

February 2, 2020

Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship

Galatians 5:14-15; Psalm 105:4

All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: *Love your neighbor as yourself.*

**But if you bite and devour each other, be careful that you don't get eaten up by each other!
Pursue the Lord and his strength; seek his face always!**

Prayer of Invocation

O God, we, your becoming people, come before you this day, trusting that you will protect, strengthen and instruct us. Help us, that we may grow in wisdom, in love and in knowledge of divine truth. And may our maturing lives give honor to you. Amen.

The Word

Acts 10:38-39a; Colossians 2:6-7; 3:12-14; 3 John 1:11

You know about Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and endowed with power. **Jesus traveled around doing good and healing everyone oppressed by the devil because God was with him. We are witnesses of everything he did.**

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

So live in Christ Jesus the Lord in the same way as you received him. Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught.

Don't imitate what is bad but what is good. Whoever practices what is good belongs to God. Whoever practices what is bad has not seen God.

Living the Word

As many of you may know, I love books. In the early 1990s I owned a used bookstore on Hayward Main Street for 5 years. Also during that time I began to sell collectible books at an Antique Store in town. In 1997 I began selling books on eBay, which I continued for 20 years until I moved back to Hayward.

If you have been in my church office you would see about half of my current collection, the other half is shelved at home. Most of my Wesley library is here at church, 25+ books, about half of them are by John Wesley and the other half of them are about him. They include his sermons and journals. The journals being the more interesting and his sermons, in my humble opinion... very 1700s and a bit stodgy.

I thought I would share a few of his journal passages: Rev. John Wesley's Journal: (Go to book) Saturday, March 31, 1739. In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to the strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (til very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done In the church.

April 1. [the next evening] I began expounding our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, (one pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching, though I suppose there were churches at that time also.) to a little society which was accustomed to meet once or twice a week in Nicholas-Street.

Mon. April 2. At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed to the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about 3000 people.

Mon. April 23. On a repeated invitation, I went to Pensford , about 5 miles from Bristol. I sent to the minister, to ask leave to preach in the church; but having waited some time and received no answer, I called on many of the people who were gathered together in an open place, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." At 4 in the afternoon there were about 3000, in a convenient place near Bristol; to who I declared "the hour is coming.

I preached at Bath to about 1000 on Tuesday morning and at 4 in the afternoon to the poor colliers, at a place called 2-mile-Hill In the evening at Baldwin Street, a young man, after a sharp agony, both of body and mind, found his soul filled with peace, knowing in whom he had believed.

Wed. 25. To above 2000 at Baptist Mills I explained that glorious scripture "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Thursday, October 20, **1743**. Speaking in public wasn't all roses. Some had a hard time with his new ideas. He had been preaching that anyone and everyone could be saved, which wasn't received at all well by some. Mobs would track him down and beat him or try to drag him the Magistrate of justice. This usually happened at night.

On this night they took him to their Justice, who had gone to bed and wouldn't see them, so they took him to the next justice. Who also denied them. The finally decided to leave him and go home when another mob came at all of them and they scattered, leaving Wesley for the new mob. Here is what his journal says at this point: 'To attempt speaking was vain, for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea.

So they dragged me along till we came to the town; where seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in. But a man catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other.

I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made toward it and would have gone in; but the gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying, they would pull the house down to the ground. However, I stood at the door and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out, ' No! No! Knock is brains out; down with him; kill him at once.'

Others said "Nay, but we will hear him speak first." I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed? And continued speaking for about a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed: Then the floods began to lift up their voice again; many crying out Bring him away! Bring him away! In the mean time my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud into prayer. And now the man who just before headed the mob, turned, and said," Sir, I will spend my life for you: Follow me , and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head."

The story goes on with several backing up the mob leader and the shop keeper scolding them for their harsh treatment of Wesley. He was safely escorted back to where he was staying.

And ended this story with these words: 'having lost only one flat of my waist coat, and a little skin from one of my hands...I never saw such a chain of providences before; so many convincing proofs, that the hand of God is on every person and thing.'

Also, in my library section of books about the Wesleys, you would find one by Bishop Reuben Job, another great author, teacher, witness and leader of the church. He died five years ago, yet he also left us with a legacy of great books and thoughts for us to use and learn from.

I often use one of this books on Prayer when I need a devotional for myself or for a meeting: A Guide to Prayer, A Guide to Prayer for All Who Walk with God, A Guide To Prayer for All Who Seek God, A Guide to Prayer for all God's People or When You Pray.

In his book Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living he wrote: "There are three simple rules that have the power to change the world. While they are ancient, they have seldom been fully put to the test. But when they were practiced, the world of things, as they were shaken was shaken until a new formation, a new world was formed. The Wesleyan movement is a prime example of this new creation that is formed when these three simple rules are adopted as a way of living.

This way of living came to John Wesley in a time much like our own. He took this blueprint, fleshed it out, taught it, and practiced it. And now it has been passed on to us. Now it is up to us to see if we will take it, teach it, and practice it until it becomes our natural way of living – one that will mark our life together and our lives as individuals."

Three Simple Rules: Jesus gave us one rule: To Love One Another, and he spent his life showing us how to do that. John Wesley, who loved Jesus, but also loved order, lists and having a 'method,' expanded that one rule into three simple rules: Do no harm. 2. Do good. And 3. Stay in love with God.

We should take a quick look at each: **Do no harm.** Most of us don't ever intend on doing harm, but sometimes we seem to harm others without even trying. Doing no harm means staying attentive to how our words or actions affect others (and ourselves). Or it means staying attentive to how our lack of words or actions affect others. This takes time, considering what we say and do - before we do it.

I find it interesting that the 'do no harm' comes before 'do good.' We usually like the positive stuff first. Yet I know that it is easier to do good if we get the harmful stuff put behind us first...Often we don't do well at looking at the dark side of ourselves. We don't want to know when we have harmed others, especially if we don't mean to.

I also know that without getting to know another, we offend because we perceive that they are like us. In order to do no harm, we have to be sensitive to where others are coming from, not just who we want them to be. Wesley actually said avoid evil. Meaning to keep yourself out of the things in life that become harmful to yourself and to others. Keep your path clear of temptations, choose your friends wisely, and know your own weaknesses.

Do good. Wesley also wrote: "Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can."

John really thought about doing good, but he experienced it in his life as he visited the poor in prison, the sick at the infirmary, fed and clothed the widows and orphans and taught and began schools and colleges to education the masses. Also doing good by just be kind and generous to others.

You may have heard of a person who will buy a meal for the next customer in line, to do good. Last week there was a video report of a restaurant in Texas that got ahead of itself. People when they found their meal paid for by another began paying for the next two, who paid it forward and on and on. The owner now has a wall of post-it notes for people to just pick up and come in for a free meal already paid for by someone before them.

One of the favorite activities of the youth program when I was at a former church, is what they call R.A.K.s – Random Acts of Kindness. Several times a year they will spend an evening just doing good to others in small ways. Can you imagine if you are feeling down at Christmas and someone stops you on the street to give you a candy cane just because? They especially would seek out the police officers or the clerk in the gas stations. Two are blessed in the action – the giver and the receiver.

Stay in love with God. Wesley actually said, 'attend to the ordinances of God'. But Bishop Job put it in common English for us." Staying in love with God is taking a hold of the faith and trust that you have and staying connected enough to God that you never forget the words, like Jesus Loves Me, that made you realized that you had a relationship with God in the first place.

Staying in love with God, is doing and being the things that connect you with God and with others. The church tried to help you do that by providing ways for you to connect through your prayers, your presence with God and others, your gifts, your service and your witness. I hope that sounded familiar to you...Bishop Job wrote of these words: "There are three simple rules that have the power to change the world."

Our Bishop, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung wrote this for us: "We claim that our mission in this world is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. And Bishop Job's words, life, and witness offer us a recipe for transforming the world. It is really a very simple recipe with just a few ingredients: respect, resources, and reverence. Treat others with respect, share our resources with others, and reverence God with our lives. A simple recipe, but what a challenge to live out and practice fully and faithfully!"
Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God. "

At last Saturday's District Gathering one of the speakers, Rev. Marsha Postlethwaite, who is the pastor at The Recovery Church in St Paul shared a conversation she overheard at her church. When someone asked "What is God's Will?" Another responded, "Just do the next right thing..."

