



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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July 3, 2013

I Don't Like This Scripture

³⁸ John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." ³⁹ But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ Whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

⁴² "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

⁴⁹ "For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." Mark 9:38-50

I don't like this passage of scripture.

I hope you all understand that it's okay to not like what you read in scripture. We do not worship the bible. We worship God not scripture. We **do** take the bible very seriously. We believe that, through the prayerful study of scripture, we can hear the word of God for our lives. But sometimes we really struggle to understand a scripture. And sometimes we find scripture passages we don't like. That's okay. For me, I have never much liked this particular scripture passage.

Are you bothered by some of this scripture? That passage that talks about cutting off hands and feet and gouging eyes is one of the most troubling passages in the whole bible. This Gospel reading compresses several ideas into a few verses and does so in a confusing and disturbing manner. Still, the Gospel is here for us if we study it awhile.

This first passage is straight forward enough. Jesus is talking to his Disciples. John speaks up and tells Jesus that he and some others have tried to shut down someone who is not a Disciple of Jesus but is exorcising demons in Jesus' name. Apparently John is of the opinion that it is not enough to do the work. You need the proper credentials too. Maybe even the proper beliefs. I also suspect that John thinks that having other people doing things in Jesus' name undermines his position. Makes him feel less important.

Jesus rebukes John and the Disciples. Here is someone acting in Jesus name, doing the things that Jesus and the Disciples want done. He says, “Why would you want to stop him? Someone who is acting in my name, doing the things I want done, is unlikely to be my enemy. And anyone not against us, is for us.”

The Gospel message for us in this passage is to be slow to judge the work of others in the world. Too often Christians present themselves as folks with all the answers. These are people who believe they have the inside track on understanding what God seeks from us in this world. When we believe that we tend to overlook what someone else is contributing. When we believe that we tend to overlook what someone else would teach us.

That attitude is a real problem in this country at this time. Too often we seem intent on insisting that someone believe as we believe before we can work with them. That attitude is very apparent these days in our political discussions. We face many difficult problems that will require solutions worked out by people on all sides of the debates. Yet there is a disturbing tendency for people to demonize one another if the person proposing something does not believe exactly as we believe.

Jesus reminds us, if someone is doing what needs doing, it may not be important that they do not believe as you believe. Think! Christians get to think. You don't have to check your brain or your common sense at the door of the church. If you aren't following the debate on some issue, take the time to get the facts. Don't let someone else tell you how to think. And allow for the possibility that even if someone disagrees with you they are not necessarily against you. Nor are they necessarily wrong. **You** might be the one who is wrong. If someone wants essentially the same things you want you can probably work with them. And, who knows? You may even learn something in the process.

This next passage is the really troublesome one. Every few years or so we hear about some mentally unstable person who has cut off a hand, or poked out one of their eyes, insisting that the bible told them to do it. In order to hear the Gospel message here you need to look at this passage carefully and draw on your own common sense and experience.

Maybe something like this happened to you as a child. When I was seven or eight I took it my head one day to hit my sister. And not a light slap either. I let her have it. She had done something that really made me mad and I swung for the bleachers. Needless to say, she was both hurt and scared and cried pretty loudly. Before I knew it my Dad was towering over me. And, like all parents, he wanted to know both sides of the story. So he asked me if I did indeed punch my sister and knock her down. Looking up at him I sort of ran through my alibi options as kids are prone to do in such situations. Testing out in my mind possible answers to that question. There didn't seem to be any good ones, so I offered up the best one I could think of. “My hand slipped.” As I recall, my Dad didn't think much of that explanation. Instead of taking responsibility for what I had done, I literally tried to blame it on my hand!

Another example. Ever know someone who suffered from migraine headaches to say that they felt like cutting their head off? When someone says that do we call the police in fear that they are about to kill themselves? Of course not. We understand that they are saying that their head hurts so much that they don't think anything they can do for it will stop the pain. Or someone says that that job they have to do is going to kill them. Are they being literal? No. People today, and people 2000 years ago, talked in much the same way. They used exaggeration, they used metaphors, they used similes. Figures of speech.

In this Gospel passage people are acting in ways that are leading others away from God. Maybe even giving the equivalent excuse of “my hand slipped.” Someone says, “I don’t know how I drank so much wine. My hand just kept reaching for a refill.” “I don’t know how I got to that place I wasn’t supposed to go. My feet led me there.” “I know I shouldn’t have been looking in that window. My eyes just focused there.”

Jesus shuts down the excuses. He talks about cutting off hands and feet, but what he’s talking about doing is telling people to stop kidding themselves. Your hands and feet aren’t leading you to do things you shouldn’t do. The problem is in your head and heart. The solution is not to cut off body parts, but stop doing what you know you shouldn’t be doing. That’s the way the people who first heard these words heard them, and that should be the way that we hear them.

Finally, there is this confusing passage about salt. “Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, what use is it?”

The first thing to point out is that this scripture passage has absolutely nothing to do with what immediately precedes it. It’s apparently a saying of Jesus that the Gospel writer wished to preserve. Still, it has something to say to us especially in this day and time.

What does it mean to have been salted by fire? I think it refers to anyone who has experienced a difficult time in their life. And, as you age, the amount of “fire” you experience mounts up. All those experiences make you the person you are today. And, more importantly, you bring that experience, that salt, to your ministry in the church.

I think at some point in time Jesus must have been trying to discourage his followers from trying to fit everyone into the same mold. Discouraging his followers from trying to get everyone to act the same way. This is a diverse world and we all have a different set of experiences. We shouldn’t be unhappy about our differences, our saltiness. We should savor those differences. The church becomes a pretty bland place when we fail to do that.

One of my professors at Vanderbilt told me something that I have never forgotten. He said, “Ministry is messy.” What does that mean? It means that we minister to real people who often have multiple problems, who nearly always have experiences different than our own and who are sometimes very difficult.

I mentor candidates for ministry, people who are answering the call to pastoral ministry; people who are trying to determine if God is calling them into the pastoral ministry. And, inevitably, at one time or another, they come to me with a story about someone who is a great help in the church but who is very difficult to get along with. Or, they describe a situation where they are trying to help someone who is self-destructive or even dangerous to others. When that happens, I give them a small card they can keep with the words “Ministry is Messy” on it.

Christian ministry is always about meeting people where they are and taking them for who they are. Yes, people sometimes need to change behaviors, but people rarely change their fundamental approach to life. Their experiences have salted them and, come what may, how they respond in a situation will be influenced by who they are and what they have experienced. And that is okay. That’s a good thing. The church needs diversity to remain vital. If everything is the same, there is no salt. The Church is bland. Its ministry will lack life.

I still don't care much for this passage. And you may disagree with how I approach it. That's okay too. Nevertheless, I still hear the Gospel when I read it. Keep these ideas in mind:

1. It's okay to question scripture. We worship God, not the bible. The bible is a means of hearing God's word. If you don't understand something, or disagree with something, think about it. Pray about it. Talk about it.
2. Christians get to think for themselves. Moreover, it's important that you do think about your beliefs, your conduct and commitments. Take responsibility for your own discipleship journey. Don't let anyone, including someone in the Church, tell you how to think or how to act. We all answer to God for who we are and how we live. We don't get to say, "My hand slipped."
3. As a Christian, dare to be the person you are. Embrace your life experience. Difference, diversity, is a good thing. God created a diverse world. And God declared it good.

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, 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.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²When any of you sin and commit a trespass against the LORD by deceiving a neighbor in a matter of a deposit or a pledge, or by robbery, or if you have defrauded a neighbor, ³or have found something lost and lied about it—if you swear falsely regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin thereby—⁴when you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you, or the lost thing that you found, ⁵or anything else about which you have sworn falsely, you shall repay the principal amount and shall add one-fifth to it. You shall pay it to its owner when you realize your guilt. Lev 6:1-5

Under the Law, sin was a 'trespass against the Lord.' Sin always involves God, ourselves and others because God expects us to live lives of justice and righteousness with regard to one another. The Law of Israel specifically included within the definition of sin deceiving a neighbor. Examples were robbery and fraud, claiming property lost by others and giving false testimony. In the movie The Godfather, one gangster says to another, "It's nothing personal, it's just business." Under God's law, what we do that affects others is always personal.

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and

said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much."⁹ Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham."¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus made his living as a tax collector. This meant that he paid the peoples' tax to the Romans and then, through extortion, fraud and intimidation collected his money, plus a sizable profit, back from the people. The story of Zacchaeus is the story of a man who has confronted his guilt and is seeking to bring himself into right relationship with God and his neighbors.

Graceworks' Ministries

Graceworks has on-going needs in their ministries to the community. In particular, at the present time, the following items are in short supply:

Toilet Paper	Shampoo/Conditioner
Razors	Shaving Cream
Dishwashing Liquid	Cleaning Supplies
Laundry Detergent	Soap
Toothpaste	Toothbrushes

If you are able to contribute any of these items, please bring them by the Church and we will deliver them to Graceworks. Thanks for your support of this ministry.

Still Looking for Worship Leaders

The Worship Ministry is central to any church because it involves the majority of the members every week. Central to the Worship Ministry is the leadership of the laity. Judy Richardson and I are trying to organize the worship leadership schedule so that it is easier for people to plan in advance when they will be serving as **Greeters, Liturgists, Ushers and Counters**.

I would very much like to see greater participation in worship leadership from the laity. If you would like to make worship leadership part of your ministry in the church, please contact either Judy Richardson or Rev. Meaker.

The Problem of Personal Information

At one time it was not unusual to distribute lists of birthdays and other personal information within the Church. Such lists can still be created today if people wish to add their names to them. However, despite many requests to the contrary, I have chosen not to put information about birth dates, other than birth month, or other personal information, in the newsletter. Once this information has been posted in an online newsletter it is available to everyone. Our birth dates are an important piece of personal information that can be used as part of an effort to steal someone's identity. For much the same reason we do not post addresses and telephone numbers of members and we do not publish information about who is in the hospital. If a thief knew that someone was in the hospital they might take the opportunity to target that person's home for a break-in. The potential misuse of online information is something that we all need to be careful about.

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

July 7, 2013: The Fourth of July: Christ has set us free. What does that mean in the land of the free? My texts are Psalm 30 and Galatians 5:1, 13-25.

July 14, 2013; View From the Ditch: When we read stories, even those in the bible, we tend to associate ourselves with those people who act in an exemplary manner. We want to see ourselves as the "good guy." Yet, when Jesus told a story he sometimes tried to make the crowd see themselves as something less than perfect. My texts are Colossians 1:1-14 Luke 10:25-37.

Worship Leaders Schedule

July 7

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Sam Richardson & Larry Eastwood, **Ushers**

Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**

July 14

Tom Moore, **Liturgist**

Tommy Cotton & Ross Crutcher, **Ushers**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Greeters**

Announcements

Sunday School Adult Classes: There are two adult Sunday School classes to choose from. One meets at 9:45 in the Fellowship hall and the other meets in the classroom next to the Nursery at 9:45. Faith development is part of our discipleship commitment.

An Adult Sunday School Class, “Companions in Christ” gathers at 9:45. We are talking about how to be better companions to our fellow Christians, discover what our spiritual gifts are, and dig deeper into what we believe and why. Please come and enjoy this time with your church family and deepen your spiritual connection with God. We will meet in the Youth Sunday School room. All are welcome! *Nanette Noffsinger*

The UMW will be meeting **July 9 at 6:00 PM in Fellowship Hall**. We will enjoy planning for an upcoming retreat (among other opportunities) and we will share a time of fellowship and dinner (pizza, salad). Please plan to attend.

First Sunday Meal/Fellowship: We invite members, guests and visitors this Sunday, July 7 immediately after church in Fellowship Hall. There is always plenty of wonderful food and good fellowship. Please join us.

Ministry with 61st Ave. UMC. The last two dates for our church to prepare and serve dinner at **61st Ave UMC this year** are **August 17, and November 16**. We will also be participating at the 61st Ave UMC Christmas Toy Store, dates TBD.

There will not be **Choir Rehearsal** during the month of July.

July Birthdays

Nanette Crowell, Mac McAfee, Leslie Eastwood, Shirley Kirk, Linda Robinson, Renita Hartsock.