
Graphics and Audio Notes

- There **will** be a sermon starter video.
- There **will** be notes and / or scripture to show on screen during the sermon.



Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the value of being connected with each other in small groups.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because life is better together.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the fourth week of the worship series focused on group life. The graphics, video and some sermon content have been adapted from the TWO Gather series at Life.Church - online at <http://bit.ly/2d0jDo0>.

What are the next action steps?

Join one of three new Wesley Small Groups launching at First UMC El Dorado before Easter 2017.

What is the good news? What is the bottom line?

The good news is that God can work in your life through other people and God can work through you in the lives of others.

What are other key takeaways?

For social media

- When you encounter Jesus – for the first time or perhaps again after a long time – being in relationship with other people can help you know where to go and how to grow.
As part of a small group, we can both offer and receive guidance about what is next on the discipleship pathway.
Just like Paul, friends can lead us.
- Throughout this series, we have found a common theme in the words of Jesus from Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I’m there with them.”

- The good news is that God can work in your life through other people and God can work through you in the lives of others.
- Small groups are part of our DNA as United Methodists. Methodism started as a movement to inspire and train disciples for Christian living and to spread scriptural holiness across the land. In 1729, a few young college men gathered at Oxford and started the first small group in Methodism. These class meetings or Wesley Small Groups were the start of a movement which spread from England to the United States and would emerge into congregations and eventually a denomination.
- When we look at the book of Ecclesiastes, we read this in chapter 4:
“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don’t have a companion to help them up!”
Being in relationship makes a difference.
- You might be the person Jesus is sending to help someone else. God works through Ananias and Paul is able to see again. Paul changes - both physically with his eyes able to see again and spiritually with a new relationship with Jesus. This is possible because Ananias overcame his fear and God worked through him.

Metadata

Topics

- Grow
- Make Disciples

Sermon Books of the Bible

- Acts
- Deuteronomy
- Ecclesiastes
- Matthew

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, smallgroup, grouplife, WesleySmallGroup, discipleship, grow

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22nd Sunday after Pentecost
TWO Gather - Have a Come to Jesus Meeting
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://bit.ly/2dfqcWF>

October 16, 2016
Acts of the Apostles 9:1-19
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,909
Audio Online at <http://bit.ly/2evtA0R>
Video Online at

Wesley Small Groups Launch

Busyness

Invitation to a Wesley Small Group

Invitation

Key Scripture: Matthew 18:20

Assurance

I'm sorry. Thank you. Please.

Not ready to pray

Logistics

Closing Prayer

Acts of the Apostles 9:1-19, CEB

¹Meanwhile, Saul was still spewing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest, ²seeking letters to the synagogues in Damascus. If he found persons who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, these letters would authorize him to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³During the journey, as he approached Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven encircled him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice asking him, "Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?"

⁵Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you are harassing," came the reply. ⁶"Now get up and enter the city. You will be told what you must do."

⁷Those traveling with him stood there speechless; they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸After they picked Saul up from the ground, he opened his eyes but he couldn't see. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind and neither ate nor drank anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a certain disciple named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

He answered, "Yes, Lord."

¹¹The Lord instructed him, "Go to Judas' house on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying. ¹²In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias enter and put his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³Ananias countered, "Lord, I have heard many reports about this man. People say he has done horrible things to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴He's here with authority from the chief priests to arrest everyone who calls on your name."

¹⁵The Lord replied, "Go! This man is the agent I have chosen to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

¹⁷Ananias went to the house. He placed his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord sent me—Jesus, who appeared to you on the way as you were coming here. He sent me so that you could see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸Instantly, flakes fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. ¹⁹After eating, he regained his strength.

He stayed with the disciples in Damascus for several days.

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.

Listen for God's Word

I invite you to listen for God's word today.

Place for Notes

You can find a place in your bulletin to take notes or, if you prefer, in the event for this worship service in the Bible app on your mobile device

Tool for Spiritual Growth

When you learn something new, have a question, make a connection with your life or hear anything that will help you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ as you worship, grow, give, serve and share, write it down.

Then, use these notes as a tool to help you grow in your faith in the days ahead.

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.

Have a Come to Jesus Meeting

Today, we continue our series - TWO Gather. Each week, we looking at stories in the bible of people who share their life together and what these stories mean for our life today.

Series Review

Week 1

In the first week of this series, we took a closer look at the courageous friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Together, they decided to obey God and not the king, were thrown into a fiery furnace and were saved from death by the power of God. From this story, we learned that it is important to have the right people in your life, especially when:

- you have to decide whether to obey God or not
- you are in the fire and facing challenges and difficulties

Week 2

Two weeks ago, we examined the story of Elisha and the widow's jars. Elisha was able to provide the right help at the right time to the widow, because they knew

each other. Elisha asked her to gather all the empty containers in her house and ask all her neighbors for their empty containers as well. She miraculously filled every empty container with oil and was able to sell the excess to survive.

- God works through you in relationship with others.
- The power of God can flow through you when you live life together.

Week 3

Last week, we looked at the story of Joseph and how his interpretation of dreams was able to save the day in Egypt. We learned that relationships make a difference - even years later, as the cupbearer remembered Joseph in prison. Pharaoh recognized that he needed help from others - something that is not so easy for some of us. God worked through Joseph in the life of Pharaoh and this made an impact on the entire population of Egypt.

Key Scripture: Matthew 18:20

Throughout this series, we have found a common theme in the words of Jesus from Matthew 18:20:

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I’m there with them.”¹

Wherever two or three gather together in Jesus’ name, God is there.

Now, you may say, “Does that mean God’s not there if I’m by myself?”

Of course not, God will never abandon you.²

But there is something special about the power of God with us as we gather in community with other believers.

God’s Work through Relationships

Throughout the Bible, we find that God uses God's people to bring about God's purposes, and there is power in relationships. This is consistent from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

Key Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

When we look at the book of Ecclesiastes, we read this in chapter 4:

“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don’t have a companion to help them up!”³

Being in relationship makes a difference.

Our History of Small Groups

Small groups are part of our DNA as United Methodists.

Methodism started as a movement to inspire and train disciples for Christian living and to spread scriptural holiness across the land. In 1729, a few young college

¹ Matthew 18:20, CEB.

² Deuteronomy 31:6, CEB.

³ Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, CEB.

men gathered at Oxford and started the first small group in Methodism. These class meetings or Wesley Small Groups were the start of a movement which spread from England to the United States and would emerge into congregations and eventually a denomination.

Transition

This brings us to the story from scripture for today.
Let me tell you the story again:

Paul Changes

Key Scripture from Bible Storybook

“Paul and his friends were on their way to a city called Damascus. Paul had heard that there were many followers in Damascus. Paul was going to arrest Jesus’ followers and bring them back to Jerusalem.

Suddenly, a bright light from heaven flashed around Paul!

Paul fell to the ground and covered his eyes.

“Paul, Paul,” said a voice from the light. “Why are you being unkind to my followers?” The voice was Jesus!

“Get up, Paul, and go into the city,” said Jesus. “Someone will come and help you.”

When Paul stood up, he couldn’t see! Paul’s friends led Paul into the city.

A man named Ananias lived in the city. He was a follower of Jesus. One day Ananias heard the voice of Jesus.

“Find the man named Paul,” said Jesus.

“But Paul is unkind to followers of Jesus,” said Ananias. “I am afraid.”

“I have chosen Paul to tell others about me,” said Jesus. “You must go to him.”

So even though he was afraid, Ananias went to find Paul. Paul was just sitting in a house. He still could not see.

“Paul,” said Ananias, “Jesus sent me to help you.”

Then Ananias touched Paul’s face. Immediately, Paul was able to see again!

Paul was baptized and became a follower of Jesus. Paul began to tell everyone he met about Jesus. Paul had changed!”⁴

Lessons from Paul Changes

This story teaches us something important about life together with others.

⁴ Kerry Blackwood, Daphna Flegal, and Brittany Sy; with special thanks to Elizabeth F. Caldwell, *Deep Blue: Bible Storybook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 462-465.

Paul's Friends Lead Him

This is one of three times in scripture where Paul's conversion is recorded. He is on the way to Damascus, a bright light knocks him to the ground, he hears from Jesus and when he wakes up he can't see. Then...

His friends lead him into the city.

Paul has had a deep and meaningful experience with Jesus and his friends literally help him know where to go from there.

Reflection

We have the same opportunity today. When you encounter Jesus – for the first time or perhaps again after a long time – being in relationship with other people can help you know where to go and how to grow.

As part of a small group, we can both offer and receive guidance about what is next on the discipleship pathway.

Just like Paul, friends can lead us.

Ananias Overcame His Fear

Imagine what this story is like for Ananias. Jesus tells him to go find Paul. Now, he knows that Paul is the archenemy of Christians - even killing them for their beliefs. Yet, he was able to overcome his fear.

Domestic Terrorism Plot in Garden City Stopped

You may have heard the news that the announcement on Friday that a “major federal investigation stopped a domestic terrorism plot by a militia group to detonate a bomb at a Garden City apartment complex.”⁵

Violence is not the way to overcome fear.

Ananias models how to overcome fear.

He goes to talk with the one of whom he is afraid.

We can do the same thing. If you find something scary about being in relationship with someone else, start with a conversation to overcome your fear.

Jesus sent Ananias to Help Paul

You might be the person Jesus is sending to help someone else. God works through Ananias and Paul is able to see again. Paul changes - both physically with his eyes able to see again and spiritually with a new relationship with Jesus. This is possible because Ananias overcame his fear and God worked through him.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that God can work in your life through other people and God can work through you in the lives of others.

⁵ <http://www.kansas.com/news/state/article108279072.html#storylink=cpy>

Call to Action - Wesley Small Groups

Wesley Small Groups Launch

This entire series has been designed to invite you to consider being part of a Wesley Small Group – a group of 8 to 12 people who commit to living as disciples of Jesus Christ as they worship, grow, give, serve and share. You can find more information and sign up at our website at:

www.FirstUMCEIDorado.org/WesleySmallGroups

Busyness

Now, there is one thing that you think might keep you from being part of a small group. This same thing may be keeping us from the best of a lot of things right now. Are you ready for it?

It's busyness.

"I can't go, I'm already out eight nights a week, I can't!"

"I'm busy, I'd love to but it's not on my schedule."

I know that this has been one of my excuses.

How many things are you not doing because your schedule is dictating your life? I'm not talking about the things that you don't really miss. I'm talking about those things that, if you were doing them, your life would be better.

I don't have time! No, no, no!

I don't have time not to have the right people in my life. I have to.

I need prayer, I need a place where I'm not the preacher, I'm just Andrew.

I'm joining a Wesley Small Group, because I know that life is better together.

Invitation to a Wesley Small Group

When you have the right people gathered together for the right reasons God shows up and God works in powerful ways.

If you want to be part of a Wesley Small Group, call the church office, come talk to me today after worship, or sign up at our website.

Invitation

Key Scripture: Matthew 18:20

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm there with them."⁶

God is there.

This connection with others starts with a connection with God.

Assurance

Some of you may say, "I'm not sure that I have a relationship with God."

⁶ Matthew 18:20, CEB.

You can be sure.
God love's you, no matter what.
No matter where in your life you've messed up, God is ready to forgive.
All you have to do is ask.

I'm sorry. Thank you. Please.

It's a very simple thing to pray – I am sorry. Thank you. Please.
Turning away from the things that we know are wrong, saying "I am sorry".
Thanking Jesus for dying and being raised for us; putting our faith in him.
And finally asking, 'Please come and fill me with your Spirit.'

Not ready to pray

You may not be sure if you want to pray a prayer like that and that's okay.

Logistics

And, if you would like to pray, then:
You do not have to pray it out loud, but just quietly under your breath.
You can repeat after me.
I'm sorry, thank you, please.

Will you pray with me?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, I am sorry for all the times in my life when I mess up.

And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.

Forgive me of my sin and all that I know is wrong.
Thank you that you died on the cross and rose for me.
I trust you with my life.
Help me receive your forgiveness.
Please fill me with your Spirit and help me to follow you.
In your holy name, Amen.