

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	Yes. There are notes, scripture and a video during the sermon.
Other Notes	

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the “so that” of spiritual formation - Loving Others

Why is this sermon important?

It is important to remember that a significant part of the Christian life has nothing to do with ourselves and instead for the good of others and the transformation of the world.

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon is essentially one of the chapters of Steve Harper’s book, “Five Marks of a Methodist.” I used the iBooks edition as the basis for this sermon, which can be found online at https://itun.es/us/_NnO3.l

What are the next action steps?

- Be a channel for God’s love.
- Target your life on perfect love of God and neighbor.
- Recognize and receive God right here and now – exactly where you are in life.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that God desires to use you exactly where you are.



Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Change Lives
2. Share
3. Share Christ

This content is adapted from *Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper.

13th Sunday after Pentecost
Five Marks of a Methodist - A Methodist Loves Others
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://bit.ly/28NeYCp>

August 14, 2016
1 John 4:20
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,843
Audio Online at <http://bit.ly/2bv8FtR>

4. Transformation of the World

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. 1 John
2. Luke
3. Matthew

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, love, others, share, shareChrist, sothat, purpose

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1 John 4:20, CEB

If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn't love a brother or sister who can be seen can't love God, who can't be seen.

Response to Scripture

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

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

Series Review

Today we conclude our series, *Five Marks of a Methodist*. During this series, we have considered John Wesley's writing from 1742: *The Character of a Methodist*, in which he describes the "distinguishing marks" of a Methodist person. This sermon is adapted from the book *Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper.

Today, we examine the second great commandment - A Methodist Loves Others.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

Take Notes - Bulletin

I invite you to take notes during the message today. You can find a place in your bulletin or if you have a mobile device you can open the Bible App and use the Events feature to take notes

God Speaking

Listen for God's word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

Tool for Spiritual Growth

Then, take it with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture

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.

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Rule Yourself Ad Campaign

During the Olympics, there are impeccable performances, incredible competition and intense drama. There are also some pretty good commercials. Two of my favorites are from the Rule Yourself campaign from Under Armour. They show some of the intense training of the US Women's Gymnastic Team and swimmer Michael Phelps.

They both end with these words:

It's what you do in the dark, that puts you in the light.

Have you seen these videos?

The athletes that are competing in the Olympic games work hard to prepare for a few minutes or even a few moments of competition.

They practice and prepare, so that they can perform their very best.

Transition

This “so that” connection is highlighted by John Wesley in the final mark of a Methodist: A Methodist Loves Others.

A Spring that Nourishes Others

Great Commandments

The longest section of Wesley's treatise focuses on on the second great commandment. The heart of Jesus' message is to:

First, love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and
Second, to love our neighbors as ourselves.

First Four Marks → Love Others

Everything Wesley described in the first four marks is intended to be a spring of living water that can nourish those around us, as we love them in Jesus's name.

- We love God,
- rejoice in God,
- give thanks to God, and
- pray to God

as a way of forming a deep connection with God that grows into the commission to live for God.

Two Important Words

Two of the most important words in spiritual formation are “so that.”

Let me give you some examples, and then a suggestion about how to fill in the blank.

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We read the Bible, so that ____ [fill in the blank] ____.
We pray, so that ____ [fill in the blank] ____.
We worship, so that _____.
We grow, so that _____.
We give, so that _____.
We serve, so that _____.
We share, so that _____.

There are many ways to fill in these blanks.
We find that our lives our changed, we grow as leaders and that others can see the light of Christ living in us.

Channel for God's Love

Perhaps, most importantly, we engage in these practices so that we can be a channel for God's love to flow through us and out to others.

Key Scripture: 1 John 4:20

Our scripture for today, describes it in this way:

If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn't love a brother or sister who can be seen can't love God, who can't be seen.¹

Threefold Grace

We receive God's love before we are aware of it.
We allow God's love to fill us.
As we are perfected in love, God's love flows through us to others.

Love for All

This love is a love for all people. Love for people that aren't Christians, people we don't know, people whose actions we just can't understand, people whose political choices don't make sense to us, and people who we consider enemies.

There is no more radical love than this – to love everyone – regardless. And this is the kind of love God commands and the kind of love Wesley commends.

¹ 1 John 4:20, CEB.

Grace is Necessary

We need God's grace, if we are to love in this way. Apart from grace, we will love other people conditionally, and worse still, we will set the conditions for giving our love!

When this happens, our discipleship becomes ego-driven rather than Spirit directed. The call to love others is a call to love radically – to love from what Wesley describes as a pure heart.

Transition

A significant reason we live as disciples of Jesus Christ as we worship, grow, give, serve and share, is so that we can be a channel for God's love.

Our Intention

Our ability to be a channel for God's love is rooted in our intention, what we desire to do. Here Wesley is drawing water from the wells of early Christianity.

Key Example: Archer

John Cassian

John Cassian was a Christian monk and theologian who lived in the 300s.² In one of his most famous writings, he uses the image of the archer and reminds us that

we can't expect to hit a target we aren't first aiming to hit.

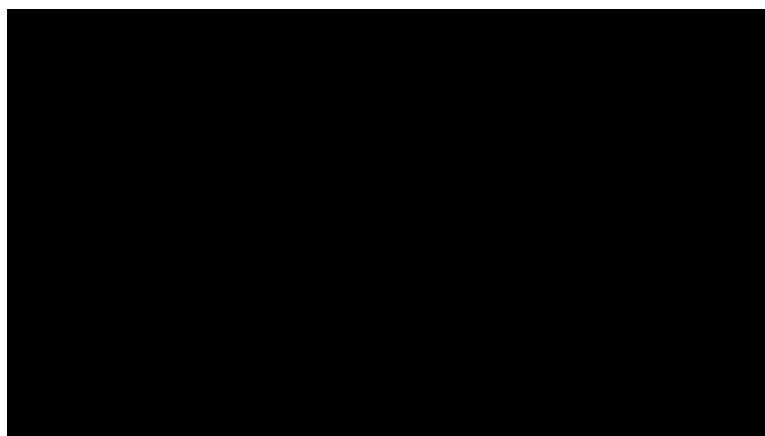
Of course, other things precede and follow the aim, but where there is no aim, there is no archery.

2016 Olympians

The same is true about archery today. The Scene from Wired Magazine put together a video on the Science of Sport focused on Archery. In this clip, two Olympic archers describe some of the mechanics.

Let's take a look...

Play - Science of Sport:
Archer Video



² Wikipedia contributors, "John Cassian," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=John_Cassian&oldid=732962034 (accessed August 14, 2016).

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Discipleship

In a similar way, our discipleship becomes what we intend for it to be.
That's why the Christian life is given its fundamental shape by the two love commandments, the first and the last mark of Christian character:

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind ... and love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39).

We have identified the target.

Purity of Intention

And as Wesley shows in this section of the treatise, it is this purity of intention that enables all the rest to follow. He describes it this way:

Your one intention at all times and in all things is, not to please yourself, but him whom your soul loves. You have a single eye. And because "your eye is single, your whole body is full of light" (Luke 11:34 KJV).

Indeed, where the loving eye of the soul is continually fixed upon God, there can be no darkness at all, but "the whole light; as when the bright shining of a candle" (Luke 11:36 KJV) does enlighten the house.

— John Wesley

Transition

Target your life on perfect love of God and neighbor.

Day-Sized Discipleship

I'm not sure about you, but sometimes this seems overwhelming. Perfect love? Seriously? I have a long way to go. I'm not sure if I can live my whole life that way.

Yet, perhaps it is not as difficult as it seems.

Key Example: Frank Laubach's Morning Prayer

Frank Laubach was a missionary in the first half of the twentieth century.³ His morning prayer is helpful. In the morning, he prayed,

"Lord, what are you doing in the world today that I can help you with?"

The twofold wisdom of his prayer guided him into faithful living.

³ Wikipedia contributors, "Frank Laubach," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Frank_Laubach&oldid=715547117 (accessed August 14, 2016).

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God is at Work

First, the prayer reminded him that God is at work in the world. God doesn't wait for us to act, but rather invites us to join in on what is already going on.

You aren't expected to do everything

And second, the prayer reminded him there are some things God is doing that we aren't expected to do. He recognized kind of spiritual distribution plan, where each disciple is given an assignment – a measurable and achievable amount of God's will.

E. Stanley Jones had a similar perspective when he wrote about going each morning to his "listening post" to get his marching orders for the day.

Ordinary Holiness

This assignment – this option of gospel living – is most often attached to the work we do every day. The saints of the ages refer to this as "ordinary holiness."

Jesus Calls Fishermen

We use it in Jesus's first call to the apostles, when he told them he would teach them to fish for people (Mark 1:17). He was talking to fishermen! This was his way of saying, "Take what you normally do and naturally do, and do it for me."

Offer our Routine Lives

In this way, discipleship isn't a course to take and pass, but rather it is an offering of the life we live routinely.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that God desires to use you exactly where you are. We are still in need of God's love and grace, yet in this way, our actual, everyday life is made holy and offered to God.

Call to Action

Be a channel for God's love.

Target your life on perfect love of God and neighbor.

Recognize and receive God right here and now – exactly where you are in life.

Invitation

We can't keep from sharing God's good gifts.

A disciple loves others.

Closing Prayer

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