

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

- Please record sermon at both worship services

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about a guide for living as a United Methodist Christian.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because there are simple ways for us to connecting our faith with our everyday experience and live a life that really is life.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the final sermon in the Love Divine series. It is the Sunday before Independence Day. The US advanced in the World Cup this past week.

What are the next action steps?

Pick up a card as a reminder of life as a United Methodist Christian and one to share with a friend to invite them to join you on the journey.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that God meets us in our everyday life and offers grace for us to grow to perfect love of God and neighbor.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - Faith, life
- Books of the Bible
 - Romans
- Series
 - Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist Christian
- Speaker
 - Andrew Conard
- Tags
 - Methodist, United Methodist, United Methodist Church, serving, service, good, evil, God, love, guide, living, life

Sermon Outline

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[Christianity is not something that we do on our own. We need each other for support and accountability. This might mean being part of a Sunday School class, UMW circle, bible study or what Wesley describes as a class meeting - a group of 12 people who looked after one another in love and sought to help others grow toward Christian perfection.](#)

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Romans 12:9-17, CEB

9 Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. 10 Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. 11 Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! 12 Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home. 14 Bless people who harass you—bless and don't curse them. 15 Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying. 16 Consider everyone as equal, and don't think that you're better than anyone else. Instead associate with people who have no status. Don't think that you're so smart. 17 Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good.

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 we conclude our sermon series, Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist Christian. I hope that this series has been an inspiration and encouragement for you.

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.

Today we consider what is at the heart of much of United Methodist Christianity - It is practical and can make a difference day to day.

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.

Baby Classes

Sometimes there is a difference between what we learn in a class or what happens in theory and what happens in real life. Let me give you an example. As we were approaching the due date for our first child, we signed up for every class that the hospital offered on giving birth and taking care of infants. One of the classes was about the nuts and bolts of how to handle a child after they were born. It was basic things like:

- How to put on a shirt - reach your hand through and pull instead of trying to push their arm through
- How to wipe after a poopie diaper - girls front to back; boys back to front

It was great. I was even taking notes. I was prepared. Until we had a baby.

In the dark, in the middle of the night after a mostly sleepless week the simple instructions did not seem that easy. Sometimes there is a difference between what we learn in a class or what happens in theory and what happens in real life. It is not just with babies.

I recently spoke with a teacher who had just graduated and was ready for her first year. When she came into the classroom and discovered that these were her students - these were her students. Nothing in school had prepared her for this classroom.

Transition

Sometimes it might seem like that in our life of faith as well. You come to worship every Sunday, read the Bible, go to Sunday School and pray most days. It might all make sense, until we are faced with the everyday reality of life.

Our Way of Life

This is the focus for the sermon today - how do we live our faith out everyday? What does what we hear, sing and pray about on Sunday translate into the rest of the week?

We begin with the big idea that underlies our life as United Methodists

Love God and love neighbor

Love God and love neighbor is Jesus' answer to the question - what is the most

important commandment in all the law? Out of all the things that we might think, believe, do or share - love God and love neighbor is essential to who we are as Christians.

Sanctification / Christian Perfection

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, considered our entire Christian life to be focused on the goal of growing toward perfect love of God and neighbor. This is possible through God's grace. Wesley was fully convinced that we can be made perfect in love of God and neighbor. We can become like Jesus by grace through faith. We can live a holy life. Near the end of his life, Wesley shared in a letter that he believed the invitation to Christian perfection was the reason that God had raised up the Methodists. Love God and love neighbor - this is our message to share with the world.

Transition

This is an important part of our faith as United Methodists, yet our denomination is not one that is focused on theological statements. "The underlying energy of the Wesleyan theological heritage stems from an emphasis upon practical divinity, the implementation of genuine Christianity in the lives of believers."¹ ... The early Methodists did not seek to rewrite doctrine, they sought to invite people to know Jesus and encourage people to grow in love of God and neighbor.

Practical Divinity

Scripture

The scripture passage from Romans gives clear and simple advice about how to live - what to do and what not to do:

- Hate evil, and hold on to what is good.
- Love each other like the members of your family.
- Contribute to the needs of God's people
- Be happy with those who are happy and cry with those who are crying.

It is this kind of practical advice for living that John Wesley offered Methodists in what we know as the General Rules. In summary, they are do no harm, do good and stay in love with God. These simple rules insist that our faith should be demonstrated in the way that one lives their life. These are a guide for living our life.

Do no harm, do good and stay in love with God

Do no harm

Wesley begins with what seems to be common sense - do no harm, by avoiding evil of

¹ ¶102 of The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced. What Wesley says is that you should stop doing bad things, especially those that you know to be wrong

- Cursing
- Fighting
- Stealing
- Not following the golden rule

We know when we are causing harm to other people, sometimes it is a matter of whether we pay attention or not. These things are common sense.

Do No Harm Example - Popcorn

I enjoy popcorn - whether it is watching a movie in the theater or microwave popcorn and a TV show at home, I like it. It is a great snack, but there is a limit to a good thing. When I make a bag of microwave popcorn at home, I know I should not eat the whole bag. This is not hard. What I do? Eat the whole bag.

Do no harm, these things are basic. We just have to do them, or not do them.

Transition

The second of our general rules to do good of every possible kind to every possible person. This takes on life when we do to others what we would want them to do to us. When we show up early to serve in worship and help create a great experience for others. Showing up for FaithWork to spend a couple hours serving others beyond the walls of our congregation. When we do good, we seek to serve others in and beyond our local community as part of God's kingdom on earth.

Serve others in and beyond our local community as part of God's kingdom on earth

Serve in Our Church

We can do good by serving others within the church - contributing as part of a team or committee, serving as an usher during worship, welcoming others as a greeter.

Serve in El Dorado

We can do good by serving others in El Dorado. On the first Saturday of every month, we host FaithWork, which creates an easy way for you to serve others beyond the walls of our church. You can spend a couple hours once a month putting God's love in action to make a difference in the lives of others.

Our next FaithWork is this coming Saturday. As you know, it will be the day after Independence Day and one of the ways that we will be seeking to bless our neighbors is firework cleanup. We will be walking through neighborhoods picking up the trash from the night before.

This is just one small way to serve others right here in El Dorado

Serve beyond El Dorado

We can do good by serving beyond El Dorado. We are connected with a partner congregation in Zimbabwe and seek to be part of God's work through our partnership with Nyameni United Methodist Church. Our middle and high school students take regular mission trips to San Marcos, Texas and other locations outside of El Dorado. We are exploring the possibility of a mission trip for adults to create more opportunities to serve beyond El Dorado.

God's Kingdom on Earth

When we do good in our church, in El Dorado and beyond El Dorado we are living as part of God's kingdom. Each week we pray that God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. In the resurrection, God's kingdom began to break into this world and we have the opportunity to live as part of it by doing good.

Transition

Do no harm. Do good. Finally, stay in love with God.

Stay in Love with God

We stay in love with God through the practice of spiritual disciplines, such as:

- Worship - Public worship
- Listening to preaching
- Studying the Bible
- Receiving Holy Communion
- Praying alone and as a family
- Fasting or abstinence

These are practices that create a greater opportunity for God to be at work in our lives.

Transition

All of these things:

- Love God and love neighbor
- Do no harm, do good and stay in love with God
- Serve others in and beyond our local community as part of God's kingdom on earth

are better when we do them with other people. It is important that we stay connected in community for support and accountability.

Stay connected in community for support and accountability

Christianity is not something that we do on our own. We need each other for support and

accountability. This might mean being part of a Sunday School class, UMW circle, bible study or what Wesley describes as a class meeting - a group of 12 people who looked after one another in love and sought to help others grow toward Christian perfection.

Support - Stretcher Bearers

When we are connected in a community, we have others to help us on our journey. We all need people to call in the middle of the night when the wheels are coming off your life. A church community that will surround you with love and support when facing major life transitions - the death of a spouse, major surgery, job loss or change in living situation.

One of the healing stories in Jesus ministry occurs when four friends literally carry one of their friends on as stretcher to see Jesus and be healed. We can be stretcher bearers for one another.

Accountability - Class Meeting / Small Group

We also need each other for accountability. Positive peer pressure can be powerful and essential in growing in our faith.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that God meets us in our everyday life and offers grace for us to grow to perfect love of God and neighbor. We have a guide for living and people to help us on the journey.

Call to Action

These make up our way of life as United Methodist Christians. These simple tools provide a guide for living that can make a difference every day.

Our evangelism team has created a tool for you to use to remember this series and to help invite people who do not have a church. These cards will be available to you as you leave today. They information about the church and this guide for living as a United Methodist Christian. I hope that you will keep one in your wallet or purse; put it on the dashboard of your car or stick it where you will see it getting ready for the day so that you will remember who we are as United Methodists.

Also, take one to share with a friend - to invite them to join you for worship, to explain what it means to be a United Methodist and share your faith with others.

Invitation

To conclude the sermon today, I want to tell you a story