

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Walk Just as He Walked

Epistle Lesson

1 John 1:5-2:6 (NRSV)

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

³Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. ⁴Whoever says, "I have come to know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; ⁵but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: ⁶whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked.

Gospel Lesson

Luke 24:13-27 (NRSV)

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." ²⁵Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Bible/Sermon Focus

One of the unique things about being Methodist is our relationship with sin and grace. We have an understanding that sin can ebb and flow in and out of our lives. We believe that a person can “backslide” into sin, even years after they have moved closer to God. We are not a faith that believes “once saved always saved.”

In the same way, we do not require a believer to have one big “holy moment” where they experience the salvation of God. That can happen, and it can happen in one big moment, but it can also happen in many little moments over a person’s life time. Having one big, holy moment isn’t a guarantee for salvation.

Every day, every moment, is another new opportunity to live in conjunction and relationship with God. This is why living our lives in loving ways, practicing the gospel, and maintaining good relationships with God, other people, and creation are so central to the messages that we share between us at Manchester UMC. Our lives are tied up with one another and with God in an inescapable way.

During this sermon series we are touching on concepts that come from process theology. Process theology is deeply rooted in a God and a creation that is relational. How we are in process with creation and with each other is connected to how we are in process with God. God is a loving force, persuasively nudging us toward goodness in all that we do. It is up to us to respond to that loving force, to respond to God and to each other in relation to that divine love.

We have a choice. We have the free will to turn from loving our neighbor if we so choose. But, we also, at any time, can turn back. To realize we are holding company with Jesus after a long walk. To witness to the redemption and resurrection. To realize that in each moment, God is present and we can choose to respond.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think it means to be “perfectly divine? Perfectly human?”
2. Reflect on the following verse from 1st John, “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their siblings, are liars; for those who do not love a sibling whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.” (1 John 4:20)
3. Reflect on this quote from Dr. Bryan Stone, “This disintegration of love is what we mean when we use the word ‘sin.’ So it is that, for Wesley..., sin is ultimately a failure to love. Conversely, what Wesley spoke of as ‘perfection’ of love may be understood as the reintegration of love and, in that sense, a vanquishing of sin.” Do you agree that sin is the “disintegration of love?” Why or why not?

Prayer

Beloved and present God, help us to be better, to sin less, to love more. Teach us to choose your way over the way of the world. Help us to be more human, made more complete by your grace. Amen.