

Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted in this background

- Please record sermon at both worship services

Key Questions

1. What is this sermon about?
 - a. This sermon is about our we do theology as United Methodists
2. Why is this sermon important?
 - a. This sermon is important because it helps us understand the tools we can use to live our faith day to today.
3. What is the context of this sermon?
 - a. This is the fourth sermon in the series, Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist. During this series we will consider the defining characteristics of life as a United Methodist Christian and what makes our approach to faith distinct from others. We will look for ways that our heritage can defines our faith and challenge us to rediscover our spiritual passion.
4. What are the next action steps?
 - a. Use the tools of scripture, tradition, reason and experience to make sense of our faith and guide our daily choices.
5. What is the good news (bottom line)?
 - a. The good news is that God invites us to follow the way that leads to life and gives us the tools to find our way.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - Theology, Faith
- Books of the Bible
 - Matthew
- Series
 - Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist Christian
- Speaker
 - Andrew Conard
- Tags
 - Methodist, United Methodist, United Methodist Church, scripture, tradition, reason, experience, faith, understanding, constructive, critical, individual, communal

Outline

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2nd Sunday after Pentecost / in Kingdomtide
Love Divine: Faith Seeking Understanding
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text online at <http://j.mp/1huibnX>

June 22, 2014
Matthew 7:7-14
Target Word Count: 2,366
Video online is currently unavailable.

Matthew 7:7-14, CEB

7 “Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door is opened. 9 Who among you will give your children a stone when they ask for bread? 10 Or give them a snake when they ask for fish? 11 If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. 12 Therefore, you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.

13 “Go in through the narrow gate. The gate that leads to destruction is broad and the road wide, so many people enter through it. 14 But the gate that leads to life is narrow and the road difficult, so few people find it.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Sermon Starter Video

- [Play sermon starter video.](#)
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Introduction

Series Review and United Methodist Handbook

Today, as we continue our sermon series, Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist Christian, we will consider how Methodists have a faith that seeks understanding.xcv

You can find some of the themes of the sermons from this series as well as additional information about the United Methodist Church. These are free for you. I encourage you to pick one up and take it home to read more about who we are as United Methodists.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you

heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Opening Story - Figuring Out Where to Go

Transition

There are times when it can be difficult to figure out if we are on the right road.

Following the Road

The final two verses of the scripture passage for today describe two different roads - one that leads to life and one that leads to destruction.

“In Matthew’s theology, the Christian life is thought of not in static terms, as a condition or once-for-all decision, but as the path or road of righteous living between the initial call of the disciple and the final goal of salvation.”¹

Daily Decision

Daily Yes / No

We make a decision every day on which road to follow.

Transition

One of the ways that we move forward on the road that leads to life is by having a faith that seeks understanding.

Our Theological Task

Theology is our effort to reflect on God’s work in our lives. In response to the love of Christ, we want to grow toward perfect love of God and neighbor. “As United Methodists, we are called to identify the needs both of individuals and of society and to address those needs out of the resources of Christian faith in a way that is clear, convincing, and effective. Theology serves the Church by interpreting the world’s needs and challenges to the Church and interpreting the gospel to the world.”²

¹ Leander E. Keck, ed., *Matthew*, vol. VIII of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 216.

² ¶105 of The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

Our theological task is critical and constructive

“It is critical in that we test various expressions of faith by asking: Are they true? Appropriate? Clear? Cogent? Credible? Are they based on love?”³

“Our theological task is constructive in that every generation must appropriate creatively the wisdom of the past and seek God in their midst ... to understand and receive the gospel promises in our time.”⁴

Our theological task is individual and communal

“It requires the participation of all who are in our Church ... because the mission of the church is to be carried out by everyone who is called to discipleship. To be persons of faith is to hunger to understand the truth given to use in Jesus Christ.”⁵

We seek the way that leads to life together as a congregation, with annual conferences and with our sisters and brothers around the world.

Our theological task is essentially practical

Our theological task “informs the individual’s daily decisions and serves the Church’s life and work. ... Our interest is to incorporate the promises and demands of the gospel into our daily lives.

Theological Guidelines: Sources and Criteria

Jesus Christ

“As United Methodists, we have an obligation to bear a faithful Christian witness to Jesus Christ, the living reality at the center of the Church’s life and witness.”

Bible

“Scripture is primary, revealing the Word of God “so far as it is necessary for our salvation.” Therefore, our theological task, in both its critical and constructive aspects, focuses on disciplined study of the Bible.”

Scripture is inspired by God and paints a picture of God’s character, God’s action and God’s people. Scripture is the written Word of God that reveals the personal Word of God, Jesus Christ.

Tradition

“To aid his study of the Bible and deepen his understanding of faith, Wesley drew on

³ ¶105 of The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

⁴ ¶105 of The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

⁵ ¶105 of The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

Christian tradition, in particular the Patristic writings, the ecumenical creeds, the teachings of the Reformers and the literature of contemporary spirituality. Thus, tradition provides both a source and a measure of authentic Christian witness, though its authority derives from its faithfulness to the biblical message.

The Christian witness, even when grounded in Scripture and mediated by tradition, is ineffectual unless understood and appropriated by the individual. To become our witness, it must make sense in terms of our own reason and experience.

Reason

For Wesley, a cogent account of the Christian faith required the use of reason, both to understand Scripture and to relate the biblical message to wider fields of knowledge.

Reason helps us to interpret scripture, make sense of tradition and process our experience. Reason is used to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ to others in a way that makes sense. Reason is helpful in inviting non and nominally religious people into the journey of faith.

Experience

"[Wesley] looked for confirmations of the biblical witness in human experience, especially the experience of regeneration and sanctification, but also in the "commons sense" knowledge of everyday experience."

The faith of an individual may be shaped by her or his experience of God, life, family and her or his environment. This experience may be meaningful, personal, positive or negative. In addition to a personal experience, communities of faith have experiences that shape their faith. The Christian experience of a community may be focused in a particular congregation or it may be shared across a diverse group of communities. Communal Christian experience becomes the tradition of the church over time.

Three Legged Stool Example

Faith Seeking Understanding

Faith Seeking Understanding

United Methodists are not afraid to ask difficult questions, to take on tough subjects, and to admit that they do not always understand the answers. We have a faith that seeks understanding - a faith that is intellectually informed. When you live out your faith as a United Methodist, we don't ask you to check your brain at the door. We seek to be a place for thinking people to bring their questions and together we might walk down the road to life together.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that God invites us to follow the way that leads to life and gives us the tools to find our way.

Call to Action

Invitation