

### Media and Graphics Notes

<b>Word of Witness Video?</b>	No
<b>Sermon Starter Video?</b>	Yes
<b>Sermon Notes?</b>	There is one video to play during the sermon, near the end.
<b>Other Notes</b>	

### Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

#### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about the background story of What a Friend We Have In Jesus and Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, as well as addressing the Charleston Church Shootings.

#### ***Why is this sermon important?***

This sermon is important because the faith we sing sustains us during dark times and it is important to consider the Charleston Church Shootings in light of our faith.

#### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This sermon is preached as an extension of the Then Sings My Soul before a Sunday off. On Wednesday evening, a gunman opened fire at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the nation's oldest black churches, killing nine.

#### ***What are the next action steps?***

- Choose good.
- Choose forgiveness.
- Choose light and life.
- Choose to follow Jesus Christ, Emmanuel - God is with us.

#### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

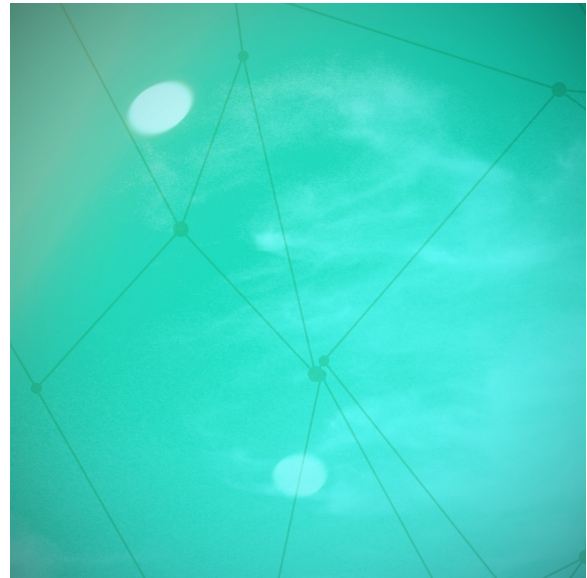
The good news is that "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear."<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Metadata***

1. Topic(s)

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 4:18a, CEB.



4th Sunday after Pentecost  
Then Sings My Soul - The Power of the Holy Spirit  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1QIAjAL>

June 21, 2015  
Philippians 4:4-9  
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,050  
Audio Online at

1. Changing Lives
2. Sharing Christ
2. Sermon Books of the Bible
  1. 1 John, Deuteronomy, Philippians
3. Series
  1. Then Sings My Soul
4. Speaker
  1. Andrew Conard
5. Tags
  1. sermon, worship, church, Methodist, United Methodist, United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church, El Dorado, Kansas, Great Plains, Annual Conference, Great Plains Annual Conference, Charleston, Shooting, faith, theodicy

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## Philippians 4:4-9, CEB

Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near. Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us. The God of peace will be with you.

### Response to Scripture

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

All: Thanks be to God!

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

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\*\*\* Start Sermon Timer \*\*\*

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### 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

#### *Transition*

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## What a Friend We Have in Jesus - UMH #526

### Background

[Joseph Scriven] experienced tragedy in his life. He was born in 1819 in Ireland. He was engaged to be married and the night before their wedding day, his fiancée was thrown off her horse into a river and drowned.

He migrated to Canada and began a new life. He was again engaged to be married, yet his fiancée died from illness before they were married. Around that same time, "Scriven received news that his mother, back in Dublin, was seriously ill. He did not have the funds to finance a trip home, so he wrote the three verses of a poem he titled 'Pray without Ceasing' and sent them to his mother hoping they would lift her spirits and comfort her.

Some time later, when Scriven himself was confined to his bed with illness, a neighbor stopped in to see him. As they talked, the friend saw a paper at the side of the bed with the words of Scriven's poem scrawled on it. After reading the poem, the man inquired if Scriven had written it. He replied, "The Lord and I did it between us." Securing Scriven's permission, the neighbor saw to it that the poem was published in a small collection of poetry called *Hymns and Other Verses*.<sup>2</sup>

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## Leaning on the Everlasting Arms - UMH #133

### Background

"Anthony Showalter was a Presbyterian elder and a well-known advocate of gospel music. He published over 130 music books ... and became known throughout the south for his signing schools in local churches.

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<sup>2</sup> Pamela J. Kennedy. *Hymns of Faith & Inspiration* (Nashville: Ideals Publications Incorporated, 1990), 124-5.

One day in 1887, he received two letters from former students, each of whom had lost their wife. Show alter went to the Bible, looking for a verse to comfort them. He selected Deuteronomy 33:27a

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*The most ancient God is a place of safety; the eternal arms are a support. ...<sup>3</sup>*

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As he pondered that verse, the words of the chorus came to mind. Show alter wrote to a friend, Elisha A. Hoffman, to ask for help writing the verses. Hoffman sent back three verses. Show alter set it all to music, and ever since, these words have cheered us in adversity.<sup>4</sup>

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## Charleston Church Shootings

By now, you have heard the news that “A gunman opened fire at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church [in Charleston, South Carolina] on Wednesday evening, killing nine people, including the pastor.

The police arrested a suspect on Thursday in Shelby, N.C. Federal and state officials have opened a hate crime investigation into the attack.”<sup>5</sup>

Why would someone do this?

Why would God allow this?

Who is to blame?

It just doesn't make sense.

Let's take a closer look at some of these questions.

## Why would someone do this?

At times like this one of the most frequent questions that we ask ourselves and other people is, “Why?”

Why would someone walk into Bible study sit with the group talking Scripture for nearly an hour before drawing a gun and starting to fire?<sup>6</sup>

In this case it seems clear that the gunman was racially motivated. One of the stories which defined his life was that whites are victims and are being threatened by African Americans. This is a dark and twisted view of reality.

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<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 33:27a, CEB.

<sup>4</sup> Robert J. Morgan. *Then Sings My Soul: 300 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 211.

<sup>5</sup> “Charleston, S.C., Church Shooting: Live Updates,” New York Times, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/live/updates-on-charleston-church-shooting/>

<sup>6</sup> Nikita Stewart and Richard Pérez-Peña. “In Charleston, Raw Emotion at Hearing for Suspect in Church Shooting,” New York Times, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/20/us/charleston-shooting-dylann-storm-roof.html>

### ***Evil and Darkness***

What happened on Wednesday was evil. The gunman had allowed his mind to be taken over so completely by racism and darkness that he made a choice to kill others.

He gave in to the darkness.  
He chose evil.

### ***Transition***

So, why would an all powerful and all loving God allow such evil to happen?

## **Why would God allow this?**

### ***God's Plan***

Sometimes people say, "It must have been the will of God." or "It is part of God's plan, we simply have to trust God."

Let me be clear:

God never intends us to choose evil.

The Charleston Church Shootings were not part of God's plan.

Racism, murder and tragedy will never be God's will.

Evil is never, ever God's plan.

### ***Free Will***

If this is not the will of God, why did 9 people die on Wednesday?

It happened because of the choices that we make as humans.

When God created humanity and placed us in the middle of a beautiful garden he gave us free will – the ability to consider options and make choices. We have the opportunity to choose good and turn toward God or evil and turn away from God.

The ability to choose to freely and heartily love God and our neighbor comes with the ability to choose to turn away from God and act out evil.

The gunman did not realize or chose to ignore the choices that could have been made for good. He chose evil.

### ***Racism***

His choices were motivated by racism and fueled with paranoia and fear.

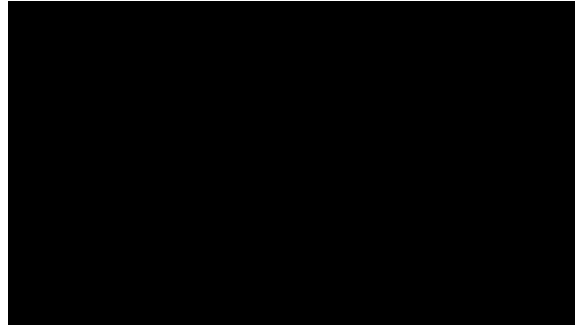
When we give in to paranoia and fear of people who are different than ourselves, we become more and more fearful. This leads to a desire to separate or protect ourselves or to destroy those who are different.

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## **Conclusion**

At a hearing on Friday, the "victims' family members offered lessons in forgiveness, testaments to a faith that is not compromised by violence or grief. Let's take a look:

Play Charleston Church Shootings Hearing Video



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*[If Video does not work]*  
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One by one, they looked to the screen in a corner of the courtroom on Friday, into the expressionless face of the young man charged with making them motherless, snuffing out the life of a promising son, taking away a loving wife for good, bringing a grandmother's life to a horrific end. And they answered him with forgiveness.

They urged [the gunman] to repent, confess his sins and turn to God.

"You took something very precious away from me," said Nadine Collier, daughter of 70-year-old Ethel Lance, her voice rising in anguish. "I will never talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul."

"We welcomed you Wednesday night in our Bible study with open arms," said Felicia Sanders, the mother of 26-year old Tywanza Sanders, a poet who died after trying to save his aunt, who was also killed.

"You have killed some of the most beautiful people that I know," she said in a quavering voice. "Every fiber in my body hurts, and I will never be the same. Tywanza Sanders is my son, but Tywanza was my hero. Tywanza was my hero. But as we say in Bible study, we enjoyed you. But may God have mercy on you."<sup>7</sup>

## Good News

The good news is that "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear."<sup>8</sup>

## Call to Action

Each one of us has choices to make every day.

We choose between good and evil.

We choose between forgiveness and resentment.

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<sup>7</sup> Nikita Stewart and Richard Pérez-Peña. "In Charleston, Raw Emotion at Hearing for Suspect in Church Shooting," New York Times, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/20/us/charleston-shooting-dylann-storm-roof.html>

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4:18a, CEB.



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We choose between light and darkness.

The choices that we make - both big and small lead us closer to God or further away from God.

### **Invitation**

Choose good.  
Choose forgiveness.  
Choose light and life.  
Choose to follow Jesus Christ, Emmanuel - God is with us.

### **Closing Prayer**

[Text here]  
Amen.