

## Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

*It's a Both/And...*

## Gospel Lesson

John 14:1-14 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to the place where I am going.” <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup>Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

## Sermon Focus

In this week’s sermon, we heard that Methodism is a balance of personal holiness and social holiness, not either/or but both/and. Our unique, personal relationship with God matters; our loving relationships with the world around us matter, too. Jesus taught that those who love him will show it in our actions toward others. As the distinctions between various expressions of the church vanish in this season of reform, the unique “both/and” theology of Methodism can help inform our great re-awakening.

## Discussion Questions

1. In this week’s sermon Pastor Andy brought up how Methodists believe that a relationship with Jesus, with God and the Spirit, are both personal and social. How do you live out both of these aspects of your faith?
2. The context of the Gospel lesson is the impending crucifixion. In one last gathering with his friends, Jesus is talking about not just his own death but also what is dying with him (namely, their understanding of the messianic mission as a violent, military conquest). Jesus replaces that idea with a God and a Messiah who dwells in a relationship of mutuality, of love, and of peace. And Jesus teaches that same mutuality is expected of us. The relationship that we have with God should reflect in the relationships we have in the world. How does the indwelling of God in your life impact your actions? How does this indwelling impact your understanding of God?

3. In our sermon for this week we heard that our social relationships matter, because there is “no holiness but social holiness,” and the renewal of the image of God mandates that we work in such a way that all persons are able to live their “divinely prescribed lives.” Who defines what is “divinely prescribed” for a person? Who has historically defined what is “divinely prescribed” for persons and communities?
4. As the church navigates this season of change, we are seeing the barriers between different expressions of church vanish. One of those barriers has for too long been between the “evangelical” and the “social justice” expressions of church. Where at Manchester UMC (or your home church) do you see these particular barriers being torn down by God? Where do you personally tend to lean between these expressions?

## Methodist Focus

For John Wesley ***faith was a very personal experience***. He deeply valued this personal relationship with God. In this sense he was “evangelical” (not evangelical as we know it today politically, but in a way that was meant to reflect how the Gospel, the good news, led to a personal relationship with God). The word evangelical in its Greek form actually means “Gospel” or “good news.” The Gospel is the good news of God. Evangelical faith believes that your personal relationship with Jesus really matters. God loves you personally and directly and is present in your life. For some this loving relationship with God is so amazing that they can’t help but want to share it with others.

At the same time ***faith was a very social experience***, meant to be shared with others. Wesley used the word “social holiness” to describe this faithful, holy response to God’s grace. The Good News of God, the Gospel, can only be “lived out” within a community. In this “living out,” we are reclaiming and renewing the image of God. Social holiness is an awareness that we live our lives connected to all creation. The image of God is relational, Triune. Renewing the image of God is a renewal of relationship, in ALL of creation; with God, with one another, with all creation.

“Social holiness” and “Social justice” are closely related, but not strictly synonyms. It is easy to see how social holiness leads naturally to working for social justice. But they are not the same things.

“Social Justice is when we are creating a world in which people are able to live their divinely prescribed life, where each person can be the full person that God sees. This requires us to fix the brokenness in the world, so that God’s light can shine through.” - Nick Reinhardt-Swierk

Seeking holiness automatically leads us to work for justice. In order for the image of God to be realized in its fullness, each one of us must be working so that every one of us can be living the way God wants us to live.

## Discussion Questions

1. Both of the Wesley brothers were deeply concerned with social justice issues of their day; poverty, employment, slavery. What are the justice issues you as an individual feel called to address? What are the justice issues that you see Manchester UMC as a body addressing?

2. Share a very personal faith experience and a very social faith experience. How were these different and how were they the same?
3. What are your overall thoughts and feelings on Wesleyan theological concepts of personal and social holiness?

## Prayer

God of Justice, we look outside of ourselves and we see a world in need. Lord, we ask that you create in us clean hearts and the desire to build a better relationship with you, so that we may be moved to respond more to our neighbor, to injustice, and to the needs of the oppressed. Nudge us to more fully live into our personal and communal callings—as individuals and as members in your body. Inspire us, inspire the church, to be more loving of you and your creation every day. Amen.

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