



The Methodist Messenger SEPTEMBER 2017



Whiteville United Methodist Church
902 Pinckney Street
Whiteville, NC 28472
910.642.3376
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Sunday School - 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday Communion Service - 6:30 p.m.

A SERMON ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The following New Testament lesson was read, and sermon was preached, by Dr. Richard B. Hays at a Service of Christian Marriage years ago. Dr. Hays is the George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School and a former Dean of the same school. This sermon appears in his book The Moral Vision of the New Testament (HarperCollins, 1996, pp. 374-6). Dr. Hays has very slightly edited the sermon as it appears below.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. --I John 4:7-21 (NRSV)

. . . Even though John is not writing about marriage, this text tells us two important truths about love that can shape our understanding of marriage -- of the marriage between this man and this woman. The two truths are simple:

Love is made known through the death of Jesus for us.

Love enacted in community makes God known to the world.

Let us think about these truths in turn.

Love is made known through the death of Jesus for us. That is the keynote of John's message: love proceeds from God. God is the initiator. "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (I John 4:10). There is the pattern, the paradigm that defines love for us. What does love look like? There are so many counterfeits abroad. How will we recognize it when we see it? Over and over again, the Scriptures answer by pointing to Jesus' death on the cross. The love that comes from God expresses itself in sacrificial self-surrender. Jesus surrendered power and divine prerogatives and gave himself for us. That is what love is: self-giving for the beloved, not self-seeking to possess the beloved. Love that seeks only its own gratification is finally disappointing and destructive illusion. But when we know the overflowing love of God, we let it flow through us to others. That points to the second important truth.

Love enacted in community makes God known to the world. The love of God continues to be visible, not only through the telling of the story of how God sent his Son for us but also through the ongoing life of the community of faith that lives by that story. John puts it this way: "No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God dwells among us, and his love is perfected among us" (I John 4:12, Hays' translation). Do you see it? Through our acts of love, the invisible God is made visible -- palpable -- among us.

What does all this have to do with marriage? Just this: the love that binds man and woman in Christian marriage is not

just warm spring evenings and roses, not the dizzy fantasy of fairy-tale romance. The love that binds man and woman in Christian marriage is the love of the cross.

That means, Tim and Sue, that your marriage is not just an arrangement that will last only as long as the rush of mutual joy lasts. It is a covenant, which will endure "for better for worse . . . in sickness and in health." Not long ago, I sat and prayed with a friend whose wife was unconscious in the intensive care unit. She had gone into seizures during childbirth, and the doctors feared possible brain damage. But amidst my friend's suffering and uncertainty about the future, I saw in his love and tireless care for her a parable of the love of God, a love that surmounts fear and suffering.

But do not suppose that all suffering comes from outside through tragic mishaps. Your marriage is a covenant that must stand firm even if your spouse becomes a threat to your tranquility and personal fulfillment, even if the time should come when you feel that that other who shares your bed has become -- for the moment, at least -- your enemy. Jesus has taught us to love our enemies. May such a time never come for you. But such times do come sometimes, even for couples in deeply committed, long-lasting marriages. Certainly, in marriage there is joy. Certainly, there is companionship and comfort. But marriage in Christ can never be a tentative coupling that lasts only as long as the good times roll. The joy of marriage in Christ endures all pain because the love that binds you in Christ is rooted deeply in the love of God.

Thus, in making the covenant of marriage, you make a covenant to love one another as God has loved you -- that means to love one another unconditionally, freely, sacrificially. In making the covenant of marriage, you promise to become servants of one another in love. In making the covenant of marriage, you form a union that reflects the love of God and stands as a sign of God's love in the world. Marriage is a sacrament in the true sense: it is both sign and vehicle of grace.

So, Tim and Sue, as you come to join your lives, this is our prayer for you: "May your marriage bear witness against all shallow, self-seeking visions of love. May the community of faith stand about you to support you in love and to receive from your love. May your marriage bear witness to the truth of the love of God and make God's love present to others in the world." In confidence that God will answer that prayer, I invite you now to come forward and make your covenant before God and one another.

In Christ,
Pastor Paul

PETER, PAUL, AND THE CHURCH

Hillsdale College just started building Christ Chapel on its campus. At the groundbreaking ceremony, which was joined to a convocation service, Dr. Michael Ward spoke. Dr. Ward is a fellow at the University of Oxford and a professor at Houston Baptist University. Said he: "Peter is the rock. That's what the name Peter means. You don't have to be a Catholic to recognize that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, and the defining function of any bishop is to sit, rock-like, stationary, in a chair, a cathedra, to be a focus of unity for the flock, which he regulates with his shepherd's crook. 'Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me' (Psalm 23:4). The Petrine principle provides for fixity, certainty, a still point in a turning world.

"Paul is the missionary, the apostle to the Gentiles, who travels all over the Mediterranean, spreading the Word, founding new churches, tackling practical problems, developing new theological understandings, firing off letters, and once even challenging Peter to his face.

"If it was all about Peter, things would petrify. If it was all about Paul, things would be appalling. You need both. The rock in Rome, and the one who roams and rocks. Two principles, in tension with each other, respecting each other, but both seeking one ultimate goal, serving the same beating heart. The heart itself is more important than whether the blood within it happens to be ebbing or flowing....

"Neither Peter nor Paul was an end in himself. Each was a servant of Christ. The two pointed to the One, the unity beyond themselves...." ("A Time to Scatter Stones and a Time to Gather Stones Together," Imprimis, July/August 2017)

NURTURE COMMITTEE

We have had a quiet summer for our committee, but are gearing up for fall events. We will meet on Wednesday, August 30th at 1:00 pm in the Parlor to discuss the 2018 Budget and 2017 Homecoming plans. Hope everyone enjoys the last few weeks of summer!

A little timely humor: How does the man in the moon get a haircut? Eclipse it! It was so good to see people all over the country coming together to view one of God's spectacular creations instead of gathering to protest or riot! Christian love to all of you!

- Debbie Conway, Chair

UNITED METHODIST MEN

Our WUMM meeting for September will be on September 2, instead of the first Thursday evening of the month as usual. We will meet Saturday, September 2nd, for the "Take the Lake" event at the Crowell Lake House at 2206 Canal Cove Road at Lake Waccamaw. The event begins around 8:30 a.m. Some will be meeting at the Church around 8:00 a.m. and carpool together to the Lake, or drive separately if you prefer. After passing out water bottles during the event, we plan to fellowship together and have a cookout afterwards. Call my cell number (910-770-0207) if you would like to assist or help set-up for the event. All men of the church are invited, and feel free to bring a guest. We plan to have fun and serve the runners, while offering an outreach/witness for WUMC.

- Brad Crowell, President WUMM

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

We hope you had a great summer and beginning to the school year! Our first Youth meeting will be Wednesday, September 6, at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. All students in grades 6-12 are invited to attend. Our Youth Group is open to anyone from the community. Remember to bring a friend and be ready to enjoy food and fellowship.

- Heather LaMora, Director

YOUNG ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

The Young Adult Sunday School Class will resume meeting on September 10. This fall we are going to do a Bible study based on the classic C.S. Lewis work Mere Christianity. Lewis, one of the intellectual giants of the twentieth century, started out as an atheist to disprove Christianity, but wound up being converted to the faith. This little gem, originally presented as a series of radio talks aired in Great Britain during the dark days of World War II, gives Lewis' defense of Christianity as a "thinking man's faith." Using reason and logic, Lewis gives a brilliant, yet easily understood, analysis of why the fundamental beliefs of Christians are the only ones that truly make sense. The study will be led by Wanda Diefes, and the class invites anyone interested (including those outside WUMC) to join us.

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." -- I Peter 3:15

- Wanda Diefes

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Whiteville United Methodist Women are eager to resume their meetings after a short summer break. We will resume meeting again on Monday, September 11, at 6:30 p.m. with a covered-dish meal in the Fellowship Hall. Please note that this is the second Monday in September so

as not to interfere with Labor Day. We anticipate an evening of delicious food and much fellowship.

If you have not been attending these meetings, we encourage you to start and become a part of a group of women whose purpose is "to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ, to develop a creative, supportive fellowship, and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church." At the forefront of this ministry are women, children, and youth.

Nan Leggett will have the devotion, and Janice Simms is the hostess.

- Dixie Batten, President WUMW

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Recently, I read an article "Time for Gratitude" by Bob Goff, and he says that "gratitude isn't just a bowed head at dinner thanking God for providing the food. It's expressing love to the people who grew it. It's not just a sentimental sigh when we salute a flag. It's remembering the sacrifice and commitment of others who gave up their lives so we could live ours."

On behalf of the Worship Committee, we have all been touched by the kindness and generosity of others. We deeply appreciate so many who place flowers on our altar throughout the year. Never do they go unnoticed! Also, a special "thank you" to Jenny Barnhill and Wendy Hood for their beautiful anthem on August 20th. From these smallest acts of love, I am sure we are all grateful!

During September, Rev. Paul Stallworth will continue to examine and preach through the sixteen (16) Articles of the Confession of Faith, which are doctrines of The United Methodist Church. This sermon series is most informative and offers us an opportunity to more fully understand Christian beliefs.

Preparations will begin soon for our annual Homecoming which will be on October 8, 2017. This year we are fortunate to have Reverend Edith ("Edie") Gleaves, District Superintendent of the Harbor District, as our guest speaker. Please begin now to spread the word so that past, present, and future members can plan to share this day with us. Printed invitations will be available in the Church Office later in September.

- Betty Gray, Chair

HELP WANTED

A retired Nurse is interested in a part-time position (2-3 days a week) assisting with elderly home care. I have thirty-plus years experience in Cardiology, Internal Medicine, and GI Diseases. I am very compassionate and caring, and will give my very best to your loved one in need. Contact Sue Clements at 1-863-529-8024.



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Mission Statement of Whiteville United Methodist Church

As people of the body of Christ, we will gather for and be strengthened by Word and Sacraments, participate in loving fellowship, grow in discipleship, and serve our community and the world in Christ's name.

The Service of Worship is broadcast on WTXY 1540 AM from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. Also it is available online at www.wtxy1540.com: **click on "Click to Listen Live" under "United Methodist Church of Whiteville"** at 10:00 a.m. to hear the complete audio of the service.

Mrs. Kathy Graham, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Layton Dowless, Custodian

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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Rev. Paul T. Stallworth, Pastor