
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.
- There will be Holy Communion at the 9 a.m. worship service each Sunday in December.

Text highlighted in this way will have a slide prepared to be on screen.

Text highlighted in this way is a reminder for Andrew during delivery.



Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about God's down to earth love in Jesus Christ.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because we have the opportunity to make a real difference in our family and community

What is the good news?

The good news is that Jesus' down-to-earth love is as real for you as it was for the first disciples – for Paul and the church at Philippi.

What are the next action steps?

You are invited to do one simple, beautiful thing each day as we prepare for Christmas.

What is the context of this sermon?

This series and sermon is adapted from the book *Down to Earth* by Mike Slaughter with Rachel Billups published through Abingdon Press.

Metadata

Topics

- Change Lives
- Make Disciples
- Share
- Share Christ
- Transformation of the World

Sermon Books of the Bible

- Philippians

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, Eldorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, Advent, Christmas, love, Jesus, downtoearth

Welcome to Worship

[Light one Advent candle]

Welcome to First United Methodist Church!

My name is Andrew Conard. I am the preacher here and it is a joy to welcome you to worship today.

Together, we will sing and pray, listen for God's word for us in song, scripture and sermon and have space to reflect on the value it has for us today.

The bottom line is when you leave, we hope you will have had some fun and be ready to live your faith in the world.

Place for Notes

You can find a place in your bulletin to take notes during the worship service 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.

Lighting of the Advent Candle of Hope

Contexting

We are in the season of Advent in which we prepare for Christmas Eve. We light candles to mark the time of longing, watching, and praying for God's healing, transformative presence to be ever more present in the world. As a congregation, we are doing something simple and beautiful each day and today we light the candle of Hope.

Meditation

Hope looked down and saw despair.

"I will go there," said Hope.

1st Sunday of Advent
Down to Earth - Down to Earth Love
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://bit.ly/2edmdrp>

November 27, 2016
Philippians 2:1-2
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,928
Audio Online at <http://bit.ly/2gklm7C>
Video Online at <http://bit.ly/2gA807P>

Scripture

Hear these words from Isaiah 2:1-5:

“This is what Isaiah, Amoz’s son, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In the days to come the mountain of the LORD’s house will be the highest of the mountains. It will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it. Many nations will go and say, “Come, let’s go up to the LORD’s mountain, to the house of Jacob’s God so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God’s paths.” Instruction will come from Zion; the LORD’s word from Jerusalem. God will judge between the nations, and settle disputes of mighty nations. Then they will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools.” Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war. Come, house of Jacob, let’s walk by the LORD’s light.

Prayer

Will you pray with me?

God, open our eyes to despair all around us, and fill us so full of hope that we can each be a light amid the shadows. Amen.

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Good News

Call to Action

 Invitation to Simple, Beautiful Action

 Logistics

Invitation

 I'm sorry. Thank you. Please.

 Not ready to pray

 Closing

Closing Prayer

Philippians 2:1-2, CEB

¹Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, any sharing in the Spirit, any sympathy, ²complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other.

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.

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.

Adventure of Thanksgiving with Family

Imagine a family gathered for Thanksgiving. When the family gets together, it is an adventure. It is not unusual for them to be gathered with in-laws and out-laws, strangers and friends. With such a diverse group, conversation can get interesting.

Avoiding Controversial Conversation

Because of a deep desire to enjoy the meal, one of the members of this family tries to steer the conversation away from anything that would create an argument – no political banter, zero comments about the presidential election, no discussion about the plight of refugees throughout the world, and they promise not to talk about people that aren't there. Yet those efforts are not always successful.

Unity through Rolls

Picture that, even in this conversationally exhausting family gathering, there is one thing that brings unity, one secret weapon of love: grandma's rolls. Nobody argues about grandma's rolls – it is her spiritual gift. The rolls are always delicious, always baked to perfection. When the conversation gets to the point of no return, someone just speaks the magical words, "Who wants more rolls?" and suddenly love fills the air.

Transition

If only we lived in a world where we could negotiate all conflicts with rolls.
I would like to believe that the church is that world.

Divisions in Church

Negotiate Conflict at a Potluck Dinner

Perhaps you know some people who use food to negotiate conflicts.
That could have been the original purpose of the potluck dinner.

Disunity in the Church

There are times when the church is a place of the same conversational gymnastics or, worse, the disunity created by argument and debate. Unity may be a clear marker of the church we read about in the New Testament, but it appears that churches in the United States are so concerned with being right, with winning an argument, that the simplest of controversies can send us over the edge. And it would seem that there are not enough rolls in the world to fix it.

Church People Debates

Followers of Jesus are capable of having some pretty heated debates with anyone and everyone who is willing to listen. I am all for a passionate conversation, but is that really what we are engaging in? Or in arguing about what kind of cup Starbucks has this year, sexual identity issues, who we voted for, and where refugees should go, are we allowing these issues to create dividing lines between us?

.....

Pause

.....

Divisions are Distractions

These divisions, these arguments, present a devilish distraction. When we think of each other as the enemy and talk at each other with hate, evil wins.

.....

Pause

.....

At best these arguments present a distraction, and at worst they actually tear us apart. We allow our differences – theological and practical – to tear down the body of Christ.

.....

Pause

.....

Transition

I believe that the world isn't looking for more hate that divides; it is looking for love (those delicious rolls) that is approachable and accessible, love that lives right where we are, love that comes right down to earth.

.....

Pause

.....

Down-to-Earth Invitation

Why are you here?

I don't know why you are here today.
You could be here in worship for all kinds of reasons.
Perhaps you have grown up in the church your whole life.
Perhaps you have been driven to faith in Jesus because of the guilt of bad choices.
Maybe you have welcomed children into your household and believe you could use some holy help.

In This Together

Whatever the reason, we as followers of Jesus are in this together.
We are following a Jesus who was messy when love came down to earth. Jesus spent his time with religious folk and nonreligious folk, saints and sinners. He loved people who were hard to love. Jesus sacrificed his life for the whole lump of them, for all of us. We are in this together.

Season of Waiting, Preparing, Anticipating

At Advent, we step together into a season in the life of the church that is as terrifying and beautiful as waiting for your child to be born. Advent is a spiritual gestation – waiting, preparing, anticipating, at the same time knowing that right here, right now there is life – *real* life – growing inside of us. We aren't just waiting for an event; we are experiencing a spiritual awakening that has changed, can change and will change the world forever.

.....
[Pause]
.....

Down-to-Earth Invitation

I am not asking any of us to pretend we understand everything there is to know about this faith we call Christianity, or to cover up the fact that people who follow Jesus do not always respond to life's challenges and other Jesus followers in civil ways. But Advent is a "down-to-earth" invitation to do a heart check and ask ourselves,
How can I discover and explore what it means to be a down-to-earth people?
How can I live Jesus' down-to-earth kind of love?"

.....
Pause
.....

Arguments of the Followers of Jesus

Division in the New Testament

When we open the pages of the New Testament, we realize that even the first followers of Jesus argued. They argued about whether the inside or the outside of the cup needed to be clean, when to wash their hands, and whether people were made for the Sabbath or the Sabbath was made for people. They also created dividing lines among themselves. This is not a new temptation or struggle. But in Scripture, we are afforded a glimpse of Jesus' down-to-earth kind of love.

Down-to-earth Love in Philippians

One of the most profound pictures of that love is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians. This is not typically a book of the Bible that churches talk about during Advent and Christmas, but it works well here because this Scripture is all about Jesus coming down to earth. Paul was writing from prison to a group of Jesus followers in Philippi. The followers seemed to have a deep relationship with Paul. Earlier, it had been Paul who had helped this group say yes to following Jesus.

Paul's Concern with the People of Philippi

As we read through the letter, we discover that Paul was deeply concerned about how this fledgling group of Jesus followers was faring. It seems that they had allowed arguments and differences to divide them, and Paul didn't want that to happen. So he wrote them a letter.

A Difference for You: Philippians 2:1-2

Philippians 2 is a beautiful hymn prefaced by these words in Philippians 2:1-2:
"Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, any sharing in the Spirit, any sympathy, complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other."¹

Paul was asking the followers at Philippi, and is asking us, a really tough question:

Has following Jesus made a difference in your life?

[Pause]

A Difference for All of Us

On the surface this may seem like a personal question, as though it's about my relationship with Jesus. But in fact the form of *you* used in the first sentence is plural, meaning "all of you." Paul was writing to the community as a whole.

Has following Jesus made a difference in our life, First United Methodist Church?

¹ Philippians 2:1-2.

[Pause]

Sometimes it is difficult for followers of Jesus in our individualistic culture to realize that following Jesus is not merely about Jesus and me.

Faith in Jesus is not about
my ambitions,
my opinions,
my interests, or even
our differences,
our arguments, or
our desire to be right.

Faith in Us

Faith is not about just me or my relationship with you; faith is demonstrated in us! Following Jesus is about what we do together and how we treat one another both those who are part of the body of Christ and those who are not.

Pause

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that Jesus' down-to-earth love is as real for you as it was for the first disciples – for Paul and the church at Philippi.

Call to Action

Jesus' love is an active love.
It does not stand by, bottled up and reserved for the right date and time.
Jesus' love is actively released through the hands of those who follow him –
through your hands...
and mine...

Pause

Invitation to Simple, Beautiful Action

This Advent, I invite you to do one simple, beautiful thing each day as we prepare for Christmas.

Logistics

On a table in the Hospitality Room, you will find a pack of cards – one for each day from today through Christmas. On them, you will find a suggestion of one thing to do to put your faith in action – to bring your God’s love down-to-earth right here in our community.

Pick up a pack of cards - we have one for each family.
Each day there is a small simple action of down-to-earth love.

Invitation

We can share God’s love with others because we have received it.

If you have never received Jesus’ love, you can.
God loves you – more than you can imagine.

You can receive God’s down-to-earth love for you
today.

All you have to do is ask.

I’m sorry. Thank you. Please.

In just a moment, I will invite you to join with me in prayer.

And, if you would like to pray,
you do not have to pray out loud, just repeat after me,
quietly, under your breath.

It’s a very simple thing to pray – I am sorry. Thank you. Please.

I’m sorry - to turn away from the things that we know are wrong
Thank you - to express gratitude for God’s love for us in Jesus Christ
Please - to put our faith in Jesus and ask to be filled with God’s Holy Spirit.

Not ready to pray

If you don’t want to pray a prayer like that today, it’s okay.
No problem.

Closing

For all of us, this Advent season is an invitation for us to open our hearts to God, to allow God to use our hands in sharing Jesus’ love with the people around us. We don’t need to have it all figured out. We don’t have to agree. We don’t have to win. We must simply allow God to use what is in our hands – those basic raw ingredients that God uses to create miracles in our lives and in the lives of others.

Maybe it’s true: God can change the world through homemade rolls – Jesus’ down-to-earth love on display.

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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.