

The Olympic torch relay began several months ago on October 24th in Olympia Greece. As you know every Olympiada the flame the torch the fire makes its way from that location the place of the ancient games to the host city. And along the way it travels around the country. You saw there some of that path of the journey that the torch is taking through Korea ending in Pyongyang on this Friday with the opening ceremonies. This journey of sharing the light is one that happens every four years and the winner every four years in the summer. And for us as Christians it's our call to share the light wherever we go. The text from Matthew today. Jesus is sharing this teaching at the very beginning of his public ministry in Matthew it's recorded as the Sermon on the mount. And in this passage in these verses Jesus describes some of the most important teaching that he offers in his ministry. It's things that he continued to live out throughout his life as he interacted with people as he healed and prayed for them. As he showed us how to live. And finally in his death and resurrection brought about God's kingdom coming here on Earth. And his words you are the light of the world is what we're taking a closer look at today and next week as well. When we consider what does it mean to let our lights. Shine. As individuals and as a congregation. What can we learn from the scriptures and how can we use this torch relay as a way of understanding or perhaps connecting more with our faith. So I want to take a closer look at both the relay and the text itself today. First to begin the Olympic torch relay is a little bit about the people that are involved. You may know that people are selected or they are chosen for a variety of reasons. Some have been former athletes Olympic athletes in the course of that country's history. Others read the story of one who competed in skating but was unable to ever serve in the Olympics and compete in the Olympics and so was grateful to be able to take part in the relay. People are honored for a variety of reasons both in the country and community. And it's a chance for people to be a part of something that's much bigger than themselves. Of course though the relay is not really about the people that are carrying the torch but almost more importantly than that are almost certainly more important than that. Are all the people who are gathered to see it. You saw the route it wound its way around the country it's certainly not the most direct route that you could take to get from Olympia to the host city. The design behind that is so that the most number of people can see and experience the light. Palace. One example of that you can take a look at this picture. This is a gentleman on Friday who just received the flame. He's about to set off on his leg of the journey. And you see how he's holding it. He's not even looking at it. And as you watch videos and see pictures of people that are in the relay they hardly ever look at the flame. The one time when they focus on it is when they're passing from one person to the next. But for the most part they're holding it up and that flame that light isn't for him. It's for everyone else who's gathered in that crowd.

And the same is true for our life of faith.

The same is true in Jesus teaching for us he says you are the light of the world. He doesn't say you're a light to help you show you where to go. He doesn't say you're the light so you'll know always how to live a faithful life he says you are the light of the world. You are a light. For the world. I would add. Jesus description here. He says that you are the light of the world seems to be pretty clear and yet really gives us no clue about why we are to be the light or how we are to be in the light. But it is clear that you are the light of the world. The light is not just for a few people its not for a close group. It's not for people that are already part of a church. It's for the world. And this is a reminder about what God's The good news about God's love. God's love is for all people. You don't have to look a certain way. You don't have to live in a particular place of town. You don't have to even have a particular job or make a certain income it doesn't matter. God's love is for you. You're the light of the world. Jesus says. And these verses here in the Sermon on the mount at the very beginning beginning of Jesus ministry anticipate and help set the stage for some words that he shares at the very end of his ministry. We hear these words at the end of Matthew and Chapter 28 Jesus came near and spoke to them. This is after he's been crucified

and been raised from the dead. He says this I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look.

I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.

In these words at the end and Matthew Jesus helps us understand who we are as the church. Our mission here at First United Methodist Church comes directly from these words our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We're not only about growing and faith ourselves.

About sharing that life with others and Eldorado in Butler County that we might be a part of this transformation that we might share and show to others. The life of Christ. And the love of God.

Being the light of the world means that living for others but not just for a certain set of people. It means. Living a life.

That seeks the good of everyone. All people have the opportunity to follow after Christ. All people can receive God's love and forgiveness. The whole world is to be transformed by God's love. You are the light. Of the world. The torch relay tries to go to as many places as possible. And. Part of what we're called to in our faith is to share the life of Christ with as many people as we can.

Now of course in the relay no single person could take this journey by themselves. It's quite a distance to travel and in this particular year there's 75 hundred people that are taking part in the relay. Now those are just the people that are actually physically carrying a torch. That doesn't count the people that have helped make the arrangements ahead of time that it prepared the accommodations that are drive the support vehicles behind the security that are going alongside them. The van in front who's taking pictures and sharing video if you want to go on tonight live video starts at 730. You can see halfway around the world. It's an amazing place that we live in. And. And there's all kinds of people that take part. And this is true for Jesus words as well. In the sentence where he says you are the light of the world. There's a meaning there that we don't quite get in English and that's it. There's two different types of words there. You is plural that you as plural and the light. Is singular. So what he's saying is not just you as an individual are the light of the world he's saying all of you together. You all you as a community you as a gathering of people you as a group of people that are trying to follow after God you are the light of the world. And together we shine we don't shine as individuals together we are the light of the world and this light is the one light of Christ. That's our hope. That's our goal that we're sharing and shining with others the one light of Christ. All of you together are one life. We take on Jesus challenge to be the light of the world together. It's not something we do on our own. Just like one person couldn't carry that torch or all the distance so in us being the light of the world it is not something we do by ourselves that Christianity is not an individual sport. It's a way of life that we do with other people. It's why we're inviting you during the season of Lent. Over the next several weeks to be a part of a Wesley small group. This is one of the ways that we're encouraging you hoping to invite you to equip you to make the environment possible for you to build deeper relationships with other people. We don't hope that you grow into the discipleship pathway on your own. Because we're designed to live life together. We're designed to do these things together to both be an example for others. And to receive encouragement from others we find ourselves in need of that. Whether it's gathering for worship being part of that was a small group building our partnership with Skelley elementary school together. We are the light all of you all of us.

Together. The Light of Christ is for the whole world. All of us together are the light. And finally let's consider today what is the source. Of the light. In the Olympic torch relay the source of the light is the sun.

In Olympia Greece. There's a mirror that concentrates the rays of the sun that lights the flame and that becomes the Olympic torch and that carries from there to the host city. It's the physical sun that provides the light.

And likewise for us as Christians are light the light of the world is from the son of God Jesus Christ. We are only the light of the world. In so far that we proclaim Jesus.

It's so far that we share God's love for all people and share this good news with others.

Some years later after Jesus was speaking. Paul was riding to the church at Corinth. And he makes that clear to them in second Corinthians chapter 4 verses 5 and 6. He says this. We don't preach about ourselves.

It's not about us. Paul says. Instead. We preach about Jesus Christ as Lord. And we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus sake. God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He's the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us. Paul was reminding the church at Corinth of a challenge that it still exists today. Sometimes when we're trying to be about God's work as individuals or as a congregation it becomes a little bit more about us. And less.

About Jesus. Look how good we are look at the ways that we are involved in the community. Look at the ways that I am able to serve and lead. Paul reminds us that we're to. Take share God's light humbly. To share the good news of Jesus with others in a way that makes it clear that it's not my good news. I want to share it with you. I want to invite you to experience it. I'm going to tell you about it. But it's not about me.

It's about Jesus it's about God's love. It's about forgiveness for whatever it might have happened in the past. And this is how we share God's life with others. This is good news that this lied light that we're called to shine is not our is it's Jesus light. That together we have the chance to share the light.

And to push back darkness in places in our lives and in the community.

You have the chance to share the light when you put food in our blessing box. You have a chance to share the light when you're involved in our community. You offer God's love to others when you invite them to join you for worship. You share the light of Christ when you welcome new people to your Wesley small group. You offer God's love to others when you show up at Skelley to let our neighbors know that you care. You shine the light when you head out to Flint Hills services on Saturday to to serve our community. You light your light shine before others when your live your life in a way that other people can see that somehow you're a little bit different. That you live your life not according to the guidance of this world. But that you have some something inside that shining a light that. Is just it's good and it's unusual it sets you apart and. People can see that. You are the light.

Of the world.

A city on top of a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead they set it up for all to see. In the same way let your light shine.

Before others. And give glory to God.

Will you pray with me or God.

We confess that we don't always shine your light. Sometimes we live in darkness. And yet you still offer.

Your light to us.

You offer your love and forgiveness. New courage and strengthen us so God help us to shine our light before others. That indeed they might see your love. They might experience your light. And together we might follow you. We offer ourselves to you in Jesus name.