

Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted in this background

- Please record sermon at both worship services

Key Questions

1. What is this sermon about?
 - a. This sermon is about God's grace and the ways that we experience and receive it.
2. Why is this sermon important?
 - a. This sermon is important because grace is essential to our faith as United Methodists and living it in our lives is critical for our faith.
3. What are the next action steps?
 - a. You might want to accept God's gift of grace and begin a journey with God in a prayer.
 - b. Or you may want to recommit yourself to growing in love of God and neighbor
4. What is the good news (bottom line)?
 - a. The good news is that God's Holy Spirit is at work in our lives before we recognize it, we are saved by God's grace because of our faith and belong to God's household and our journey as United Methodist Christians is toward Christian perfection.

Context

This is the second sermon in the series, Restoring Joy: 5 Habits for Living Well. In this series we explore five important lessons the Bible teaches us about living well and experiencing real joy.

What makes United Methodists different from other denominations? How do I tell my friends what it means to be a Methodist? Does being a United Methodist make any difference at all? Join First United Methodist Church for a five-week journey to explore the defining characteristics of a United Methodist Christian. We will consider our history as a church, our approach to faith and look for ways that our heritage can defines our faith and challenge us to rediscover our spiritual passion.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - Grace, Methodism
- Books of the Bible
 - Acts, Ephesians
- Series
 - Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist Christian

Day of Pentecost
Love Divine: Rooted in Grace
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text online at <http://j.mp/1rcRX34>

June 8, 2014
Ephesians 2:1-10
Target Word Count: 2,366
Video online is currently unavailable.

- Tags
 - Methodist, United Methodist, United Methodist Church, grace, prevenient, justifying, sanctifying, Holy Spirit, pentecost

Ephesians 2:1-10, CEB

1 At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. 2 You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. 3 At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else. 4–5 However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God's grace! 6 And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. 7 God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus. 8 You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. 9 It's not something you did that you can be proud of. 10 Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

Sermon Starter Video

- [Play sermon starter video.](#)
-

Introduction

Series Review and United Methodist Handbook

Today we continue our sermon series, Love Divine in which we are examining life as a United Methodist Christian.

Last week, we remembered that life as a United Methodist means living as part of Christianity's family tree and recognizing that there are things which we share in common with all other Christians around the world.

You can find some of the themes of the sermons from this series as well as additional information about the United Methodist Church. These are free for you. I encourage you to pick one up and take it home to read more about who we are as United Methodists.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message

today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Opening 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.

Pentecost Story in Acts

Today is Pentecost, the final Sunday of the Easter Season. People from across the world had gathered in Jerusalem for the Jewish festival. This is the day we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit in power to the very first disciples. We find the story in Acts 2:1-4:

“When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”¹

Everyone who was in Jerusalem heard the disciples preaching in their own language and telling about the good news of Jesus Christ. Apart from concluding these Galileans were drunk (as apparently some did), there needed to be some public explanation for what was going on. Peter stands in the midst and provides it in Acts 2:17:

17 In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams.

Peter’s message here was critical for them and for us to understand. What these pilgrims were witnessing that day in Jerusalem was not simply an amazing miracle. It was, as Peter’s message alludes, nothing less than the inauguration of an entirely new era. With the resurrection of Jesus, God’s kingdom began to come on earth through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Transition

The experience of the Holy Spirit is not just something that happened a long time ago, to

¹ Acts 2:1-4, CEB.

the first disciples. The experience of God's grace through the Holy Spirit is essential to who we are as United Methodists. It is something that people have continued to experience throughout Christian history and connects with our series and theme for the day.

John and Charles Wesley

Who are those guys?

One of the questions that I heard several times last week was, who are those guys on the screen? Did anyone else have that question. They are John and Charles Wesley. John is on your left and Charles is on the right. We look to John and Charles Wesley for the essentials for our approach to faith as United Methodist.

Biography

John was born in England in 1703 and his brother Charles in 1707. Their father was a priest in the Church of England and "Both John and Charles [attended Oxford and became] Church of England missionaries to the colony of Georgia, arriving in March 1736. It was their only occasion to visit America. Their mission was far from an unqualified success, and both returned to England disillusioned and discouraged, Charles in December 1736, and John in February 1738. Both of the Wesley brothers had transforming religious experiences in May 1738. John Wesley describes this experience in his journal:

Wednesday, May 24, 1738

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed.

--

I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

- John Wesley

This is the way that John Wesley describes the Holy Spirit at work in his life bringing an assurance of God's forgiveness in his life. Following this experience of the Holy Spirit, John and his brother lead a lively renewal movement in the Church of England which over time, lead to our denomination the United Methodist Church.²

Transition

Today we will look at the deep and profound understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in God's grace.

² *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012.* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 11-12

The Way of Salvation

The Human Condition

“All of us have issues. We have problematic aspects of our lives that need to be addressed. All of us are sinners.

What is Grace? Work of the Holy Spirit

God loves us and is trying to heal us. We don't deserve that love—it is a gift that flows from God's very nature as our loving creator. That active love that seeks to shape our lives is called grace. We experience grace by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's grace leads human beings from their brokenness to maturity, from sin to perfection. That journey is the way of salvation. We talk about the way of salvation as the different ways that we experience God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit throughout our life:

- Prevenient grace
- Justifying grace
- Sanctifying grace

Prevenient Grace - On the Porch

In the Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Donald McKim defines prevenient grace as:

Prevenient grace “comes before” any human response to God. God offers grace and love to all people.

... In Arminianism and Wesleyanism the view is that God's grace is extended and persons may choose whether or not to believe in Jesus Christ. The human decision of the faithful are responsive to and enabled by God's grace.”³

Our Response - Yes or No

God does not force anyone to make the journey. God created humanity in God's own image, and part of God's nature includes free will. God did not create robots who were programmed to obedience; instead, all of us have the ability to obey or disobey.

In the same way, God's healing power does not overwhelm us. God loves us enough to allow us to reject his gift of love. God's grace is resistible. Yet, when we accept that grace and allow God to shape our hearts, minds, and lives, amazing things can happen. “⁴

Justifying Grace - Cross the Threshold

³ McKim, Donald. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. p 120

⁴ <http://www.abingdonpress.com/download/44/Chapter%20Summaries.pdf>

In the Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Donald McKim defines justifying grace as “A term used in Wesleyan theology to indicate the grace of God extended to those who believe in Jesus Christ and thus are justified or saved.”⁵

Justifying grace is when we are made right with God through Jesus Christ. God accepts you by grace through faith.

This experience of grace is meant most often when someone asks, “Are you saved?” We see this experience from the scripture passage for today: “You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith. This salvation is God’s gift.”⁶

Saved from and Saved for

Those who receive the gift of God’s forgiveness and love, are saved:

- from our sin and the power of sin and death.
- for perfect love of God and neighbor - to live as children of God.

The experience of being made right with God

Sanctifying Grace - Explore God’s House

In the Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Donald McKim defines sanctifying grace as “In Wesleyan theology, the grace God gives throughout the Christian life to enable one to live as a faithful Christian disciple.”⁷

Sanctifying grace enables us to move toward perfect love of God and neighbor. We can become like Jesus by grace through faith.

We grow in holiness throughout our life and have the opportunity to move all of our life into God’s house.

Christian Perfection through the Holy Spirit

What Christian perfection is not

Talking about perfection seems a little pretentious and impossible - There are all kinds of ways that I am not perfect. So, let me be clear about what Christian perfection is not

- Christian perfection is not never making a mistake “Indeed,” Wesley wrote, “I expect not to be free from actual mistakes till this mortal puts on immortality.”
- Freedom from weakness or temptation The apostle Paul prayed that he might be delivered from an infirmity (a “thorn in the flesh” he called it), and God’s answer back to him was, “My grace is enough for you, because power is made perfect in weakness” (2

⁵ McKim, Donald. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. p 120

⁶ Ephesians 2:8, CEB.

⁷ McKim, Donald. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. p 120

Corinthians 12:9). Weakness is not the opposite of perfection; it's a condition for it."⁸

What is Christian perfection?

"So what is perfection? [As part of the sermon on the mount and teaching about the realities of God's kingdom, Jesus gives the command in Matthew 5:48:

"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁹

The Common English Bible translates the command this way:

"Therefore, just as your heavenly Father is complete in showing love to everyone, so also you must be complete."¹⁰

Practically, for Wesley as for Jesus, perfection looks like living out the Great Commandment to love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself."¹¹

"Above all else, though, being made perfect means being made perfect in love. Love removes us from the burden of erecting barriers to keep God and others out. It moves us to forget ourselves in self-giving acts of service. Jesus called for difficult, uncomfortable, dangerous love. The miraculous thing is that flawed, fallible people are the only ones qualified for this perfection. They are the ones who experience God's grace."¹²

Full Sanctification as the Reason for Methodism

Yet this is what Wesley taught throughout his life, and believed that this is the reason that Methodists were created. In other words, Wesley believed that there was a particular reason for Methodism. Methodists existed because God had given them a particular corporate calling – to spread the teaching about the possibility of full sanctification."¹³

Conclusion

Perfect through the Power of God

"Wesley was fully convinced of God's desire for Christians to experience a fully sanctified life as fruit of a life of holiness. He was just as convinced that God has the power to bring this

⁸ Alex Joyner, "Perfection and Christian Faith," *Ministry Matters*, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/4625/perfection-and-christian-faith> (accessed January 31, 2014).

⁹ Matthew 5:38, NIV.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:38, CEB.

¹¹ Alex Joyner, "Perfection and Christian Faith," *Ministry Matters*, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/4625/perfection-and-christian-faith> (accessed January 31, 2014).

¹² Alex Joyner, "Perfection and Christian Faith," *Ministry Matters*, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/4625/perfection-and-christian-faith> (accessed January 31, 2014).

¹³ Kevin Watson, "Christian Perfection: The Reason for Methodism," *Vital Piety*, <http://vitalpiety.com/2013/05/27/christian-perfection-the-reason-for-methodism/> (accessed January 31, 2014).

about. So if we deny the possibility of full and entire sanctification in this lifetime, we are denying the power of God's grace to transform us and the world. To put it another way, if we're not desiring to be made holy in this lifetime, what are we desiring? And what are we expecting?"¹⁴

Good News

The good news is that God's Holy Spirit is at work in our lives before we recognize it, We are saved by God's grace because of our faith and belong to God's household. Our journey as United Methodist Christians is toward Christian perfection.

Call to Action

One of the ways that you can ask God to help you take a next step in your journey is through prayer.

- You might want to accept God's gift of grace and begin a journey with God in a prayer.
- Or you may want to recommit yourself to growing in love of God and neighbor

I want to make it possible for you today. There may be just one person here today who would like to experience God's justifying grace for the first time or recommit themselves to this journey. So, if you would like, you might just echo this prayer in your heart today. Will you pray with me?

Invitation

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for your death and resurrection for me. I am sorry for the things in my life that have been wrong. I turn away from everything that I know is wrong. I now receive your gift of forgiveness and put my trust in you. Please, help me live as one of your children. Holy Spirit, fill me and give me the strength to live a life that really is life. Thank you, O God. Amen.

¹⁴ Alex Joyner, "Perfection and Christian Faith," *Ministry Matters*, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/4625/perfection-and-christian-faith> (accessed January 31, 2014).