



Millville United Methodist Church

The Dove July 2016

Hello Church!

Take a few moments to read this passage from the Book of Acts.

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. – Acts 3:1-10, NIV

At the time I’m writing this I just preached my sermon on Fruit Loops and realize that there is a caveat, a “but” that I need to tack on at the end of it. I spent a lot of that sermon talking about all of the declining numbers, negative figures, and gloom and doom kind of talk that is often used to describe the state of the church in America by folks in and out of Christianity. If you weren’t there that Sunday, I shared my belief that these numbers don’t define the church’s identity or mission. Reflecting on that message, there is one statistic tossed around that is an indictment on us as the church that we really need to consider. At many recent district and conference gatherings I’ve heard about how Professions of Faith have been seriously low for our conference and the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference for many years.

If you’re unclear on what that phrase means exactly, it is a declaration one makes to publicly state their faith in God and the beliefs associated with this new way of life. Professions of Faith being low means that our United Methodist Churches aren’t leading people to confess their sins, repent, and live for Christ. The common occurrence anymore is that people are moving from church to church for a variety of reasons. This in itself isn’t a bad thing because the church is meant to be a refuge for believers

wherever life takes them. Millville UMC wouldn't be what it is today without this dynamic because the majority of our membership found its way to our church after leaving a previous home and local church behind. Our mission field isn't solely made up of those who are moving here from somewhere else though! We've got a whole lot of local, year-round folk in our backyard and neighborhood that have never heard about the love of Christ, or haven't in a very long time. What are we to do about them?

The conversation that led me to Fruit Loops also laid a challenging truth on me that I've been wrestling with for several days. I don't have a complete answer to the problem I've outlined above, but I at least have a start or a foundation to work with. Take a few moments and think back to all the church interactions and dealings you've been a part of as far back as you can go. This includes worship, meetings, studies, and even conversations you've had with other members of the church. In all that you're able to recall, can you pick out any moments where there was a clear sense of expectation? In any thoughts or feelings expressed, or in anything anyone said, could you feel an expectation and hope about the great things God had in store in the future?

I've been focused on worship, and I believe with every fiber of my being that we can do more at least in this area. I know I've talked about it plenty enough, but the God-given hope and expectation for the future available to us is something that needs to transcend words in our faith lives! It needs to be felt and fill us up to the point that we can't help

ourselves but be changed by the movement of the Spirit capturing us. This isn't an aimless hope, but one grounded in the work of the living God seen in Scripture and lived out through generations of believers. I thought this reading from Acts 3 shows us how often we settle in our expectations and how much farther we can go.

Firstly, this healing happens in the context of folks living out their religious practices and meaningful routines (going to afternoon prayer) individually and as a community. Routine is interrupted here so that God could do a miraculous act. The man looked upon the Apostles and simply expected money from them, as he did with the many who walked past him every day. How often do we limit God to our terms and in subconscious ways expect the Spirit to operate in our version of normal or in the paths we outline? We get used to our patterns and routines; we settle into the ways we interact with God and our fellow believers on a regular basis. None of this is bad in and of itself, but we need to challenge ourselves and be intentional in leaving room for the living God to breathe and act in our lives and community!

In this passage from Acts, we see how one life was definitely changed by expectations being shattered by the Spirit acting through people. Try and imagine how many more were changed by seeing this man, that we read everyone recognized even after he was healed, and hearing his testimony? Getting back to our mission field, what does this passage have to say to us? I believe it illustrates the need for us to have God-sized expectations in our church, in the world, and

everywhere and way that we interact with both. We won't lead people to faith and introduce them to Christ if we don't expect it to happen through us and act accordingly. People need to know and feel that a life of hope, peace, and joy is theirs to claim if they choose. Healing and reconciliation is there to partake in through Christ. If they're not hearing it from us, if they don't feel a spiritual expectation from God among US, then where will they get it? May we be a people that regularly lean on the everlasting God for all of this and more!

With Blessed Expectation,
Pastor Brad



Hello Friends,

This month our Lay Leadership and Nominations Committee will be covering the Administrative Council. If you have any questions, concerns, or feel like you are being led to serve on this committee Pastor Brad will be more than happy to answer any questions and talk to you more about them!

The **Church Council** shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church. The church council shall be amenable to and function as the administrative agency of the charge conference (§ 244).

Mission and Ministry - Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:

- a) The nurturing ministries of the congregation shall give attention to but not be limited to education, worship, Christian formation, membership care, small groups, and stewardship. Attention must be given to the needs of individuals and families of all ages.
- b) The outreach ministries of the church shall give attention to local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy. These ministries include church and society, global ministries, higher education and campus ministry, health and welfare, Christian unity and interreligious concerns, religion and race,

and the status and role of women.

c) The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing of personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; Lay Servant Ministries; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ.

d) The leadership development and resourcing ministries shall give attention to the ongoing preparation and development of lay and clergy leaders for the ministry of the church (§ 258.1).

e) The nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities shall include consideration of (i) the election of a prayer coordinator to promote prayer and mobilize the local church to pray, (ii) establishing a prayer room or designated place for prayer and prayer resources, and (iii) encouraging intentional prayer for the pastoral leadership of the local church.

Meetings - a) The council shall meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call special meetings.

b) In order for the council to give adequate consideration to the missional purpose of the local church, it is recommended that the first agenda item at each meeting be related to its ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness. The administrative and supportive responsibilities of the church will then be given attention. It is recommended that the council use a consensus/discernment model of decision-making.

Other Responsibilities - It will also be the responsibility of the church council to:

a) review the membership of the local church;

b) fill interim vacancies occurring among the lay officers of the church between sessions of the annual charge conference;

c) establish the budget on recommendation of the committee on finance and ensure adequate provision for the financial needs of the church;

d) recommend to the charge conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the committee on pastor-parish relations (staff-parish relations);

e) review the recommendation of the committee on pastor-parish relations regarding provision of adequate housing for the pastor(s), and report the same to the charge conference for approval. Housing provisions shall comply with the annual conference housing policy and parsonage standards. Housing shall not be considered as part of compensation or remuneration except to the extent provided for in denominational pension and benefit plans.

Membership - The charge conference will determine the size of the church council. Members of the church council shall be involved in the mission and ministry of the congregation as defined in § 252.2. The membership of the council may consist of as few as eleven persons or as many as the charge conference deems appropriate. The council shall include persons who represent the program ministries of the church as outlined in § 243. The membership shall

include but not be limited to the following:

- a) the chairperson of the church council;
- b) the lay leader;
- c) the chairperson and/or a representative of the pastor-parish relations committee;
- d) the chairperson and/or a representative of the committee on finance;
- e) the chairperson and/or a representative of the board of trustees;
- f) the church treasurer;
- g) a lay member to annual conference;
- h) the president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Men;
- i) the president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Women;
- j) a young adult representative
- k) a representative of the United Methodist Youth;
- l) the pastor(s).

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OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

There's a new twist to Operation Christmas Child this year. In an effort to make it easier for our entire congregation, a small group will select an age group and do all the shopping. This allows them to take advantage of bulk purchases or great sales. If you want to be a shopper, please let us know.

Your help is still needed to fill the boxes. This year we will choose a Sunday morning after church to gather for this labor of love. More info on this to follow.

Most importantly, we need a promise of your financial support. This will help determine the number of boxes to be filled. All money must be received by September 9. Let's do our part to bring the generosity of Millville UMC to needy children of the world.

Please call Kathy Cropper (302-381-8444) or Nancy Bowers (410-598-5600) with your pledge or fill out the form you will find in next week's bulletin.

Donations Needed For Wesley Hall

Donations of the following items for Wesley Hall would be greatly appreciated:

- Kitchen trash bags, 30-gallon size
- Storage bags, quart-size
- Trash bags for small containers,
(4 to 8 gallon size)
- Bath tissue and paper towels

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee is very pleased to report that through June 19, 2016, the total budget receipts for the year were \$74,100 which exceeds the budgeted goal by \$1,600.

Through May 31st (the latest date I have complete records for) our income exceeded our actual expenses by \$4,501.

Our congregation is to be praised for their outstanding giving. Last week our pastor informed us that we needed \$100 designated for missions to meet our obligations to local missions. Mission giving is based solely on what you, the congregation, designate for missions; it is not a budgeted item. Once again, the congregation showed their generosity by responding with \$205 for the local food pantry and \$100 for local missions. **THANK YOU MILLVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.**

At the June Finance committee meeting, we discussed the pre-existing plan for a fund raising/pledge drive this fall. In February, when the committee mentioned in the Dove that we needed to increase our income to meet our financial needs, you stepped-up your giving. Because of your excellent response, the committee voted unanimously to indefinitely postpone the planned fund raising/pledge drive. We don't need to do so because of the great generosity of our congregation. Please keep giving generously.

Larry Kaplan, Chairman

Staff Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Update

As you may know, the purpose of the Staff Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, or SPPRC, is to provide a connection between the pastor, staff and congregation. This leadership role is intended to provide the pastor with **all support necessary to be successful in his ministry, and to ensure that the spiritual and other needs of the congregation are fully satisfied.**

The committee is made up of members of the congregation who are elected to serve, as well as the lay member of the annual conference and the lay leader. The current committee includes:

Nancy Bowers, Lee Brubaker, Kathy Cropper, Marilyn Ferry, Bonnie Kaplan, Donald Maeby, Mike Matera, Janet Smith and Rich Spina (chairman).

As always, you are invited to contact any member of the committee directly to discuss matters relating to your worship experience and the ministry of our church. Your suggestions to improve our ministry and any concerns you may have are welcome. You may also send your comments by email to me at jrspina@verizon.net.

Rich Spina, Chairman

Redemption – Part 2

By Ed Thornton

Remember from last month's Bible Study that God's has a plan for our redemption. He intervenes in history to carry out this plan. Not only did Isaiah's predictions of Cyrus prove true, Isaiah predicted the coming of the Messiah, which became true as we will as we see in this month's New Testament reading.

Read Ephesians 1:7-10

This passage jumps into the middle of a long section of praise to God for His great blessings. The first section, verses 3-6, elaborates on the blessings we have in God the Father, and this, the second section, elaborates on the blessings we have in God the Son. It is divided into three parts:

1. Redemption and forgiveness
2. Grace lavished
3. Mystery revealed

Part One Redemption and Forgiveness

This section of praise to God the Son begins at a familiar place – the cross. The cross of Christ is where our redemption was purchased. It is what makes forgiveness possible. The phrase “through his blood” is the reference to the cross. As we know the idea of “blood” was a familiar one to a culture where sacrifices were common.

The idea is that by pouring out His blood for us, Christ made it possible for our sins to be forgiven and for us to be “bought back” from our slavery to sin. The emphasis is on Jesus' total sacrifice – the giving of his life – and the cost of that sacrifice.

It is through this blood of Christ that we have redemption. The idea of “redemption” is a bit of a stretch for us to really understand today. It is the idea of being set free, of being bought back out of slavery or prison, and restored. Most of us have absolutely no idea what it means to be enslaved – to be stripped of any personal rights, dignity, or freedom. To become the property of another – no longer human but merely a thing to be used, abused, or neglected entirely at the whim of someone else who “owns” you. To know that there is not a single thing you can do for yourselves to change your situation.

So if you can imagine what it means to be enslaved – if you can sense a bit of the horror and helplessness. Then you can start to understand what redemption is. It is the idea of someone appearing out of nowhere, paying the debt and setting you free. That is the essence of the cross of Christ. Because of our sin, we were enslaved. The irony about our slavery to sin is that we had gotten so used to it that we think it is normal or even good. Yet we were trapped. We were helpless. We were without hope. God acted in history again to redeem us.

We hear of His action in the Gospel – the good news. It is this simple: we were lost, but God acted and so Jesus came to rescue us. He came to liberate us. He came to set us free.

Jesus redeemed us, dying on the cross, buying us back from our slavery to sin and enabling us to have a new relationship with God.

We were redeemed, our sins were forgiven. The slate is wiped clean, the balance owed reduced to zero, the guilty verdict changed to not guilty. All of the things that we have done that are wrong, all of the things we have failed to do that are right, are wiped away in one act of God in Christ's death. This is the Gospel – simple, yet powerful beyond our imagination. In Christ we have redemption and forgiveness.

Part 2 Grace Lavished

Our redemption is all about God's grace. It's all about God's love. We don't merit this. We can't earn it, we can't "luck into it" or receive it accidentally.

It is all about the choice that God made to come to us while we were in slavery and redeem us. All we can do is accept our freedom and praise God.

Listen to the verb used here. He "lavished" it on us. The word pictures abundance, celebration, extravagance. It brings to mind a royal feast, lacking in nothing, abounding.

So what should be our response to God's grace lavished upon us? Worship. When we worship God, we are responding to the One who has "lavished" grace upon us. Our gratitude flows, our adoration is expressed. Let's honor Him with our response. Let's rejoice in all that He has done for us. Let us celebrate that God's grace is freely given to us, and thus we have hope. Let us worship Him with our whole lives.

Part 3 The Mystery Revealed

The concept of "mystery" here is that of something which was formerly hidden that has now come to light.

It is the end of the suspense movie, where all the secrets are finally laid out, the loose ends tied up, and the "mysteries" all revealed. Notice that Paul doesn't tell us what this mystery is?

He talks about it, describes it, tells us that it has been "made known to us", but doesn't say what it is.

Finally we are told that ALL THINGS, in heaven and on earth, will be brought together under one head Christ. Finally, it will all make sense, will all fit together, will all be complete.

Everything is brought together in Christ's return. All the parts add up, the numbers fall in line, and the end result is "summed up" in Christ.

By the faith we do know that it has to do with Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection. And we also know that it has to do with the end of time, Jesus' return.

Remember, for these three reasons - redemption and forgiveness; Grace lavished; and the Mystery revealed we praise God.