and foremost on their minds. God laments, "No one will admit that I am God." Admitting that God is God is not merely verbal assent. It involves how each of us lives in relation to God and the world.

²⁸ *Jesus said:*

I will tell you a story about a man who had two sons. Then you can tell me what you think. The father went to the older son and said, "Go work in the vineyard today!" ²⁹ *His son told him that he would not do it, but later he changed his mind and went.* ³⁰ *The man then told his younger son to go work in the vineyard. The boy said he would, but he didn't go.* ³¹ *Which one of the sons obeyed his father?*

"The older one," the chief priests and leaders answered.

Then Jesus told them:

You can be sure that tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you ever will!

³² *When John the Baptist showed you how to do right, you would not believe him. But these evil people did believe. And even when you saw what they did, you still would not change your minds and believe. Matthew 21:28-32 CEV*

Jesus is addressing the same issue in Matthew 21:28. It is easy to speak the words, to acknowledge that God is in charge, but if our lives do not reflect that belief then our words are meaningless.

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 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.

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.

Worship Leader's Schedule

May 31

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**

Pat Moran & Maurice Edwards, **Greeters**

Tommy Cotton & Herb Haynes, **Ushers**

June 7

Linda Robinson, **Liturgist**

Mike & Renee Fetting, **Greeters**

Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **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.

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 nearly upon us. 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!