



Re-Write Your Story

Traditional Worship • October 14

Our Pastors:

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

Sunday Morning Volunteers:

- Ushers (14): Greg & Linda Stilwell, captains; Chuck Taylor, Jacque Hardin, Nelson & Joyse Rivers
- Ushers (21): Eric Eades, captain; Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Greeters (14): Marty Van Stone, Wanda Erwin, Carla Bolin
- Greeters (21): Warren & Rosemary Heinsohn, Mary Lockett

*An usher remains 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: John Keller, Nancy Hitch, Brenda Jeffries; the family of Paul Murphy in his passing (funeral will be at Methodist Temple on 10/20); the family of Russell Kinchloe in his passing.
- Today's Sanctuary flowers given by the Flower Committee to the glory of God.
- Temple Choir is directed today by Joan Nevill. Organist: Barbara Waite. The anthem was given to the Glory of God in memory of Dr. David Martin.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer" by J.B Carlson

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The world belongs to God,
People: The earth and all its people.
Leader: How good it is, how wonderful,
People: To live together in community.
Leader: Open our lips, O God,
People: And we will shout praise!

CHORAL INTROIT

"Come, Let Us Worship God" by Donald D. Ketting

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*FIRST HYMN UMW #238

"My Hope Is Built"

*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.

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: O God, You have set before us signs of hope that Your Kingdom is coming. Open our eyes to see where it is already here. Give us hearts of gratitude for Your beauty and grace in our midst. And now, hear us as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

GIVING OFFERING

"Give Me Jesus" by R. Billingham

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

#94 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"All Things Bright and Beautiful" by John Rutter

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READING

John 16:19-33

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE TFWS #2176

"MAKE ME A SERVANT"

MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton

Cynicism/ Hope

Good morning friends. I am so grateful that you decided to go through the rain this morning and to come to worship with this and I trust, I hope that this will be an uplifting experience for you today. I do have a confession to make. I'm sorry about the long scripture reading. I meant to say 23 and not 33 when I put it into Planning Center. It kept going and going and I thought that's a little longer than I remember and I'm like, well we're just going to have to go with this I guess. Here you all are standing so patiently and so kindly. Thank you for your kindness. By next service I hope you will have that changed from 33 to 23. Yes. It's my fault. It's my fault.

So the last couple of weeks we've been talking about rewriting our stories and specifically the idea of this sermon series is that the stories that we tell ourselves have power. They have power in terms of how we look at ourselves. They have power in terms of how we live our lives. They have power even in terms of like the way that we organize our society. The stories we tell ourselves have power. Last week our sermon topic, our chapter in terms of our storytelling sermon series was the mind of division vs the mind of Christ. Basically what I suggested was that a divisive mind, in terms of a faith perspective, a divisive mind chooses just to see God's presence in their club and their team. But the mind of Christ chooses to see God's presence in all. In fact I would go as far to say that the best way to love God is to love everything and everyone. That was last week's sermon. Well this week we're talking about cynicism versus hope. And I think it's a relevant topic for where we find ourselves today as a society and as a people. Cynicism versus hope is a struggle we definitely are in today and really all the time.

As we get started, let's take a moment to center ourselves and pray. Help us to be present to you today, Oh God, even as you are here present both in and through us. Amen.

So let's talk about cynicism and hope. Cynicism. What's my definition for that? Cynicism for me is a lack of confidence in the present that leads to a pessimism about the future. The word cynicism, I learned, comes from a group of Socratic philosophers from the ancient world and they were called cynics. The cynics had lost all confidence in humanity. They had lost all confidence in a person's ability, and so they called them cynics. Cynicism is a lack of confidence in the present that leads to a pessimism about the future. Hope on the other hand is the complete opposite of that. I think hope is confidence about the present that leads to an excitement about the future. From a faith perspective, hope is about looking to the past to see how God has been faithful to us and realizing that just as God has been faithful to us in the past, God will be faithful to us in the present and on into the future.

In the book of Hebrews there is this wonderful phrase that says, 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.' The idea is that God is always faithful. As we think about God's faithfulness, that gives us hope and confidence about the present and even excitement into the future. And today, what I hope to talk to you a little bit about is some ways that we can cultivate hope within our lives. The way I'd like to do is take a look at the first four verses of our scripture lessons- not all like 20 whatever we just read. So I'm just going to focus on the first four, and I think as I looked at the scripture lesson today, the first thing that was important to me was to understand the story behind the story of our scripture lesson. The story behind the story of a passage from John today is that Jesus has just told his disciples that his time with them is limited. Jesus has just told his disciples that he's with them now but there's going to be a time coming when he's going to be betrayed, crucified. He's going to die. And then the idea is he's going to be raised again. So Jesus tells his disciples though that their time together is limited. They're going to be separated, but then there's a time in which they're going to be reunited. If I was just going to summarize the story behind the story of our scripture lesson today it would be this: Now you see me. Now you don't. Now you see me.

Now you see me Jesus says to disciples. For a while you won't. Then you will see me again. Now as I thought about that though, I think that's a pretty good way to think about our own spiritual journey. Right? I mean if you think about your own walk with God there is going to be moments where 'Now you see me'. There is an intimacy with God and you have this capacity to see God in all things. Life even starts to seem like it's all fallen into place and it's going to work out. Now you see me. Then: Now you don't. There will be periods of time when God seems distant. And it seems like the presence has vanished. And forgive me for saying this but all Hell begins to break loose. And you're wondering how can I put the pieces together again? Now you don't. Our calling in the midst of those periods is to hold on because now you see me is on the other side of those periods of alienation if you will.

As I have thought about hope, at least in my own life this week, the first thing that seemed to come to me as I wrestled with what I really believed about hope was that a lot of times we learn hope by going through pain. I don't know why that is, but a lot of times we learn hope by going through pain. Think about the metaphor that Jesus uses with the disciples. It's sort of like a woman that goes into labor and it really hurts, but then the baby comes and the joy is restored. Now that's a pretty intense metaphor for hope if you ask me. I prefer to use the metaphor that hope is kind of like a slab of concrete and new life springs through the cracks. That's my image of hope. But the idea is when we have gone through some stuff and we realize that we can make it through it, that gives us a sense of hope for when we go through stuff again that we can get through this as well. My dad had this phrase that he often used. He said Anti brokenness creates openness to God. But I'd also say brokenness teaches us to have hope when everything's broken. It has this capacity to teach us if we're willing to sit with it long enough and realize that hey I've got through stuff like this before and yeah I'm going to get through this too. Hope is about confidence in the present.

So the first thing is that hope is born out of pain. It's weird, I know, but I think it's true. The second thing I can say about hope is it's cultivated by being intentional about what the voices are that we are listening to. Hope is cultivated by being careful about what that is we're listening to. I like the way Jesus says it. He says when I'm gone the world's gonna rejoice. Negative voices right. But one day your joy is going to be restored. Positive voices right. I think to continue to cultivate hope in our life we have to be careful about what we're listening to. We can listen to the negative voices or we can listen to the positive voices. We can listen to the less than hopeful voices or we can listen to the hopeful voices.

Now certainly we live in a time where much of what we hear is negative right. I read an article about how much screen time that we have in our lives this past week. In the article I think it may be exaggerating just a little bit, but the article suggested that on average we spend about 10 hours a day with the screen every day. That is a lot. The other thing the article said was on average an adult picks up their phone every 11 minutes. That's crazy. Now I don't know what it's like for you, but for me when I'm on average picking up my phone and I'm always watching the screen, it's not always all that positive or hopeful. In fact if I'm dialed in to the news especially, it's not very positive and not very hopeful. And I think the reason for that is bad news is easier to report. It just sells better right.

I read another article about bad news versus good news and the article suggested that the reason why we report on bad news is because it's easier in the sense that bad news happens quickly, but good news usually happens over a long period of time. The bad and horrible things happen in a moment, but the great things they take forever and so it doesn't sell that well so let's just report the bad news because that's quick and accessible. We can keep repeating it again and again and again. Now here's the problem with that, when we continue to listen to bad news over and over again, it will skew the way that we see the world. For example airplanes. When an airplane crashes, what does the news do? Reports it instantly. Boom instantly. And if we're not careful we think well riding an airplane is really dangerous, but the truth of the matter is, statistically it's much safer than driving a car. And yet we're not afraid to drive a car. Why? Well because we do it. It's just interesting to me how skewed things can become as we digest bad news.

There's an old parable. The parable goes: there was a young man who went to his elder and said, 'Sir I've got a problem.' And the elder says, 'Well, what's your problem?' The young man says, 'It's like two dogs are fighting within my heart. One is hopelessness. One is hope.' And he says to the elder, 'Which one wins?' And the elder responds, 'Well the one you feed.'

The one you feed. Friends, we claim the gift of hope by being intentional about what we read, what we listen to- and the other thing I would say is- what we don't listen to. For me one of the biggest practices that has helped me keep hope alive at least within my heart is the practice of silence. I know I need to spend some time in silence when I get annoyed about everything and the world seems ugly to me. I know I need to just go turn off the radio in my car or go for a walk at Wesslmen Woods or take my dog for a walk and just be quiet and let go of all the negative junk that I've accumulated within my soul. We cultivate hope, confidence in the present, and excitement about the future by being intentional about the voices we listen to.

Last thing about hope. The thing about hope is the way it grows. I think more than anything else as I think about my life, the way I hope grows is in our willingness to believe in the future. I think about Jesus. He shares his thoughts with his disciples and sends them out. In the Gospel of John, he says to his disciples, 'Hey guys you're going to do even bigger things than me.' So much of the time, we as Christians talk about believing in Jesus and that's great. But rarely do we think about the fact that Jesus believes in us. So why don't we believe in one another? Hope and confidence grow when we believe in each other. Not because of what we are but really because of who we are. Namely we are children of God. We have the divine presence living within our hearts which means we have endless capabilities, endless potential. There is a core of goodness within us, and so much of the time religion has lost the capacity to see this and celebrate it.

I mean religion at its best- religion at its best- leaves us excited about being alive because we're children of God. Christianity historically at its best was always excited about being alive. When we were excited about being alive and we were excited about our potential. We came up with some of the best art the world's ever known and some of those beautiful music the world's ever known. Religion at its worst, which unfortunately sometimes it seems like we specialize in, leaves us feeling less than, horrible, awful. I think sometimes the reason why negative and judgmental religion works so well is because people come here and it confirms all their worst fears about themselves. I mean we live in a world that teaches us again and again that we're not enough, and we don't measure up. We should hate the way we look. We're not good. And then we go to a church and negative and judgmental religion says you're not enough. You're a horrible person. You're not enough. Even some of the Protestant Reformers said that we're nothing but a pile of manure covered by the blood of Christ. That's a great starting point, let me just say, to motivate people.

But for me, as I look at the Gospel story it starts with this: We are made in the image of God and those things that keep us from seeing that presence and celebrating that presence, those are the distortions. Those are the things we need to get out of the way so that we can claim our endless potential as people who are vessels of the holy. The best way that we can share that with one another is quite simply by being confident in one another's abilities. And when we're celebrating that confidence, I can't help but to think Hope has got to grow. Confidence about the presence has got to grow and excitement about the future has got to grow.

The person that comes to my mind I think that did this really well of all people is Mr. Rogers. Do you know that guy? Yeah I watched the documentary that Mr. Rogers this past week. I grew up watching a little bit of Mr. Rogers as a kid, but this documentary- Oh my gosh- you should watch it! Get it at the library. This guy is a rock star. He is an absolute rock star. He was willing to tackle all kinds of things and teach kids about it. I mean he talked about divorce. He talked about war in the Vietnam era. In the early days of Mr. Rogers, all the civil rights stuff was going on. There were people protesting black people and white people swimming together. So do you know what Mr. Rogers did? He bought a little kiddie pool, and he and an African-American man washed their feet together in the pool to teach kids that that's not the way you act. That takes courage. Wow. And his basic message over and over again was this: I like you just the way you are. I'm proud of you. You have limitless potential. That caught on like wildfire. You know what he was doing. Right. He was preaching the gospel. He wasn't using the words of God and Jesus, but he was teaching the gospel in the way he was living, in the way he was presenting it. And that caught on like wildfire. In fact that you know Mr. Rogers couldn't even go to the airport. He couldn't go because all these people would come up to him and say, 'Mr. Rogers We love you. You're so great.' And here's what he would do. He would stop and he would talk to every one of them and he would miss his flight. How cool is that?

This is not to say that it was always easy for him. In fact towards the end of his life around the time 9/11 happened, they asked him to come back on and speak some words of hope in the midst of that period of time. Initially this is what Richard Rogers said 'in the face of such hopelessness and hatred, well what's the use?' Even Mr. Rogers struggled with hope. Here's what he did. And in one of those now you don't see any moments, he went on the air and he looked at America and he said, 'I love you just the way you are. I'm proud of you. And then he said I'm grateful, I'm grateful for the way that you are going to keep your kids safe and you're going to love your kids.'

I was in tears because I was like where is that voice today? Where those leaders today? Where are those people who claim the name of Jesus in this way? Because man we need this. We need this. We need people who are able to look at the pain of this world and say you know what, that's not all there is. We need people to look at one another and say you know what, in spite of your imperfections- I know we all got them- but there's more to us than that. There's a presence within us and we're going to claim that and celebrate that and be Christian about the way we treat one.

Now you get me all worked up. That was not my notes, but do you hear what I'm saying? Are you with me? Hope is about confidence in the present that leads to excitement about the future and the confidence and the excitement comes from believing the presence of God is within us all. Amen.

*LAST HYMN UMW #178

"Hope of the World"

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"Glory to God, We Give You Thanks" by J. W. Kerr