

Opening

Alive to God

Check-in & Introductions

Prayer of Confession

(Choose one person to lead the group in this prayer of confession from the General Board of Discipleship, of the United Methodist Church)

Meticulous God of immeasurable grace, how shall we measure our sins? Only you know their real dimensions; the history of human disobedience; the ramifications of hatred; the multiplication of wrongdoing by generations; the perpetuation of prejudices by unthinking repetition; the aggravation of offenses by the unforgiving and vengeful. However, you account for our sin, there are none of us who do not stand in need of some measure of your grace, which in Jesus Christ is out of all proportion to human wrongdoing. **Amen.**

Scripture

Epistle Lesson

Romans 6:1-11 (NRSV)

¹What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think God's vision for the world looks like?
2. What do you think Paul meant when he said, "How can we who died to sin go on living in it?"
3. 1 Timothy 6:1 says, "Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor..." How could/has this passage been used in the past? How can this passage be used today?
4. In this week's sermon we learned that George Whitefield was a slave owner, and that, not surprisingly, he used scripture to justify it. When have you seen or heard someone using scripture to justify harmful actions/perspectives?
5. Unpack the following quote from this week's sermon, "Knowing where we are spiritually, in our relationships with God and one another, positions us to get to where God wants us to be."
6. Do you feel like you are living the life you were meant to live all along?

7. "Being forgiven by the grace of God changes us. That change is so profound that we describe it as dying to ourselves and living a completely new life, lived outwardly, oriented toward others." How do you live your life, outwardly, oriented toward others?

Diving Deeper

(Take turns in your group reading through and then reflecting on the Diving Deeper section)

This week's sermon focused on the new life that is experienced in a relationship with Christ. Being forgiven empowers us to die to our old selves and live as our new, true, Christlike selves. And yet we do not seem to ever fully die to our old selves; the new life overlaps with our old. This is true on a personal, and social level. In order to progress toward the new life in Christ, we have to describe the current reality. We must name what is happening.

Because that's the thing about forgiveness, it doesn't really work unless we can name that we have indeed sinned. Forgiveness cannot be given until we realize that we have done something wrong. In order to move from the structural/corporate sins of the past, we have to see them for what they are. That takes perhaps, a painful a realization that is wrought with struggle. It may require an apocalyptic moment. Apocalypse means to "uncover" or "reveal" (hence the book of Revelation is the apocalyptic book in the Bible).

One of the structural/corporate sins our sermon touched on this week was the sin of slavery. The Bible has a bunch of problematic stuff about slavery. There were different kinds of slaves that the scriptures condone: sex slaves, debt slaves, slaves that were born into that life, and on and on. Historically the Bible has been used to condone slavery in the United States of America.

As our new life in Christ overlaps with our old, on a personal level, it does so on a social level as well. Learning about the history of our nation, our past; and learning about the history of Christian complicity towards slavery; are necessary steps in the process of redemption for all of creation.

Closing

Prayer

Holy God, we thank you for the new life in your son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for your ever-abiding presence. We thank you for meeting us where we are, and nudging us to turn around, and look back, while we move forward. Be with us this week. Bring us back safely together. We pray for your church. We pray for our neighbors. **Amen.**

Study Link

<https://manchesterumc.org/all-church-study/>

"There is a way God wants us to be, a life God wants for every one of us. And until every one of us is able to live that life, the work of the church is unfinished."