

Sermon for June 15, 2008

Boscobel & Mt. Zion UMCs

Text: John 21:15-19

Title: "Love God"

Introduction: I bought my first car when I was 17 years old. It was a 1973 Renault 17 Gordini; a two-door sports car that was lemon yellow with a black interior. It was fast and fun to drive ... until it started on fire near Dry Ridge, Kentucky my sophomore year in college. My Dad gave me my next car; a 1976 Peugeot 504 diesel with a sun roof. Now I was cool. It was a white four-door with rust spots. The transmission went out at 210,000 miles the Tuesday before Sarah and I got married.

After we were married we bought a little Honda Civic hatchback and ran that until we were about to move to Texas (no a/c). We bought another Honda that we had until it was time to move up to a mini-van. Since then we are on our third mini-van for Sarah and the girls and our second Dodge car for me.

You know, I loved that 1973 Renault 17 Gordini. I would have loved to drive that forever. But, it doesn't work that way... As I get older I'm starting to figure out that 'stuff', no matter how much we like it doesn't last!

The only thing we really have in life is LIFE! I think much too often we humans think that we can control the things that go on around us. These past couple of weeks should be a good reminder that Someone much more powerful than you and me is in control. I'm sure some of you would like to have a little less water in your fields, yard, or basement. We like to think that we are in control, but we're not!

Again, the only thing we really have in life is LIFE and the 'secret' of life is that we have to live it from the inside out. The only thing we have any control of is our choices. What will we choose to do and be?

Well, John Wesley believed that if the Christian people who were part of the Methodist Movement in 18th Century England would live by Three Simple Rules, they could transform the world around them. Wesley understood that God desires for us to be 'Change Agents'. We are supposed to go into all the world and make disciples for Jesus Christ. In other words, we are the agents that God uses to change the lives of people to be more and more like Jesus.

John Wesley's Three Simple Rules were taken from Scripture and were meant to be used to live from the inside out for Christ and Change the World around them! I believe that it can happen today!

The first rule we talked about was: "Do No Harm". We are to make choices not to hurt the people around us by our words or actions This includes but is not limited to, gossip, slander, physical violence, boasting or verbal abuse.

The second of Wesley's rules to live by is to "Do Good". It's our choice whether we want to follow Jesus Christ or not, but if we do choose to follow Christ, we will be challenged to help people who cannot help themselves; spend time and resources to make the lives of the people around us better. We will be expected to search out the needs of the world and not wait to be asked to help.

The Third of Wesley's Three Simple Rules is kind of the glue that holds the other two together. Without the third rule being followed, the first two will be impossible to do on any consistent basis. The Third Rule is just as simple as the first two: "Love God".

Now, to "LOVE GOD" does not seem like it would be too hard, but Wesley again realized that people have a tendency to fall away from their commitments and then come up with excuses like, "But, I wasn't sure HOW to do the job." So, Wesley used Scripture again to come up with the "How".

If we study our Bibles, we find that people tend to do the same thing over and over again. We are creatures of habit and our habit is to think that we can handle things ourselves. Throughout the Old Testament there is an ongoing story of the Israelite people promising God that they would follow God. But, if things are going well, it doesn't take long for those humans to think that they can handle li without God ... "Thanks God! We'll take it from here!" Then they quit listening to God, their lives fall apart, they wonder why and when the crisis is great they cry out, "Help us God!" God helps, they promise to never turn their backs on God again and they fall into the same cycle.

Wesley challenged the early Methodists to remember the tools that God gave them in Scripture to make sure they did not fall from their faith. He gave a list of things we can do to help us stay in love with God and grow in our faith ... PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD, THE LORD'S SUPPER, PRIVATE AND FAMILY PRAYER, SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES, BIBLE STUDY, and FASTING. These tools are essential to use if we want to live a faithful life.

I hear that there is a line in the new PRINCE CASPIAN movie where one of the characters is talking to Aslan the Lion (portraying Jesus/God) after not seeing Him for awhile. The character says to Aslan something to the effect of, "Wow! You seem so much bigger now." To which Aslan says, "I'm not any bigger, you've just grown."

The more we grow in our faith, the more we understand how Great God is! John Wesley was trying to train the early Methodists ... and also us today ... to learn methods to help us realize how Great God is!

1. PUBLIC WORSHIP – We are to spend time with each other worshipping God. When we don't, we realize that something is missing. This has to do with, "If you are not embarrassed of me, I will not be embarrassed of you before my Father."
2. THE LORD'S SUPPER – We remember Jesus and His disciples meeting in the upper room every month. Jesus said, "When you do this, do so remembering me." We are not to forget how much God loved us first! John 3:16.
3. PRIVATE AND FAMILY PRAYER – This is our communication with God. Prayer is our time to get alone with God and talk about the things that are important to God ... remember this is a conversation, not a speech. Family Prayer is time to tighten bonds within family and model a relationship with God ... DADS!
4. SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES – Alone time with God in God's Word is vital for us to grow in our faith. Study of Scripture helps us to understand Who God is and who God wants us to be. This is why we are challenging each other to read the New Testament this year.

5. BIBLE STUDY – This is different, because it is not alone time. Studying has to do with getting together with other followers of Jesus and finding out what everyone is getting out of the Word of God.
6. FASTING – This is not for dietary purposes. Fasting has to do with denying oneself before God and putting God first ... even above the distraction of taking time to eat.

These are great ways to remind ourselves and show God that we love Him, but it's not enough. We are reminded in our Scripture for today that we are challenged to show God in other ways.

We are in John 21. Jesus has died and has been resurrected. The Disciples know that Jesus is resurrected (He's appeared to them twice according to John) and are now in their home area of Galilee. They are feeling so much at home, in fact, that Peter, James and John have taken four of the others out fishing on the Sea of Galilee ... their old job. Their fishing luck was kind of like mine this year, though. They were out all night on the sea and caught nothing. As dawn came, the disciples saw someone standing on the shore, but they couldn't tell who it was.

He asked, "Have you caught any fish?"

"No."

"Throw your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get plenty of fish!"

They did ... and they did! They couldn't pull the net in because it was so heavy with fish in it. John figured out that it was Jesus and Peter jumped in the water and swam to shore. When the disciples got in, Jesus already had a charcoal fire burning with fish on it for breakfast. There was bread too.

Peter went and got the net for more fish as Jesus had asked and they were served breakfast by their Lord.

That's where we pick up our reading for today...

READ JOHN 21:15-19 NOW AND PRAY!

- I. Peter and Jesus
 - A. What an incredible bitter-sweet moment for Peter. I'm sure he had a lot of memories flood back to him.
 - B. My understanding is that smell is our greatest sensor when it comes to reminding us of the past. Think about how that effected Peter that day:
 1. The smell of the Sea of Galilee.
 - a. Peter grew up there and was called away from there when Jesus said, "Follow Me and I will make you a fisher of people."
 - b. Probably reminded him of the storms on the sea and Jesus calming them.
 - c. Reminded him of Jesus inviting Peter to come walk on the water with Him.