

Wesley United Methodist Church  
June 7, 2020  
Is There a Word From the Lord?  
Scripture: Psalm 8  
2 Corinthians 13:11-13  
Matthew 28:16-20

I knew what I was planning to preach about this week. It was all planned out, but I just couldn't go there. I couldn't take the easy pre-planned route. At the same time, I know that when I record this on Thursday or Friday and you don't watch until Sunday or Monday, things may have changed again in a few short days or even a few hours or minutes.

As I sat down to write, my heart was breaking and I cried out "Is there a word from the Lord?" The news was filled with responses to the murder of George Floyd and with responses to those responses. Cities were experiencing peaceful protests and/or looting and violence. National Guard and police officers were greeting protestors with violence or with bended knees.

The Army's 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne had deployed 700 soldiers with fixed bayonets to Washington DC as of Wednesday afternoon. Secretary of Defense Esper in disagreement with the president opposed using military forces for law enforcement during the street protests. By the time you hear this, I don't know what the situation will be. And so I ask, "Is there a word from the Lord?"

The simple answer to that is, "Yes, There is always a word from the Lord?" This is a question that has been asked since the beginning of time. In times of worry and despair, in times of fear and disaster, we ask "Is there a Word from the Lord? What does God have to say to us today?"

The first answer to that question actually comes to us directly from Jesus in the assigned Gospel reading for this Sunday. I had planned to preach about the Trinity today, and, I guess I still am, because any time we talk about Jesus, any time we talk about God, any time we talk about the Holy Spirit, we are talking about the Trinity. But more about that later. But the Holy Spirit was also working and in the readings that were assigned for today, there is a word from the Lord; in fact several.

In today's Gospel, as Jesus was preparing to leave his disciples for the final time, we have the words that we know as the Great Commission. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Right there we hear the formula of the Trinity, but then we also hear the words that speak to us so profoundly today, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" or as the Common English Bible puts it, "Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

Friends, when the evening news or the news from the doctor seems overwhelming, Jesus speaks, "Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age." When all we want to do is sit and cry, or yell and scream, or curl up in a ball, or throw something really hard, we hear the word from our Lord, "Look, I myself will be with you every day." Whatever it is that is happening, we do not have to face it alone.

Earlier, we heard the words of Psalm 8. That was also assigned for today and when I was preparing the service, I intended to use this psalm as a way of talking about God the creator. In verse 4, we heard, "What are human beings that you think about them; what are human beings that you pay attention to them?" I selected a picture of two people silhouetted

against the moon (Insert picture #3 here) because it showed how small we are in the grand scheme of the world, and yet, God not only pays attention to us, but also, and especially cares about whatever is happening to us and around us. The Psalmist shared a word from the Lord, that God cares about and pays attention to human beings, even though we are so small in comparison to all of creation. As the psalmist proclaimed, “Yet, you (God) have made them (made us) a little lower than God, and crowned them (crowned us) with glory and honor.”

Then I looked to the reading from 2 Corinthians that we just heard. Paul was writing to a church that was in conflict. In the last words of his letter, we heard him plead for them to “Put things in order, respond to my encouragement, be in harmony with each other, and live in peace – and the God of love and peace will be with you.” Another word from the Lord for us through the apostle Paul as he dealt with conflict in the church.

Friends, I know that we don’t agree about everything. We are not all in agreement about many things, and probably especially true when it comes to politics. We probably do not all have the same viewpoint about the many things that have happened in this past week and continue to happen.

But I would like to believe that we can agree that what has been happening is not good. The events of this past or so certainly do not reflect humanity at its best. I imagine that all of us have had some really tough moments when we tried to figure this out, tried to think about how we might respond, and wondered what would happen next.

All of this has been happening while we are slowly looking at how to re-enter other parts of our lives; parts of our lives that have been interrupted and shut-down as we have tried to respond to COVID-19.

Some of us are eager to be out and about. Some of us are afraid to be out and about. Some of us aren't really sure what we are thinking. Some think about what is best for themselves, others think about what is best for others. I assume that all of us realize that we cannot see into the future and we don't know what will happen with this pandemic.

We cry out, "Is there a word from the Lord?" And we hear, "Look. I am with you every day." Again, we hear, "What are human beings that you care about them, what are human beings that you pay attention to them?" We hear "be in harmony with each other, live in peace." We hear words from the Lord for people a long time ago and for us today.

There is one thing that I want to say about the Trinity that is also an important word from the Lord for us. The Trinity is about relationship, it is about God the Father, the creator, and Jesus the son, the savior, the redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, the counselor, the guide. It is about all three being in relationship with each other so much so that they are one God; and they are also in relationship with us today.

Remember that Jesus was a Jewish man speaking primarily to Jewish people; people who were counter cultural in insisting that there was only one God. Yet, by the time Paul was writing to the church in Corinth – probably a little more than 20 years after Jesus' death, he ended his letter with these words that had likely become common by that time, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."

The early church had come to understand and experience God in many ways that included Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The early church recognized an intimate relationship among them, a relationship that extended to them and to us.

It is this relationship that is, for me, another important word from the Lord for us today. God is about community and relationships. God's communal character is about being one, about being in unity, even as we are individuals and separate from each other.

Maxie Dunham wrote a book called "Jesus' Claims – Our Promises". At the beginning of that book he wrote these words, "It is absurd to apologize for mystery. Lodge this thought solidly in your mind. ...

"There are some truths we do not appropriate simply by appealing to reason. Wonder and awe are not rational categories. Love cannot be dissected. Hope often defies what seems rational, and faith takes us beyond superficial reasonableness."<sup>i</sup>

He wasn't writing about the Trinity at that point, but whenever I think about the Trinity, I think about those words. I can't explain the Trinity to you. I can try but anything I say will be inadequate. Theologians have been trying to explain it for 2000 years.

Mystery works for me. I don't understand why the creator made a universe that is so majestic and yet still cares about us humans – not only as a group, but also as individuals. But I know that it is true. I don't know why the world couldn't listen to Jesus and change its ways, but I know that because we didn't, Jesus was killed and then rose again and is with us every day. I don't know how or why the Holy Spirit speaks to me and to each of us, but I know that if I pay attention, the Holy Spirit does get my attention and guides me in the path that God is calling me to go.

Today there is a word from the Lord. It is a word of comfort. It is a word of hope. It is a word of love. It is a word of relationship and community. It is a word calling us to be all that God knows that we can be.

It is a word calling us to respond to God's love with love for all of God's creation. Over the next three weeks, we'll be exploring this a little more as we look at three simple rules for living as God calls us to – simply they are “Do no harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.”

As we live our lives each day, I pray that we will keep our eyes, ears, and hearts open so that we may hear a word from the Lord to guide us in the days ahead.

Let us pray.

Our Loving God, you love each of us even though we don't always understand why. You sent your Son Jesus to live among us. You have given the Holy Spirit to us so that we may continue to be guided to live in ways that bring glory to you. In the most difficult times, we can be sure that there is always a word from you. Help us to pay attention. Help us to look with your eyes. Help us to listen with your ears. Help us to love with your heart and help us to be your hands and feet bringing a word of love to your hurting world.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Dunham, Maxie. Jesus' Claims – Our Promises, p.16 The Upper Room, Nashville, TN c. 1985