

“The Character of a Methodist”
“Loving God with All Our Strength”

We continue in our sermon series “The Character of a Methodist.” This sermon series invites us to recommit our lives and our hearts to Christ. In both the Hebrew Scripture and the words of Jesus, we are reminded that the greatest commandment is *“to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself.”* The last three weeks we have focused on loving God with our hearts, souls and minds. The last portion of the first phrase is to love God with all our strength. Sometimes it is easy to note how weary and overwhelmed we are, and how the world seems too much to bear. Loving God with all our strength is to embody Christ in our lives. We just celebrated the gift of incarnation at Christmas. God comes to us not just as a spirit, but with a body that also needs nourishment and care. In the gospel, Jesus withdraws to strengthen himself for his ministry. We too, are offered strength in order to be witnesses to God’s love in the world. --Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Loving God with All Our Strength”**

Prayer for the Week

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart; wean it from earth; through all its pulses move; stop to my weakness, mighty as thou art, and make me love thee as I ought to love...hast thou not bid me love thee, God and King? All, all thine own, soul, heart and strength and mind. I see thy cross; there teach my heart to cling. O let me seek thee, and O let me find! (United Methodist Hymnal #500, Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart, verses 1 & 3, George Croly)

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, February 5, 2018 Mark 1: 32-35

Prior to this passage, Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law. That very evening, Jesus was swamped with people wanting to be healed. He sneaked out of the house before anyone was awake to pray. Sometimes I think we consider Jesus a kind of "super hero." He just keeps on going and always is kind, understanding and helpful. If incarnation means anything, it means Jesus was human. Jesus knew what it was like to be tired, to grieve, to get angry and to experience life just like we do. Jesus got up early and disappeared because he needed to be strengthened and to care for his spirit. *He models for us how important it is to find strength for our souls by time spent with God. How do you strengthen your relationship with God?*

Tuesday, February 6, 2018 Mark 1: 36-39

Of course, Jesus doesn't get much time off, and in response to the demands, he proposes continuing to travel to other places. Why? Because Jesus needed to share his message and the power of God to change lives. Sometimes we get stuck, because we are unwilling to move in a new direction. We are called to love God with all that we are and the strength we have is grounded in the care we give to our hearts, our minds, our souls and bodies. When we have cared for all of ourselves, we have the strength to follow wherever Jesus leads us. *How are you caring for your heart, soul, mind and strength today?*

Wednesday, February 7, 2018 Isaiah 40: 21-26

This chapter begins second Isaiah. God speaks comfort to those who have been in exile and long for restoration and redemption. This chapter is filled with words of hope and comfort. These verses reminded Israel and reminds us that there is nothing to compare to God's glory, power and wonder. God has great strength and is creating something new. Often we seek to return to what we know and understand. God is calling us into the future which is uncertain, but it is the place where God is and where God will be. God will be the one who creates a new heaven and earth. *Today, spend some time in wonder and awe of God's love and grace. May that awe strengthen your heart, soul and your mind.*

Thursday, February 8, 2018 Isaiah 40: 27-31

Faith is not lived backwards, only forward. We are reminded that God doesn't weary or grow tired the way we do. What is promised is that the ones who will wait upon God will be strengthened and renewed. Our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength are lifted up by God's grace, by God's love, by God Spirit. We grow weary when we are not leaning into God and the promises of God. We grow tired when we only depend on our own understanding. *Today, memorize this verse: "They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."*

Friday, February 9, 2018

"All the commandments of God, a "Methodist" accordingly keeps, and that with all his or her might. For their obedience is in proportion to their love, the source from whence it flows. And therefore, loving God with all their heart, they serve God with all their strength." Taken from The Character of a Methodist by John Wesley. Today take some time to ponder how and in what ways you love God with all your heart and how it is you serve God with all your strength. Do your words and your actions match the love you claim you have for God?