



Glendive/Wibaux United Methodist Church
August 11, 2019

Isaiah 1:1-1, 10-20, Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 Luke 12:32-40

Sermon Title: Just Discipleship

It's ironic, or the Holy Spirit, that the bulletin cover for this week, which I put together two weeks ago, has this graphic: The Flip Side of Justice. What's the front side of justice? That's what we've heard from our three scriptures this morning. It doesn't always happen, but all three speak to justice.

Let us pray. Almighty Creator, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from who no secrets hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that they may be open to meditations and words I pray are acceptable to you. Amen.

What is the flip side of justice in Just Discipleship, my theme this morning? Now, Just Discipleship has several inferences. Let's get on the same page with the words and how I'll use them.

Just meaning 'only' discipleship, as in Larry's granddaughters call me Just Carol, meaning 'only' Carol not gramma or gramma Carol. So, it's not that definition of 'just,' which is rather limiting for discipleship.

What then, is discipleship? According to our United Methodist glossary, discipleship is, "The active living of the individual Christian in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ, that is, being as effective a disciple of Christ as possible. Discipleship involves a ministry of outreaching love and witness to others concerning Christ and God's grace. Discipleship also calls the Christian to ministries of servanthood and service to the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment." (<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/glossary-discipleship> August 6, 2019) I'll repeat that. REPEAT

The Mountain Sky Conference has a working definition of disciple. "A disciple is someone whose life is being transformed by the love of God the Creator; through the power of the Holy Spirit, and by following the way of Jesus Christ."

Just discipleship, when *just* means fair and impartial and unbiased, even-handed, works in this morning's context. Just discipleship is social holiness, a basic Methodist doctrine.

Well, what does **that** mean? Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, United Methodist Board of Church and Society, wrote that, "Social holiness is unique to Methodism. United Methodists

have a long commitment to social holiness. It is in our DNA. It is part of who we are. Wesley has said, 'There is no religion that is not social, no holiness that is not social.' Wesley goes on to say that without social holiness, we cannot exist. It is because of God's love for us and Christ's love that we reach out into the world to walk with others and to accompany them in their journeys. Because social holiness is unique to us, it means that we must be in this together. We live our lives together and we live our lives with all of God's creation. We walk with one another. We walk with those who are poor those who are vulnerable, those who live on the margins of life. It is a gift that God has given us, and we have claimed as Methodists who are committed to social holiness; that we would be with one another in this journey as we live our lives together." (www.umc.org/who-we-are/united-methodist-beliefs-social-holiness, August 6, 2019)

Back to my opening statement. How does this relate to the bulletin cover, The Flip Side of Justice? In Methodism, one of our calls through acts of social holiness, is to seek justice. For those of you baptized as Methodist or who have affirmed your baptisms here, that means you have accepted the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. (UMC Hymnal, page 40)

Isaiah shouting, "Hear the words of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!" Yowza! Isaiah was severely scolding God's people for sacrificing rams and offering useless burnt offerings, when at the same time, they didn't do as they knew they ought. Those things are useless, just public shows of immature faith.

God does want us in worship and to worship Him. But not with these false idolatrous things like burnt offerings. He expects absolute faith without compromise to human forces. And the flip side of justice? He expects joy. Joy which always come in the morn. And with joy, we are to work for justice too. Which sometimes isn't joyful in actions but should be in worship. Isaiah 1:17, says that joy will come when we cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed. Joy in being part of God's kingdom. Joy at the freedom and grace we have been given. And we are to bring to others. When we worship let's be joyful. When we are acting for justice, let's be joyful.

What about Hebrews? Hebrews 1:1 is one of my favorite passages. It explains the mystery of faith: the ability to believe in a divine Jesus, who was also human. It explains the Holy Spirt as guide and advocate. It explains why we must do justice, even when we may not always see the way forward ourselves. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." I must act because my faith, which I don't always understand, tells me to.

The stories in scripture tell us of all those folks who have gone before who lived their lives faithfully. Abraham, who followed well into his longest years. Noah, who pulled up stakes and went out on a limb in faith. In just these two there was joy in the morn. But we have our own stories today and we are making more of them every day. Times of challenge overcome by sheer faith. Grief and loss that win against hopelessness and despair, through faith.

It is by God's grace, through faith, that we receive salvation. Faith in God, though, is what keeps us waking up every day, keeps us challenging our personal comfort zones to seek justice for others. And gives us comfort and peace when the challenge is overcome. Proverbs 1:33. "Those who listen to me will be secure and will live without dread of disaster." Those who listen to me, God, are the faithful. Not promising there won't be disaster, but we'll weather

it; especially if we weather it with others. That is the faith of our fathers. And when we wake up every day, answering the call to work against injustice and evil in all its forms, there will be joy in the morn.

Finally, our Luke passage reminds us that we must be ready for action. Be dressed for action and have your lights lit (Luke 12:35). Being prepared for God is parallel to what Isaiah demands in living an obedient life without falsities and then not being prepared to carry out God's call.

We will have joy in the morn when we practice justice, when we live as true disciples of Christ and when we are ready to do both. These are challenging times we live. But truthfully, someone or some peoples are always living in challenging times somewhere in the world. And we are called to address their challenges and our own through acts of social holiness, just discipleship and with joy. These are tough.

Pastor Bill Foster said, "The words of the prophets are sometimes flavored by food cooked over fires fueled by dung. Prophets are compelled to speak God's word using the crap we expel as fuel for the fire. Such words may not smell or taste good to either the prophet or the hearer, but they are necessary for our survival and spiritual well-being."

Folks, people around the world still use dried manure, dung, for cooking and heating their homes. It will always be there. So, let's us use our words and actions, even the ones that don't sound or smell so pleasant, to help others find justice, as we disciple others in Christ and find joy every morning in the doing of it.

Amen and Selah

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