



Glendive and Wibaux United Methodist Churches
June 14, 2020

Welcome to worship with Glendive and Wibaux United Methodist Churches. I am Pastor Carol Rhan and am joined by Ms. Kathleen Linder for music and vocals.

Well, we've made it through another week. There have been joys and some sadnesses. Montana's testing for COVID-19 continues to show a rise in infections and we all need to be mindful of what we can do to protect others. And this means physical distancing and wearing face covering when you can't. I kept a card someone sent me which said, "Nevertheless she persisted." This is what we're doing persisting and overcoming but never at the expense of someone's else,

This week I spoke with someone I noticed had joined our life stream last Sunday. They said, yes, they had but after a few minutes it was boring, so they logged off. I laughed out loud with the honesty and because it's been a challenge for me being confined to this format for right now. We are fortunate to have live music which other pastors have not. So that is a blessing I revel in.

I found some other honest, and not so honest, statements by church folks that may just become your new church experience later.

1. Hey! It's my turn to sit in the front pew.
2. I was so enthralled; I never noticed your sermon went over 25 minutes.
3. Personally, I find witnessing more enjoyable than golf.
4. I've decided to give our church the \$500 a month that I've been sending to the televangelist.
5. I volunteer to be the permanent teacher for the Junior High School class.
6. Forget the denominational minimum salary, let's pay our pastor so she can live like we do.
7. I love it when we sing hymns I've never heard before.
8. Since we're all here, let's start the service early.
9. Pastor, we'd like to send you the preaching conference in the Bahamas.
10. Nothing inspires me and strengthens my commitment like our annual stewardship campaign.

Do you remember from last week's message that the number 10 indicates balance and calm? And there were 10 of these.

Prayer of Illumination

Almighty God, in you are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Open our eyes that we may see the wonders of your Word; and give us grace that we may clearly understand and freely choose the way of your wisdom; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

<http://www.caldwellpresby.org/docs/resources/Prayers%20for%20Illumination.pdf> 11/6/2020

Genesis 18:1-15

God appeared to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent. It was the hottest part of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing. He ran from his tent to greet them and bowed before them.

3-5 He said, “Master, if it please you, stop for a while with your servant. I’ll get some water so you can wash your feet. Rest under this tree. I’ll get some food to refresh you on your way, since your travels have brought you across my path.”

They said, “Certainly. Go ahead.”

6 Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. He said, “Hurry. Get three cups of our best flour; knead it and make bread.”

7-8 Then Abraham ran to the cattle pen and picked out a nice plump calf and gave it to the servant who lost no time getting it ready. Then he got curds and milk, brought them with the calf that had been roasted, set the meal before the men, and stood there under the tree while they ate.

9 The men said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?”

He said, “In the tent.”

10 One of them said, “I’m coming back about this time next year. When I arrive, your wife Sarah will have a son.” Sarah was listening at the tent opening, just behind the man.

11-12 Abraham and Sarah were old by this time, very old. Sarah was far past the age for having babies. Sarah laughed within herself, “An old woman like me? Get pregnant? With this old man of a husband?”

13-14 God said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh saying, ‘Me? Have a baby? An old woman like me?’ Is anything too hard for God? I’ll be back about this time next year and Sarah will have a baby.”

15 Sarah lied. She said, “I didn’t laugh,” because she was afraid.

But he said, “Yes you did; you laughed.”

Romans 5:1-8 Developing Patience

By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us—set us right with him, make us fit for him—we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus. And that’s not all: We throw open our

doors to God and discover at the same moment that he has already thrown open his door to us. We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand—out in the wide-open spaces of God’s grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.

3-5 There’s more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we’re never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can’t round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!

6-8 Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn’t, and doesn’t, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn’t been so weak, we wouldn’t have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.

Matthew 9:35-10:8

Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. “What a huge harvest!” he said to his disciples. “How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!”

The Twelve Harvest Hands

10 1-4 The prayer was no sooner prayed than it was answered. Jesus called twelve of his followers and sent them into the ripe fields. He gave them power to kick out the evil spirits and to tenderly care for the bruised and hurt lives. This is the list of the twelve he sent:

Simon (they called him Peter, or “Rock”),

Andrew, his brother,

James, Zebedee’s son,

John, his brother,

Philip,

Bartholomew,

Thomas,

Matthew, the tax man,

James, son of Alphaeus,

Thaddaeus,

Simon, the Canaanite,

Judas Iscariot (who later turned on him).

5-8 Jesus sent his twelve harvest hands out with this charge:

“Don’t begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don’t try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.

These are the inspired words of God for the people of God and the people say, Thanks be to God.

The Doxology Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Message

How do you count? Four months ago, the question in many churches was how do we count worshippers who aren’t sitting in pews? How do we count engaged, views or reached visitors to our streaming services? And if we can’t count in the ‘normal’ way, how will justify ourselves. We like to count things in church! Money, members, worshippers, attendees, Sunday school classes, people serving in ministries, did I say money, baptized persons, mission teams, youths and young adults. I have known some who will count the church kitchen towels.

When I read the question, “how do you count,” on the UMC Discipleship Ministries website this week, the commentator’s focus was our Matthew text, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few,” and “He saw the crowds.” What constituted a crowd on that day? Was five folks gathered like we do on Wednesdays for social holiness a crowd? Was a crowd the size of the largest United Methodist congregation in the US, The Church of the Resurrection in Kansas, led by Adam Hamilton, that boasts average pre-COVID worship at all its campuses of 13,000 persons?

Then I thought of second way to look at the question, how do you count. How do I count in the kingdom? What difference do you, do I, make as a laborer in the fields when the harvest is sooo rich and laborers are few? I know I count in God’s eyes as a blessed child. But how do I, through my witness, my work, my resources, my testimony, my gifts and talents, count in making disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world? Do I make a difference?

And then a third interpretation of the question, how do you count, came to me. This has to do with how we count each other. How do we count siblings who aren’t related by blood, other than the blood of Jesus Christ, but siblings as all God’s children are? And then I had to seek and answer to something I’d read recently. How did they count the African slaves over two hundred years ago when the Constitution of this country was written by white men and slave holders? *The Constitution counted a slave as three-fifths of a person for purposes of taxation and representation in Congress (thus increasing the number of representatives from slave states.* www.britannica.com/topic/African-American/Slavery-in-the-United-States 6/11/2020

We know that this systemic injustice continues to count against African Americans today. How we count others matters. Our Matthew text reminds us that troubles can raise passionate patience in us. If we

aren't counting ourselves among the laborers in the abundant field of countering injustice and cruelty, in all their manifestations, then those who suffer bear the responsibility for patience during troubles all on their own. How long must they wait? Can they count on you? Can you be counted on?

How do you count? How do we count on each other to be one another's keepers? When Jesus sent the twelve, count 'em, 12, to harvest the field, he sent them not to the easy places but the hard places. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. And finally, you have been treated generously, so live generously.

Can churches finally stop counting people in the pews and choir lofts and instead count the confused, sick and untouchables and go and seek them? Count them and make them count, for God's sake. Will you be counted on to do this? Can God count on you to go to your neighbors and families and friends and speak out against social injustice, to heal the broken hearted and those who feel unloved. Again, can He count on you? How do you count?

Amen and Selah

Please join me in the Lord's prayer

Our father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn and Blessing