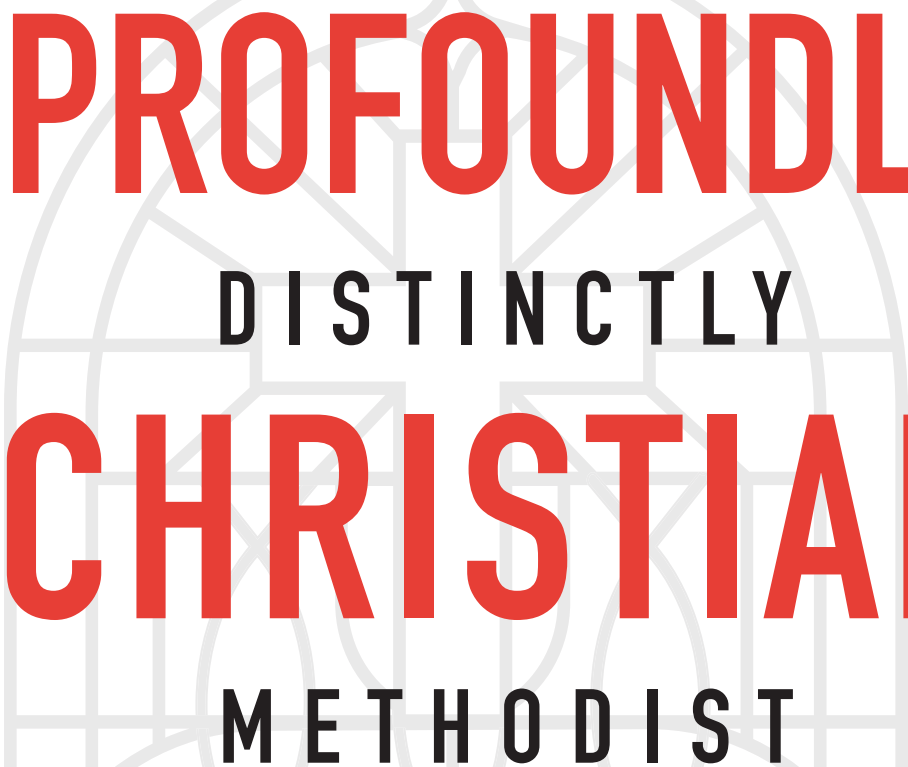


A CHURCH-WIDE STUDY IN THE
ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH



PROFOUNDLY
DISTINCTLY
CHRISTIAN
METHODIST

SERMON OUTLINES

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How to Use This Resource

The outlines and resources provided in this guide are intended to serve as an inspiration for the pastor who wants to lead their whole congregation through the catechism. The outlines complement the ten-week church-wide study. They highlight and explore topics in a way that brings additional content to the study rather than simply repeating it. You are encouraged to use them in the way you find most helpful. While you are welcome to preach through them as they are written, you may find it more effective to use these guides as inspiration. As you internalize the teaching, make it your own! Insert your own analogies that will best connect with your local congregation. The catechism itself provides ample material for preparing a sermon each week. As you read the text of each scripture listed under each question, you will find more material than you could possibly include in any given Sunday service!

Week 1

God and Creation

Scripture

DEUTERONOMY 6:4–5 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

Introduction

In Luke 5, the disciples had been working hard all night but had not caught a single fish. I mean, there wasn't even a single sardine on board! Jesus instructed them to “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (v. 4). When they obeyed, the disciples' nets filled until they began to break. In short order it appeared as if they had more fish in the boat than was left in the sea.

I've always been captivated by Jesus's call to put the nets into “deep water” for a catch. We are left to assume that the disciples had been goofing off in the relative safety of the shallows. Their empty nets testify to what that will get you! If we want to experience a God-sized harvest, we have to go deeper. Deeper into the person and nature of God. Deeper into the love and commands of Christ. Deeper into relationship with the Holy Spirit. Attempting to lower our nets into the deep waters of God the Father's nature

and personhood seems all at once laudable and ludicrous. Yet here we go. There is only one way that we are ever going to be full to overflowing with the knowledge, understanding, and joy of the Lord and that's to go on and dive into the deep waters. Ready?

Teaching Points

1. There is one true God who is holy, alive, and engaged.

But the LORD is the true God;

he is the living God, the eternal King.

When he is angry, the earth trembles;

the nations cannot endure his wrath.

“Tell them this: ‘These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.’”

But God made the earth by his power;

he founded the world by his wisdom

and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar;

he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth.

He sends lightning with the rain

and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

Everyone is senseless and without knowledge;

every goldsmith is shamed by his idols.

The images he makes are a fraud;

they have no breath in them.

They are worthless, the objects of mockery;

when their judgment comes, they will perish.

He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these,

for he is the Maker of all things,

including Israel, the people of his inheritance—

the LORD Almighty is his name. (Jer. 10:10–16)

- God is not distant, nor is he removed from creation.
- God did not start the earth and then retreat from it. He chose to inhabit the world he created!
- God is jealous. He abides no other gods, is not like any other god, and will not be called by another's name.

2. God is triune. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Exalted to the right hand of God, [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. (Acts 2:33)

- The Trinity is of one substance. God is eternally one in essence and power. All three persons are fully divine, but they are not three separate deities.
- Many secretly conceive of God the Father as CEO, God the Son as COO, and God the Holy Spirit as the social director. This simply is not true.
- The relationship between the persons of the Godhead serves as a model for perfect love and relationship.

3. God is sovereign and gracious.

When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. (Josh. 2:11)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

- God is absolutely in charge—of everything!
- God has an unchanging nature. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.
- God is not dependent on anything, but everything depends on him.
- What we believe about God doesn't change him. What he believes about us changes everything!

Why It Matters

1. You are not alone! Because God is relational, alive, and engaged in the world, we are never alone. No matter what we face, where we go, or what we encounter, we are never alone. God is with us. He chooses to be with you!
2. Choose to live as creatures. Do not try to take the place of the Creator. God is sovereign and in charge of everything. You should submit yourself to that reality. It's a lot less pressure than trying to rule your own life and the lives of everyone around you. If you let God be God, you will experience the best and most that life has to offer.

Additional Worship Resources

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 those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

Psalms

8, 68

*Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer's Praise*¹

25 “Father in Whom We Live”

23 “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!”

31 “How Great Is Our God”

31 “The Splendor of a King”

1. All hymn suggestions are taken from Seedbed's *Our Great Redeemer's Praise* (2022), <https://my.seedbed.com/product/our-great-redeemers-praise-a-hymnal-for-all-gods-people/>.

Week 2

Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Scripture

HEBREWS 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Introduction

If I were to make up a story from my imagination that I really wanted you to believe, it would not start with: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Matt. 1:23). I'm not going to explain the birds and bees this morning, but I think we can all agree that the virginal conception of Christ can sound a little crazy. Perhaps that is fitting considering where the story heads next: The virgin's son lives a sinless life, heals the sick, raises the dead, commands the wind and waves, and shows extraordinary generosity to the least likely of recipients. In gratitude for his life's work, he is nailed to a cross and laid unceremoniously in a borrowed grave; one which apparently doesn't suit him because three days later he makes a hasty exit from the tomb. That story is so ridiculous that the listener is left with only a couple of choices. Either the

story was made up by truly crazy men, or as extraordinary as it may seem, it is one-hundred-percent true. The latter is where I land.

Teaching Points

1. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:30–35)

- Jesus is in every way fully human.
- Having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus is without original sin. He is the second Adam. He has the exact same agency and choice as the first Adam.
- Jesus’s human nature means that he experiences all that we experience, including hunger, loneliness, and temptation. However, unlike us, he does not succumb to fleshly desires. He is not just born without sin. He also leads a sinless life.

2. Jesus is God from God, Light from Light, the incarnate deity.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. . . .

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his

own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1–4, 9–14)

- Jesus is eternal, divine, and sovereign.
- Jesus chooses for the sake of humankind to set aside his glory.
- The eternal, divine, sovereign God approaches humanity humbly and is unrecognized.

3. *Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.*

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:33–34a)

- Jesus died to atone for sins. He died to give his life as a ransom for ours and to pay the penalty for our sin.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” (Luke 24:5b–6a)

- Jesus not only pays the penalty from sin, but he also overcomes the consequence of our sin—namely, death—when he is raised from the dead. He literally defeats death itself!

“‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:11)

- Jesus is coming again to usher in the new Eden. He will restore creation and our place in it. We must be prepared for his return!

Why It Matters

1. Romans 10:9 says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” That is good news!
2. For those who are saved, we have a new life to live. In Luke 9:25–26 Jesus asks, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” Once saved, you are called to be unapologetically Christian. That does not mean that we are rude, arrogant, or judgmental. It does mean that we will live with conviction. Living as an unapologetic Christian means knowing you are the worst of sinners who has been saved by grace. It means you don’t have to be stuck in sin anymore.

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”²

Psalms

2, 23

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer’s Praise

103 “Cornerstone”

119 “I Heard an Old, Old Story”

119 “Victory in Jesus”

134 “There’s Something About That Name”

2. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (USCC, 2000), § 2616.

Week 3

God, the Holy Spirit

Scripture

ACTS 1:4–8 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Then they gathered around and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Introduction

Once at a car show, I saw the most beautiful car I had ever seen. It was striking in every way. Even when parked, it looked like it was tearing down the pavement, leaving a wake of jealous drivers in its path. I approached the owner and asked if I could take a look under the hood. He popped it open and I was looking into a perfectly empty engine compartment. It turned out that the car came on a trailer and would leave in the same way. I can't help wondering how

many believers—and consequently churches—are just like that car. The truth is: If you don't have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside you, it doesn't matter how put together your outside might be, you aren't going anywhere.

Teaching Points

1. *The Holy Spirit is a person.*

- The Holy Spirit is a living agent who interacts with believers.

Acts 15:28: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements:”

- The Holy Spirit speaks.

Acts 1:16: “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.”

- The Holy Spirit leads.

Romans 8:13–14: “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”

- The Holy Spirit grieves.

Ephesians 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

2. *The Holy Spirit gives new birth.*

Ezekiel 36:26–27: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

- The Holy Spirit does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. God moves us to repentance and obedience.

John 3:5–7: “Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”

- The Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ, our Lord.

3. *The Holy Spirit brings gifts.*

- He gives gifts to individual believers.

1 Corinthians 12:7–11: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

- He gives gifts for building the body—the church.

1 Peter 4:10–11: “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

Why It Matters

1. If you are living without the Holy Spirit in your heart, you are going to be working too hard, and you will risk burning out of the Christian faith. God gifts his Holy Spirit to give us life and to empower us for ministry.
2. Like all relationships, your relationship with the Holy Spirit isn't intended to be a one-time meeting. It should be an ongoing love affair. After all, according to Saint Paul, the greatest gift the Holy Spirit gives is the gift of love (1 Cor. 13).
3. Acts 1 calls the Holy Spirit a "gift." He is given continuously so that we might be continually filled to overflowing: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Notice that this continual filling is to fulfill three purposes: power, praise, and persuasion.
4. End this sermon with an invitation to receive a first or fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Offer anointing with oil for your congregation. Take time to pray individually with everyone that comes that the Spirit would fall on each one. Be sensitive to his instructions for your prayers and follow his lead!

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

"Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."³

Psalms

51, 143

3. A Book of Prayers © 1982, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc.

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer's Praise

299 "Spirit of the Living God"

306 "Surely the Presence of the Lord"

313 "I Want a Principle Within"

361 "Sweet, Sweet Spirit"

Week 4

The Church

Scripture

ROMANS 12:4–5 “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

Introduction

There was a middle-aged preacher who was unpacking the meaning of Jesus’s description of the church as salt and light found in Matthew 5. As he taught, he began to extoll the congregation to stay salty and lit for Christ. As the younger generation began to giggle and squirm, he tried even harder to make his point. “I’m serious! Christ is calling on our church to be salty and lit for him!” Later the children’s director was kind enough to let him know that being “salty” means rough or wild living and being “lit” means being stoned. Later the staff presented him with a keychain that read “Matthew 5: Salty and lit.”

Teaching Points

1. *The church is alive.*

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . .

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:4–5, 9–10)

- The church is an organism, not an organization.
- You don’t show mercy to a building or corporate structure, you show it to people!
- The living body of Christ is always growing or shrinking, being healthy or unhealthy, celebrating or grieving, etc.

2. *There is no church of one.*

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them

to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”
(1 Cor. 12:12–27)

- There is no such thing as a solitary Christian. We are called into a relationship not only with Christ but with those who have been baptized in his name. When we profess Christ, we enter relationship with the Godhead and with all those who have placed their faith in Jesus.
- The church is at its best when all members of the body are present.
- No one has all the gifts, but everyone needs all the gifts at some point. That requires being connected to the church!

3. *The church is distinctive.*

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:13–16)

- The church cannot be like any other group of people, club, or organization.

- The church should not fit into a nonprofit category at the chamber of commerce. It must be distinct. It must operate and function so differently that it can only be identified as the body of Jesus Christ.
- The church must stay salty. Salt preserves. Salt gives flavor. Salt also has a way of making you want more salt.
- The church must stay lit. Light transforms darkness. Light needs fuel (the Holy Spirit!).

4. The church has a mission.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18–20)

- The church has a mission that was given to her by Jesus.
- There is no higher priority than the one the body receives from her head!

Why It Matters

1. God has chosen the church to be the instrument of his mercy, the bearer of his grace, and the communicator of his salvation. This task requires the body to stay healthy, to exercise the gifts of the Spirit regularly, and to actively promote spiritual, emotional, and physical growth.
2. We must show up to do our part and receive our share of life! The body needs us and we need the body. No body part lives separated from the body for very long and no body functions fully if a part is missing. Staying connected empowers individuals and communities to thrive.
3. Finally, we have a mission and we must stay on it. Moreover, we have a character and quality that we should maintain while we fulfill that mission. No one should mistake us for anything other than what we are: the living body of Jesus Christ, the church. In other words: Stay salty and lit!

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“Sovereign Lord God, we gather to exalt the name of Christ among the nations. We join in the mystical union in Christ with the communion of Saints and the innumerable heavenly hosts in a festive gathering known as the assembly of the firstborn, which is dedicated to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant through His shed blood. We are grateful for receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken and offer to the triune God worship with reverence and awe. Amen.”⁴

Psalms

84, 122

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer’s Praise

386 “And Are We Yet Alive”

405 “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

388 “The Church’s One Foundation”

472 “Onward, Christian Soldiers”

4. Edward Williamson, “Prayer for Worship Uniting Heaven and Earth,” *O for a Heart to Praise My God: Hymns of Charles Wesley and Scriptural Liturgies* (Seedbed Publishing, 2024), 210.

Week 5

Future Hope

Scripture

ROMANS 6:5–8 “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”

Introduction

For a while a church was advertising themselves on a billboard. It read: “Don’t believe in hell? Neither do we.” Another church ran a competing campaign. Theirs read: “Don’t believe in hell? You will.” No doubt they both thought themselves very clever, though I can’t imagine either was a very effective campaign. I suppose we should at least give them both credit for talking about the afterlife. This is an area of theology that many churches have ignored for too long. Today, we need a straightforward exploration of the reality of heaven and hell, and how it all works.

Teaching Points

1. Heaven is real.

John 14:1–4: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

- It’s a family household. Jesus himself calls it his Father’s house. This isn’t a sixteenth-century castle or modern McMansion. No, this is a close-knit household where multiple generations live in close community with one another.
- Revelation 21–22 vividly describes the nature of heaven:
 - God is dwelling among the people.
 - God is unrivaled.
 - Death is no more, grief is no more, crying is no more.
 - It is beautiful and built around the presence of God.
 - It is lit by the glory of God.
 - The gates are never shut (because nothing harmful or evil can ever enter).
 - Trees of life are planted for enjoying eternal life.

2. Hell is real.

- According to Gallup, more than 40 percent of Christians no longer believe hell is real.⁵ Yet polls do not change eternal realities. If that poll applies equally in this room, only six in ten of you believe what I am telling is true right now. I wonder, why don’t you believe in hell? Do you have empirical evidence? Do you doubt the truth of Scripture? Or is it perhaps you just don’t want to believe hell is real. Perhaps if hell exists, you would have to

5. Megan Brennan, “Belief in Five Spiritual Entities Edges Down to New Lows,” July 20, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/508886/belief-five-spiritual-entities-edges-down-new-lows.aspx>.

live differently. You might feel more obligation to your neighbor or family member that you love. What would happen if, instead of ordering your life around what you want, you began with the truth and adapted your life accordingly?

- Of course, hell is real, and we all know it. If we skip the pitchforks and images of endless torture, we can probably agree that the broadest definition of hell is living apart from God. Can there be anything more painful, more destructive? Considered this way, I know lots of people living in hell, and you do too. And maybe like me, you love some of them enough to want to help them escape hell on earth—especially before it becomes eternal, irrevocable separation from God.

Scripture is far from silent on the subject of hell.

Revelation 21:8: “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Matthew 25:46: “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Psalms 9:17: “The wicked go down to the realm of the dead, all the nations that forget God.”

2 Thessalonians 1:9: “They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”

Matthew 13:50: “and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jude 1:7: “In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”

2 Peter 2:4: “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment;”

- Let’s call hell the eternal absence of God and let’s agree it is not a place we want anyone to be.

3. Children of heaven and hell are growing together right now.

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

“‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” (Matt. 13:24–30)

- Jesus is telling us: There is still time.
- The field belongs to the owner—the Lord.
- Until the harvest comes (the second coming), there is yet time for those under the influence of the Enemy to repent.
- While you have a responsibility to work in the fields, you will be relieved to know, you do not have to decide who goes to heaven and who goes to hell.

4. Jesus decides who goes where.

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.” (John 5:22–30)

- All authority is given to Jesus. He is the judge. He alone will issue judgment.
- This is the best news human beings could ever hear! We know Jesus’s nature is loving-kindness.
- The judgment is coming and has now come. We don’t have to wait until natural death to determine our eternal fate. Those who profess Christ are saved today.

“The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.” (Ezek. 18:20)

- You are culpable for yourself.
- You may have had the best or worst parents in history. At the end of the day, you have free will given by God and are accountable for your choices.

Why It Matters

Here's how Jesus decides

1. This life matters. The disposition of your heart matters.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. (Col. 3:1–7)

2. Ease, tolerance, being nice, following the path of least resistance are not acceptable standards for living our lives.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. . . .

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7:13–14, 21–23)

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“Loving God, enliven in me the hope of heaven and deepen my conviction of ‘things not seen.’ Help me to come willingly, in your good time, to take my place among those who have loved you faithfully and imperfectly, and to take

with joy and confidence that last small step across the thin threshold that divides this world from the next. Amen.”⁶

Psalms

82, 94

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer’s Praise

283 “Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory”

632 “Shall We Gather at the River”

629 “Soon and Very Soon”

637 “When the Saints Go Marching In”

6. Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, “Prayer for a Faithful Farewell,” *Our Great Redeemer’s Praise* (Seedbed Publishing, 2022), 713.

Week 6

The Word

Scripture

ISAIAH 40:8 “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.”

Introduction

About 20 percent of Americans have read the entire Bible, even though 87 percent own a Bible.⁷ Yet, 54 percent believe America would be worse without the Bible.⁸ Most have them on shelves, there is one in the pew in front of you! So, people see the value and need for the Word, but are not reading it! That’s a major issue—and one you can do something about!

7. Lifeway Research: Americans have a positive view of the Bible. However, more than half have read little or none of the Bible, April 25, 2017.

8. Barna: State of the Bible 2021: Five Key Findings; May 19, 2021.

Teaching Points

1. *Jesus is the living Word!*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14)

- Scripture reveals Jesus Christ and he is the full revelation of God.

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
(John 20:31)

- Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, “explained everything in Scripture concerning himself.” Jesus, in his hometown, said, “Scripture is fulfilled today.”

2. *The Bible is trustworthy.*

Proverbs 30:5: “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”

- Scripture is accurate and authoritative. Mistakes in our interpretation are possible because we are human! We must remain humble.
- In the armor of God passage (Eph. 6:10–18), Scripture is called the “Belt of truth.” Belts keep your pants up! Don’t be embarrassed/exposed for living apart from the truth!
- Exegesis—letting the Word speak for itself. We don’t search the Scriptures trying to find proof texts for what we already believe based on non-biblical sources or texts. Rather, we allow the Scriptures to inform and correct our beliefs about God, creation, sin, salvation, and the like.
- Scripture is a living document. While its message is eternal, the Bible was written at particular times, in particular places, by particular people. Don’t be lazy. Do the work to understand it as it was given.

3. Take the Bible as it is.

John Wesley wrote in a sermon “On Corrupting the Word of God”:

The first and great mark of one who corrupts the word of God, is, introducing into it human mixtures; either the errors [heresies] of others, or the fancies of his own brain. To do this, is to corrupt it in the highest degree; to blend with the oracles of God, impure dreams, fit only for the mouth of the devil! And yet it has been so frequently done, that scarce ever was any erroneous [heretical] opinion either invented or received, but Scripture was quoted to defend it.⁹

- In an argument with religious leaders, Jesus remarked, “Scripture cannot be set aside” (John 10:35).

Deuteronomy 4:2: “Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.”

Proverbs 30:6: “Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.”

4. The Bible is useful.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:14–17)

9. <https://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-136-on-corrupting-the-word-of-god/#:~:text=The%20First%20and%20great%20mark,the%20mouth%20of%20the%20devil!>

- Scripture contains everything necessary for salvation.

Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

- Scripture guides us.

Psalm 1:1–3: “Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
 or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers.”

- Scripture centers us and blesses us.

Why It Matters

1. Read it: Make time, quiet your heart/mind, read it in community.
 - Hard, but worth it. Most easy things are trivial. Bible literacy is the work of a lifetime. And it should be!
2. Use it as plumbline.
 - In the sermon “On God’s Vineyard,” Wesley says the Methodists “had one, and only one rule of judgment, with regard to all their tempers, words and actions, namely, the oracles of God.”¹⁰ When they were called “Bible-bigots,” Wesley adopted the term and used it with pride.
 - Tempers: What is your rule of judgment you use? If a brother/sister sins against you, how do you react? What is your rule? Anger? Retribution? Or is your rule the oracles of God, namely the use of Matthew 18?

10. <https://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-107-on-gods-vineyard/>.

- Actions: What is your rule of judgment in your actions? Do you follow the oracles of God in your dating life or do you just “swipe right”? How about in the work you do to earn a living? Or any number of other daily actions?
- Wesley demands, “Bring me plain, scriptural proof for your assertion, or I cannot allow it.”¹¹
 - This should apply to our voting, leading, business dealing, school exams, etc.
- 3. Engage: Bible study, Sunday school, midweek class, etc.
 - Bill Bouknight: “The Bible will not let you be happy without being holy.”¹² And that is a gift!

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“Almighty God, unto you all hearts are open all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.”¹³

Psalms

19, 119

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer’s Praise

427 “Holy Bible, Book Divine”

429 “Wonderful Words of Life”

434 “Standing on the Promises”

334 “Trust and Obey”

11. John Wesley, “Advice to the People Called Methodists with Regard to Dress,” (1780), §5.1.

12. William R. Bouknight, *5 Beliefs Worth Dying For* (Bristol House, 2010), 32.

13. “The Collect for Purity” from The Book of Common Prayer in *Our Great Redeemer’s Praise* (Seedbed Publishing, 2022), 702.

Week 7

Sacraments

Scripture

ACTS 2:38 “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

MARK 14:22–25 “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is my body.’

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them. ‘Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’”

Introduction

Water is a powerful force. It brings both life and death—often in the same surge. In Scripture, water appears in creation, in the great flood, and the Red Sea. It even flows from the rock. But it also represents chaos. The waters are where Leviathan lives and plays (and responds to God alone). It is no wonder

that water would become the tangible sign through which people would be born again.

Teaching Points

1. In baptism, the old self is buried with Christ.

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”
(Romans 6:3–4)

- Baptism is a drowning death. We descend into the silence of the waters and die there.
- In the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ. We are buried with him.
- But baptism is also about resurrection. When we emerge from the waters, we are joined to Christ in his resurrection in a way that enables us to live a new life!

2. Baptism is more than a symbol.

“and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.” (1 Peter 3:21–22)

- Baptism doesn’t save us in and of itself, and yet, we must be born again of water and the spirit!

“Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.” (John 3:5)

- It is neither the preacher nor the one being baptized who works the miracle of baptism. It is the work of the Holy Spirit alone.
- Baptism is a cleansing of all sin, original and actual. It liberates the heart to choose the Lord.

3. Baptism incorporates us into God's family

- It is God's yes to us. It is a form of parental adoption.

1 Corinthians 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

- This is also why baptism happens in community—not in private (except in cases of emergency). It is hard to join the family without the family there to receive you!

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Have you ever been to a family reunion and met people for the first time? If so, you know the importance of staying connected! Imagine if our closest relationships were with people we hardly know! Once we are incorporated into God's family, it is critically important to connect in ways that allow us to take on the family likeness. Holy Communion is one of the ways that makes that possible.

4. The old is gone, the new has arrived.

Matthew 26:26–28: "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

- Jesus fulfills the old covenant and inaugurates a new one. (Gen. 15)
- He gives us the Eucharist as a lasting ordinance and invaluable gift for Christian living.

5. Communion connects us.

1 Corinthians 10:16–17: “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”

Romans 6:9–10: “For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”

- Remembrance and memorial—yes . . . but so much more. Christ is *spiritually* present at the table. He is not crucified again and again, but having died once and for all for the sins of the world, he is present among us in holy Communion. He meets us at the table.

Why It Matters

1. Live into your congregational promise given at baptism . . . to live as Christ!

Galatians 3:26–28: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

- Be the family of God.
- Remember your baptism with thanksgiving!

2. Stay connected.

John 6:53–58: “Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.’”

Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

- Take Communion regularly.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Offer a remembrance of baptism in the service, either as they come forward for Communion or by spraying them with drops from hyssop or other branches.
- Offer holy Communion.

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“We do not presume to come to this your table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your abundant and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table; but you are the same Lord whose character is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls

washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.”¹⁴

Psalms

116, 139

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer’s Praise

216 “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”

418 “Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees”

497 “Cleanse Me from My Sin, Lord”

485 “What Can Wash Away My Sin”

14. “The Prayer of Humble Access,” *Our Great Redeemer’s Praise* (Seedbed Publishing, 2022), 733–34.

Week 8

Sin

Scripture

ROMANS 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Introduction

Romans 5:12: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—”

- What a way to start, huh?
- The reality of sin is undeniable.
- Sticking your head in the sand or pretending otherwise doesn’t make sin and its consequences go away. It won’t make you less dead to God, to yourself, and to others.

Teaching Points

1. *The origins of sin.*

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Gen. 3:1-13)

- The term “original sin” refers to the sin committed by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. The consequences of their sin extend to the entire human race. In other words, once sin enters the picture, it affects everyone. It

is almost like a virus that spreads to the entire human race. No one is immune. We are born in sin.

- While Adam and Eve freely chose to sin, they were prompted to sin by the serpent. Then and now, the serpent lies to tamper/pervert our relationship with God. Lies are, in fact, his native language. Then and now, Satan sews doubt and promotes an economy of scarcity: “Did God really say you must not eat from any tree?”

2. Total depravity—sin really is that bad.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (Rom. 7:14–24)

- Even if we didn’t know about Adam and Eve, original sin would still be obvious. Little children bite, lie, etc. No one must teach them how to do it!
- Original sin is also manifest in actual sins. Actual sins take two forms: sins of commission and sins of omission. Sins of commission consist of breaking known laws of God, whereas sins of omission consist of failing to do something we know we should do.
- The consequences of original sin for human nature are not partial. They are total. We are not mostly good and only very occasionally bad or sinful. Rather, original sin leaves us blind and deaf to God’s law and to God’s

love. As a result, we constantly choose things that are not good for us. We also worship all manner of idols or false gods, including food, sex, money, power, and the like. And we cannot do otherwise.

Why It Matters

- The answer to Paul’s question—“Who will rescue me?”—is coming next week.
- In order to give you a small measure of good news this morning, consider this: “just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:21).
- Between now and next week, take an inventory of your soul. In what ways have you been disobedient to God? What does sin look like in your life? What are you doing that you know you shouldn’t be doing? What are you neglecting to do that you know you ought to do?
- Do you want to be free from sin? Do you want to flourish as God intended? Do you want to know God’s love for you? Do you want to be transformed by his great love?

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“Almighty and most merciful God, we confess and lament that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. Because the remembrance of our sin is more than we can bear, have mercy on us and forgive us. For the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, pardon us of all that is past and grant that we may ever serve you in newness of life, to the glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.”¹⁵

15. “Services of Holy Communion: The Confession,” *Our Great Redeemer’s Praise* (Seedbed Publishing, 2022), 730.

Psalms

38, 51

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer's Praise

505 "Sinners, Turn: Why Will You Die?"

502 "Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy"

509 "Just as I Am, Without One Plea"

244 "O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done"

Week 9

Grace and Justification

Scripture

1 TIMOTHY 1:14–15 “The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”

Introduction

Antoinette Tuff was a school bookkeeper at Ronald E. McNair School in Atlanta. On August 20, 2013, she faced down a twenty-year-old gunman intent on shooting up the school. She related stories of her own brokenness to reach the young man and convince him to surrender before he could harm anyone. Reflecting on the encounter, Tuff said, “Make sure that you prepare yourself for a purpose. And when God calls your number, make sure that your heart is open to receive what directions he gives you.”¹⁶

16. <https://www.npr.org/2014/01/31/268417580/how-one-womans-faith-stopped-a-school-shooting>.

Teaching Points

1. *Saved by grace through faith.*

Ephesians 2:8–9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

- We are not saved by our good works. Period. Nor are we saved by faith. It is grace that saves us.
- Faith is the pipeline through which grace flows into our hearts and souls—and back out again in works.

2. *Gifts are given and received.*

- God’s grace is unmerited and freely given.
- He gives his grace, not because we deserve it, but because of who he is.
- The gift has already been given. Jesus has already done everything necessary for your salvation.
- Like a wrapped present delivered to your door, you must decide to open it, receive it, and enjoy it!

3. *Faith is infinitely more than intellectual assent.*

James 1:22–25: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”

- Faith is about putting your trust in God. And it works! When we have faith, we will trust God and do what he says. We will work for the Lord and his kingdom.
- Summarize Matthew 25.

- Brother Andrew, “God’s smuggler,” drove a VW Beetle full of Bibles in plain view into communist countries. “Lord, make seeing eyes blind” was his prayer at checkpoints. He later wrote: “Of course it’s dangerous. But it’s a lot more dangerous for all of us if we don’t do it. Even in a conquering army there are casualties. Safety is not the issue when we look at the Great Commission. The purpose of the church cannot be to survive, or even to thrive, but to serve.”¹⁷

Why It Matters

James 2:14–19, 26: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. . . . As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

- Volunteer: usher, greeter, children’s leader, youth snacks, caregiver, write cards, make calls, etc.
- Plant a church, serve in international partnerships, give yourself to the work of God on earth.

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“Grant, Almighty God, that we, who have been redeemed from the old life of sin by our baptism into the death and resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ, may be renewed in thy Holy Spirit, and live in righteousness and true holiness;

17. Brother Andrew and Al Janssen, *Secret Believers: What Happens When Muslims Believe in Christ* (Fleming H. Revell, 2007), 215.

through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.”¹⁸

Psalms

103, 118

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer’s Praise

89 “Love Lifted Me”

93 “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”

560 “Living Hope”

485 “Nothing but the Blood”

18. Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 254.

Week 10

Sanctification and Christian Perfection

Scripture

ROMANS 12:2 “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Introduction

How long have you been holy? Did you make it all the way from waking up this morning to now? How about from the parking lot up until now? How about just during the last twenty minutes? What do you think your longest stretch of uninterrupted holiness has been? And don’t say the day you slept eighteen hours! Have you ever made it an entire day? A whole week? Did you know that no one is talking or thinking about holiness . . . except Christians. That means we probably need to really be focused on it so that we don’t lose sight of how important it really is. As Global Methodists, we’ve written it right into our very reason for existing: “to spread scriptural holiness across the globe!”

Teaching Points

1. Holiness is the standard Christ is seeking.

Matthew 5:48: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

- We are not allowed to settle for a standard lower than the one Christ himself set for us.
- All of us have heard and most of us have said something to the effect of “to err is human,” or some variation that implies the inevitability of sin.
- The standard is holiness and nothing less. But being holy isn’t just about keeping all the rules and always obeying God’s laws. It is also about being filled with the love of God in such a way that we, in turn, love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37–40).

2. Holiness is a response to God’s demonstrated grace.

Exodus 19:3–6: “Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.’”

- God doesn’t ask us to have blind faith! It is informed by God’s previous acts of salvation and mercy.
- After he led his people out of slavery in Egypt, he expected them to honor his covenant and follow his lead faithfully. It was a right response to what he had already done for them!

1 Peter 2:2–3, 9–10: “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted

that the Lord is good. . . . But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

- God expects us to grow in our salvation. He expects us to live responsively to the grace he imparts to us.
- He reminds us that he has saved us for a purpose. We should live that purpose out fully.

Romans 12:1–2: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

- When we enter life with Christ, the old life is gone. We begin a new life that is to be lived in markedly different ways. Specifically, we live according to his "good, pleasing and perfect will." In other words: a holy life!

3. Sanctification is often a process.

James 1:2–4: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

- For most people, entire sanctification is the work of a lifetime.
- In every season of life, we must invite the Holy Spirit to perfect us and move us into the holiness of God.

Why It Matters

Exodus 34:29–30, 35b: “When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. . . . Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.”

- Moses was radiant from his sanctifying experience of being in God’s very presence.
- The people wanted to be shielded from his Holy Spirit glow! It caused them fear and recoiling.

2 Corinthians 3:12–13, 16–18: “Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. . . . But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

- Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside them! We are called to glow with unveiled faces!
- The world needs radiant people to illumine the dark places.
- Commit yourself to holiness and seek the Holy Spirit’s help in being made perfect as Christ is perfect.

Additional Worship Resources

Prayer

“I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed by

thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.”¹⁹

Psalms

16, 141

Hymns/Songs from Our Great Redeemer’s Praise

316 “Take Time to be Holy”

313 “I Want a Principle Within”

341 “Seek Ye First”

343 “Have Thine Own Way, Lord”

19. John Wesley, “Wesley Covenant Prayer,” *Our Great Redeemer’s Praise* (Seedbed Publishing, 2022), 710.