

Re-Write Your Story

Traditional Worship • September 23

Our Pastors:

- Lead Pastor Andy Payton leadpastor@methodisttemple.church
- Associate Pastor JillAnn Knonenborg associatepastor@methodisttemple.church

Sunday Morning Volunteers:

- Ushers (23): Eric Eades, captain; Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, John Oberhelman, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Ushers (30): Greg & Linda Stilwell, captains; Chuck Taylor, Jacque Hardin, Nelson & Joyse Rivers
- Greeters (23): Pat & Ken Haynie, Tom Harvey, Janet Kissel
- Greeters (30): Janet Kissel, Wanda Erwin, Mary Lockett

*Ushers & Greeters remain in the Narthex during worship. Please reach out to them with any questions or special needs you may have. They are happy to assist!

Additional Information:

- Prayer Concerns: Russel Kincheloe, Nancy Hitch
- Today's Sanctuary flowers given by Greg & Fran Black to the glory of God in honor of Faith Black Wynne.
- Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Don Travis. Organist: Barbara Waite.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

Hymn Sing

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"Lighten the Darkness" by H. Willan

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Listen! The story of God is unfolding.

People: It is the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar.

Leader: It is the story of Moses and Miriam,

People: The story of Peter and Paul.

Leader: A story of redemption, struggle, courage, and hope.

People: It is our story, here and now.

Leader: Our story is God's story.

People: We will listen.

CHORAL INTROIT

"Enter His Presence" by C. O. Beck

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*FIRST HYMN

"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness" (Nettleton)

*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

"Make Our Garden Grow" from "Candide" by Leonard Bernstein/Christopher Dedrick

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: Creator God, help us to do everything for the sake of You. Let us cling to nothing except to You. Call out to us that we may hear You, an forever delight in You. O God, hear us now as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

GIVING OFFERING

"Christ Is The World's Light" by R. Hobby

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

#94 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"The Triumphs of His Grace" arr. by Stan Pethel

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READING

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE TFWS #2203

"In His Time"

MESSAGE *by Pastor JillAnn Knonenborg*

What is a story?

Will you pray with me? Gracious God as I strived to deliver your message this morning, may you increase and we decrease. For it is written that only in giving up our lives will we find them. Amen.

I was led to talk to you all today about stories- about how stories can shape us, change us, guide us to a new way of living, and about how as Christians we must carefully choose the stories that we will live by. And then I realized that someone had already preached that sermon better than me in the movie version of The Lord of the Rings. There is a point in the second movie when Frodo and Sam are ready to give up. They've been on a quest to destroy an evil magical ring, a quest that they never wanted to go on in the first place. So far every one and every thing has stood in their way. Right when it seems that they and their friends will lose everything, Sam teaches us all about the power of a story.

So let's listen: 'I can't do this Sam.'

'I know. It's all wrong. By rights we shouldn't even be here. But we are. It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo, the ones that really mattered full of darkness and danger they were. Sometimes you didn't want to know the end because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing. Like a shadow that even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines, it will shine out but clearer. Those are the stories that stay with you, that meant something even if you were too small to understand why. But I think, Mr. Frodo, I do understand. I know now. The folk in those stories had lots of chances to turn back, only they didn't. They kept going because they were holding on to something.'

'What are we holding onto Sam?'

'That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo, and its worth fighting for.'

Sam and Frodo had the strength to face unbelievable odds because they trusted in a story that good will triumph over evil. It wasn't a fact that they could prove, but trusting the story gave them power. And courage. There is perhaps nothing more human than telling stories. In fact some scientists now think that what sets human beings apart from all other animals is not that we use tools or have languages, but that we can change the world by telling stories. Stories may just seem like ideas, but once we share a story in common, it is the most powerful force on earth.

Think of it this way: depending on which side of the Ohio River you come from I bet you tell a different story about a basketball game in 2011 when the unranked IU upset #2 UK. If I told the story of that game, I would bask in the glory of every minute until 5 4 3 2 1, Christian Watford lands a 3 pointer at the buzzer to win the game. On the other hand, if my wonderful, amazing, but deeply misguided colleague Don Travis would tell that story I imagine he might question whether the ball was really off of Christian Watford hands when the buzzer sounded. Or he might just not tell that story at all. Depending on the story what is true is different. Was the state of Indiana founded by brave pioneers or ruthless land stealers? What makes someone beautiful? Am I a good person a bad person or both? These questions cannot be definitively answered with data points. We must start by telling a story and our answers will come out of the stories we've been told and the stories we've lived.

In this new sermon series, we're going to talk about some of the stories, some of the narratives that animate our lives. These are the assumptions that consciously or unconsciously guide many of our beliefs and choices in daily life. Some of these stories are so widespread that we don't even realize that there are alternative stories. We assume that they're the way things are and always have been and always will be, when in fact they're just the current story. No wonder Jesus so often said 'you've been told that this. But truly I tell you something totally different.'

The Christian movement is a story- not in the sense that Jesus is made up or make believe but that we Christians choose to believe Christ's story is more true than all the other stories we have been told. Because it's true, we decide to become a part of His story. We are invited by God to change our lives forever by weaving our individual stories into God's larger story.

Roger Olson, a Baptist Pastor, put it well when he said, 'To be Christian is to be caught up in a story, to in dwell in it which is so much more than learning facts about it.' So what is the Christian story? Well actually it's many stories. These threads come together to form a great tapestry of God's work in the world. Over the next few weeks we'll be listening to some of these stories and the truths that they tell, but what is the seam of the Tapestry? What is the foundation, the beginning of all the other stories?

All narratives need a first chapter, but my English professors would tell you that what separates a mediocre story from a great story is that in a great story the seeds of the last chapter are planted in the first. The ending doesn't come from out of the blue. We've all seen films where the ending seemed like it came from another movie. Those are bad movies; but in a good movie or book, when we look back from the end of the story, we can see clearly where it all started.

The Gospel according to John tells us the origin story. I like to call this story the light in the darkness. It goes like this: in the beginning- or maybe once upon a time- was God in Christ. Christ was the word, the decree of God. And what Christ brought into the world was the life and light. The light shines always and darkness cannot overcome it. Through all the pages of Scripture, through all the successes and sins of the church, through all the beauty and brokenness of human history, there has always been God. There has always been love conquering evil in the world and inside each one of us. That is the origin story that God invites you to claim as your own.

Of course, if we accept that this story of light is what's really true, there are also stories we simultaneously reject as untrue. John in his church did not deny that darkness is real, but they reject the story that darkness is stronger than light. Christ brought life and good into the world, not death and destruction which means they reject the story that horrible suffering is God's will. God is on the side of life and God is supreme which means they are freed from stories that tell them to be afraid.

How might your life be different if you trusted the story love wins? How might your life be different if you trusted the story do not be afraid? How might our church, our community, our country be different if we trusted the story light overcomes darkness? Would that change how you treat people? How you treat yourself?

Friends, we live in troubled times. The world seems more violent than ever. Millions of people go hungry while others die from eating too much. Some people can't get the drugs that they need to live while others die from taking drugs that they don't need to numb their pain. I can access all human knowledge on my cell phone but almost no wisdom. We know things need to change. We know we're more often part of the problem than part of the solution. What if the real problem isn't with our policies or habits or systems? What if it goes deeper than that? The real problem is the stories we dwell in- the ones we reluctantly but adamantly believe are true.

Ivan Illich was a Catholic priest in Croatia. During the Cold War he was asked, 'do we change the world through revolution or reform?' He answered, 'Neither. If you want to change the world then you must tell a different story.' So here's one. Ever since the beginning, in the midst of all of the darkness, there is light because Jesus is still with us. If we take time to stop and look, we can catch glimpses of that light. Love hasn't gone anywhere. It's here to stay.

You can join in on the story of the light in the darkness every day, every time you follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to choose love over hate, generosity over greed, courage over fear. Every time you let the Christ light shine through you, you are part of the story. We get to live inside the greatest story ever told, and even better, God loves us so much that he gives everyone Jew, Gentile, black, white, male, female, old, young, he gives everyone the chance to write a few lines of that story.

The next step is up to you. What will your part in the story be.

*LAST HYMN UMH #182

"Word of God, Come Down on Earth"

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"O Love How Deep" by B. Culli