



Connect Share Explore

Traditional Worship • August 26

- Prayer Concerns: The family of Lowell Weller in his passing; Joyce Freeman.
- Today's Sanctuary flowers given by Patrick & Linda Jackson to the glory of God in honor of their wedding anniversary.
- Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Don Travis. Organist: Barbara Waite.
- Ushers (26): Eric Eades, captain; Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, John Oberhelman, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Greeters (26): Pat & Ken Haynie, Tom Harvey, Janet Kissel

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"Holy God, We Praise Thy Name" by P. Manz

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Blow through us, breath of God.

People: Bring rain that can water our souls.

Leader: Blow through us, breath of God.

People: We will be the instruments that play Your song.

CHORAL INTROIT

"The Lord Is In His Holy Temple" by Douglas Wagner

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*FIRST HYMN #428

"For the Healing of the Nations"

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Please turn to those around you and pass the peace of Christ.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Temple Brass

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us listen for God in the silence.

PASTORAL PRAYER

All: God who rules over us, God who became one of us, God who always has been and always will be, give us new hearts that long only to serve You. O God, hear us now as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

GIVING OFFERING

"My Song Is Love Unknown" by M. Burkhardt

*DOXOLOGY the congregation stands as the Ushers return the offering to the Altar.

#94 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"Blessed Assurance" by Fannie Crosby; arr. by Joel Raney

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 6:37-38

Judging Others

³⁷ "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE TFWS #2203

"In His Time"

MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton

Share: No Strings

Good Morning Methodist Temple. I trust you all have a great weekend and have enjoyed the cooler weather this past week. If you're like me and you live on Burkhardt road, you might have enjoyed the lack of traffic because of the construction of right outside of your house. Lack of traffic but not so good for nap time, so I don't know. It's a tradeoff. It's an important week in the life of Methodist Temple. More than anything else, it's an important week because it is my wife Leslie's birthday week. I'm taking off this next week. I'm going on vacation this next week to emotionally and spiritually prepare myself for this national holiday. Now, I'm not going to tell you how old she is, but I will give you a hint. 1985 is an important year. Goonies was going on at that point. Star Wars was playing at that point. I was learning to ride my bike around that point. It was an important year, and there was some really important people being born around that year. I'm not going to tell you how old she is, and she's not here this morning so I can- she is here this morning. Oh! Oh, No. JillAnn, you take it from here. You should point out more. Because I was talking about, well anyway. Happy Birthday Leslie. Happy birthday! I have all your gifts purchased. We're good. Thumbs up. Thumbs up OK. All right.

We've had fun these last few weeks at Methodist Temple. We've been talking about what we dream and hope that we could become as a congregation, and basically just to say it simply, we hope and we dream as a congregation that we can become a kind of safe and nonjudgmental space for people to connect and to share and to explore. Now I want you to understand something. There's no hidden agenda here. All right. We're not going to drastically change the building or worship times or the songs we sing. There's no hidden agenda here. You need to hear me on that. None. It's not about all that stuff that doesn't last. When I talked about our dreams and our vision for a church, what I'm talking about is what we hope to become within our hearts. And what I hope when we become within our hearts as a church is a safe and nonjudgmental place- community- where people can relate to one another, learn what their gifts are, share their gifts, and explore the Christian faith in a healthy way more than anything else.

I'm just going to recap what we've talked about these last few weeks. In order to make this a reality, I think we have to first realize that despite our many differences- and we have differences and that's OK. That's actually a good thing- the one thing that can unite us is our common search for a God of love. Right? There's differences. There's there is spectrums. There is different preferences. There is different opinions. There is different ideas. All sorts of different things. But at the end of the day, the one thing that I think can unite us to make this community I'm talking about the reality is our search in our quest for a God of love. The way that we grow into that relationship with the God of love is we enter into a community with one another. We grow in connection with each other and at the same time we grow in connection with God. One of the things that community teaches us more than anything else is how to live with the shortcomings of one another. And when we are able to live with grace and live with the shortcomings of one another, it's then that we truly become Christlike and we become a safe and nonjudgmental place for people to connect, to share, and to explore.

So I know that's kind of a long intro, but today what we're going to talk about is kind of that judgmental piece. We're going to take a look at that famous verse from Jesus's teachings. But before we jump into that too far, let's begin with the moment of prayer. Would you pray with me? God of love you, we do thank you for the gift of your presence. God of love we thank you for the gift of your grace. God of love we thank you for your challenge which lives within each and every one of our lives. I pray that you would help us to be present to you even as you're here present with us today. Amen.

Our scripture lesson- if you want to open your bulletins again this week- comes from the Gospel of Luke Chapter 6. Now what's important for us to understand about the Gospel of Luke Chapter 6 is that this passage of Scripture finds itself within what is called the Sermon on the Plain. Now, in the Gospel of Matthew, it's called Sermon on the Mount. And the idea in the Gospel Matthew is Jesus kind of preaches from a high place- a mount. In the Gospel of Luke, he preaches at a level place. So they came up with a highly sophisticated and unique way of describing it rather than the Sermon on the Mount. It's called Sermon on the Plain.

In the Gospel of Luke Chapter 6, Jesus is preaching about what it means to live a blessed life. He is giving the Sermon on the Plain. Now if you're like me, when you hear that we're blessed you kind of hesitate. And the reason is because the word blessed, I don't know, sometimes gets used in some kind of odd and different ways. Like when people say, I'm just so blessed. I think sometimes what they mean is like it's all going my way and they're not careful they come across as God plays favorites- like I'm blessed. They're not blessed. That kind of thing. But it's important for us to understand when Jesus used the word blessed, he's not talking about like gods. More on your side than someone else's side. It's not like God plays favorites when Jesus used the word blessed. Instead what he's talking about is basically a life that is seeking to say yes to the presence of God. To be blessed is a life that is seeking to say yes to the presence of God. And I push it a little farther out and even say that to be blessed is about saying yes to a relationship with God that already exists within our lives. And that's not important for us to hear that and understand that. When we enter into a relationship with God, we say yes to something that already exists. It's that's that God ever left us. It's just that we kind of left God.

This is most, I think emphatically reflected, in the passage just before our passage this morning when Jesus says be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful. Think about that passage. God's mercy is already there. And then when you say yes to that, Will you be merciful as God is merciful to you? Be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful and so by the time we get to our passage this morning what we did last is Jesus kind of, in my opinion, laying out some more ways in which we can live a blessed life. And so this morning, if you want to do what we did last week, we're going to play that game circle up. I'll tell you what words I'm going to talk about as we take a look at our passage of scripture. You can either mentally circle these words or you can literally circle these words, but I'm going to tell you where I'm going to go. So first word circle up. Verse 37. Circle judge. Second word, same verse. Circle condemn. Third Word, same verse. Circle forgive. In verse 38, fourth word. Circle Give. And if you want to just really really go get with it this morning, you can underline this phrase. All right, are you ready? "For the measure you give will be the measure you get." Last phrase, verse 38.

All right so let's talk about Judge. Do not judge so you will not be judged. That's the verse. It's probably one of the most popular verses that are quoted of the things that Jesus said. I mean we hear this 'don't judge stuff' all the time. Especially in our society today, I think when people say 'don't judge' basically what they're meaning to say is that 'who are you to tell me if I'm wrong?' Right? When someone says 'don't judge' basically they're saying 'who are you to tell me I'm wrong?' I mean come on. Jesus said 'don't judge'. Who are you to tell me I'm wrong? But the thing that's important for us to understand here is that in the Greek language, and in Jesus's day, there were two types of judgments that people used. And here's a really sophisticated way of understanding it. There are good judgments and there are bad judgments.

Jesus does call us to make good judgments. The good judgments are what we would call good decision making, otherwise known as discernment. You weigh the options. You weigh the facts. You think about the pros and cons. You might consult other people that you trust. You might think about your past experiences, and as a result of that you make a judgment call and you make a good judgment hopefully. I mean Jesus does call us to do this, and he says things like 'You'll know them by their fruits'. That's a judgment. You'll know them by their fruits. The image here is a powerful one. There are good fruits that bring life. There are bad fruits that if you eat them will spoil us, if you will. They make us sick. And so that's a judgment.

We're called to make these types of good judgments, otherwise known as discernment. The thing that comes to my mind when I think about good judgments is something my Papaw Payton said. My Papaw Payton is my great grandfather from Kentucky. He passed on years ago. My Papaw Payton was a wise man. He was a Kentucky farmer, tobacco farmer. He had milk cows, and so he was just a fountain of wisdom. These people always have so much wisdom. Well here's one of Papaw Payton's statements: 'If you don't use your head, you might as well have feet on both ends.' I've used this before. This is like the Sermon on the Plain with Pastor Andy. If you don't use your head, you might as well have feet on both ends. Make good judgments. Come on people. Make good judgments. Use your head. Jesus calls us to make good judgments.

So we are the bad judgments? The bad judgments that Jesus is talking about, I think, when he says don't judge, is when we begin to think of ourselves as better than other people because of the good choices we have made or the associations that we have within our lives. When we begin to think that we're better than other people because of the good choices we have made and the associations that we have in our lives, that's when our good judgments become bad judgments. And I think one of the forms of bad judgment that Jesus spent a lot of his time speaking against was religion. People used their religion in his day to think of themselves as better than other people.

Classic parable on this. A little bit later on in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee who both go to the temple to pray. The Pharisees in those days were kind of like the religious elite. The Pharisees in those days lived according to all the commandments. The tax collector in those days was by and large was thought of as the scum of the earth. So you have a very religious person going to the temple to pray. You have a kind of a non-religious person going to the temple to pray. And as the parable unfolds, Jesus says the Pharisee goes to the temple and begins to pray, God I thank you know I'm not like other people, like the thieves and this person and that person. The Pharisee says, I especially thank you that I'm not like that tax collector.

Now the image that pops in my mind when I think about this parable is like, when I'm in a restaurant and I'm sitting down getting ready to eat. Someone off in the corner begins to pray. And they don't really pray in such a way that praying to God. They pray in such a way that everyone else around them knows that they're praying. You know what I'm talking about. "God. We thank you for this meal... and basically in the way that we're saying our prayer. We thank you. We're not like all these other heathen people here around us." That's what I think about when I think about this parable. To be clear, I pray before my meal. It is just kind of quiet. I think the Pharisee acts like this in this parable.

And so the Pharisee says thank you, I'm not like other people. The tax collector simply says, have mercy on me. Have mercy on me, I'm a sinner. Jesus ends the parable by saying 'truly the tax clerk goes home right with God. Justified is the word. Truly the tax collector goes home right with God. Now this is a parable about bad judgment in some ways. Don't be like the Pharisees who think of themselves as better than other people because of their religion. Be like the tax collector, really in this case, who is humble and understands themselves as someone who is in need of the mercy of God. So make good judgments, but don't let them become bad judgments.

Next word condemn. Don't condemn lest you be condemned. So the first phrase is don't judge or you'll be judged. Next phrase don't condemn or lest you'll be condemned. Now this is an ancient rabbinic way of teaching. In Jesus's day, a lot of times the rabbis- the teachers- would say the same thing, but they would say it kind of twice right in a row. They would say the same thing just in different ways. Make the same point but just say it right in a row. And so basically what Jesus is saying he says don't condemn is basically the same thing he said when he said don't judge. The Greek word for condemn is associated with making final judgments upon people. And by that I mean, when Jesus says don't condemn, he is saying 'don't within your heart assign that person to Hell because of who they are'. Don't make a final judgment on people. As I think about that idea of not making final judgments on people- which is another form of thinking of ourselves as better than other people based upon religious ideas and practices- the thing that comes to my mind is something Philip said. He said whenever we assign a person or a group of people as going to Hell, we have only given ourselves permission to treat them like it as well.

In our mind in our heart when we say, 'Well that group of people can't possibly be going to heaven. They are going to Hell' We're condemning them. We've all but given ourselves permission to treat them like Hell too. You can see it again and again and again and again throughout the life of many faith traditions. I'm not just going to pick on Christianity here, but we're certainly guilty of this sometimes- very much guilty of this. Don't do that is what Jesus is saying. Don't do that. Did you know that the root word for the word religion is to bind together, to connect. The root word for that is to bind together, to connect. Healthy religion connects us to God and keeps us connected to one another. That's healthy religion. Unhealthy religion keeps us disconnected from one another, keeps people separated from us. It's like us and them type of thinking which quite frankly to me means that some of the people who call themselves religious are really non-religious. And some of the people who call themselves non-religious are really religious in the sense that they are connected to other people. Jesus is calling us to live into healthy religion. Now to be clear, I'm not saying that I'm promoting an 'anything goes' type of lifestyle. There are some things that are bad. There are some things that are wrong. And some people are going to do things that hurt us. In those cases, what we need to do is learn from that situation, try not to put ourselves in those circumstances again, and forgive.

Next word. Forgive. Forgive and you will be forgiven. That's what Jesus says. Now the Greek word here is release. It literally means release. So think about this passage in that context. Release and you will be released. Release and you will be released. There's an old saying. It says, 'when you forgive someone, a prisoner is set free, and you're the prisoner.' Yeah, we're not called to judge. We don't, we're not called to condemn. No, it doesn't mean anything, goes on. It means that sometimes we're prisoner and harmed and people do things we don't like and they hurt her feelings. And in those cases, Jesus says we need to forgive. Release so that we will be released within our own hearts. For me forgiveness is about coming to that place where we no longer let the pain of our past control our present decisions. Forgiveness is about coming to that place where we no longer let the pain of our past control our present decisions. We don't let the pain that someone else has caused us keep us from treating them with kindness and graciousness. It's not that we don't feel the pain anymore, it's just that we don't let it control us anymore.

The basis of us living a forgiving life, and hear me when I say this, is of course the forgiveness of God. It's the forgiveness of God. We're just living in the same way that God treats us when we forgive people. And if you don't hear anything else this morning, hear this. To me the gospel is about a view and a trust and a belief in a God who is more than our mistakes. In fact, I think the love of God is so great and so large that God even uses our mistakes to teach us to be all the more grateful and all the more loving and all the more life giving to other people. Think about your life. God uses your bad choices, my bad choices to help us learn how to be a loving people. I know that I'm getting better when I get grateful for the many mistakes that I've made because all those mistakes that I've made have helped me to love. That's how large God's love is for us. That's the basis by which we can forgive other people.

Final word: give. When we believe that God's more than our mistakes and we ultimately believe that God's love is capable of meeting all of our needs, it's then we're able to give without strings attached. By that I mean we are able to give in such a way that we're really not looking for anything in return because we believe God is going to meet our needs. So much of the time our giving is either manipulative or needy. Manipulative in this sense we do good things for people but really we're just trying to manipulate them into doing what we want them to do. Needy in the sense that we do loving things for people in the hope that they will love us back and help us find a cure for our loneliness. But when we start with the idea that that God fulfills the deepest desires of our hearts, it's then we are able to give selflessly and not selfishly. When we give in that way with no strings attached, it's then that we get the blessing that Jesus talks about at the very end of our verse. It will be given to you. It's a free giving. It's a free sharing. It's free because God has met the needs of our hearts and we just simply give to others. It is then as we begin to do that we come to alive with what I think of as the joy of giving.

I'm only three minutes over. I know you're Methodist and I know you'll forgive me. But here's the thing: Don't judge. Don't condemn. Forgive. Share without strings attached. And it's then that we reflect the love of God. Amen.

BLESSING OF MINISTRY

Don Travis

*LAST HYMN TFWS #2223

"They'll Know We Are Christians"

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION

"Lobe den Herren" by J. Pachelbel

POSTLUDE