

**“The Character of a Methodist”
“Loving God and Loving Others”**

We finish our sermon series “The Character of a Methodist” as well as celebrate Valentine’s Sunday. On top of that, today is a “transition” Sunday if you will. In the liturgical calendar, it is Transfiguration Sunday which is the last Sunday in Epiphany. In the Western Christian calendar, Lent begins on Wednesday. We have a few days to focus on how the love we have for God in our hearts, souls, minds and strength is made real in our love of each other and our neighbor. In the gospels, Jesus on the mountaintop is the same Jesus who comes down from the mountain and continues to heal, to teach, to preach and to show God’s love for everyone. This week we will have the interesting intersection of Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day being the same. How will your love of others be shown in your love of God? And how will your love of God be shown in your love of neighbor? This will be a good week to consider those questions. ---Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Loving God and Loving Others”**

Prayer for the Week

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down; fix in us thy humble dwelling; all thy faithful mercies crown! Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art; visit us with thy salvation; enter every trembling heart. ...Finish then thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be. Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee; changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and praise. Amen (Love Divine, All Loves Excelling, #384 United Methodist Hymnal, Charles Wesley)

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

Study Guide

Monday, February 12, 2018 Mark 9: 2-6

This is Mark's version of the Transfiguration. For those early believers who were from the Jewish tradition, this story took them back to Moses. Moses went up the mountain glowing with the presence of God. Jesus goes up the mountain and not only does he glow, Moses and Elijah suddenly seem to appear as well and were conversing with Jesus. There on the mountaintop, the presence of God with Jesus was affirmed, by Moses and by Elijah. They are awed and afraid. Overwhelmed by their experience of the Jesus. *Think of your mountaintops..... How does your love of God correspond to your experience of Christ in that powerful moment?*

Tuesday, February 13, 2018 1 Corinians 13

This is Paul's beautiful statement on love. This "love" letter is found on posters, embroidered on pillows or on wall hangings. Often it is read at weddings. The words seem very simplistic, but are not easy to live. Paul encourages people not be arrogant or seek their own advantage or keep score. Love stands up for truth and against injustice. In fact, love *"bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."* In the four phrases, two are positive, two not so positive. To bear and endure all things makes the point that life is not always easy, it is often difficult and uncertain. Love strengthens a person and a community. *How do you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself? How do these words encourage and challenge you to live out the great commandment?*

Wednesday, February 14, 2018 Psalm 51: 1-4

Today is Ash Wednesday, the first of the forty days of Lent. It is also Valentine's Day, a day to celebrate love. The Psalm passage is one of traditional readings for Ash Wednesday and reminds us of the solemnity of Lent. Traditionally, today is a fast day, when believers refrained from food in order to focus on their relationship with God. What better way to enter Lent than to remember *"What Wondrous Love is this, oh my soul!"* Lent is an invitation to evaluate our relationship with God and to grow closer to Christ and deeper in our faith. This confession of David is about his being overwhelmed by his sin and his need for grace. *What are your intentions this Lent? How will you be open during these 40 days to answer the question "Who is this Man?" Today at noon, there will be an Ash Wednesday service at Mead's Corner. Tonight worship begins at 7:00 in our sanctuary. Please come and begin the Lenten journey with your brothers and sisters.*

Thursday, February 15, 2018 Mark 9: 7-9

Suddenly in the midst of the light there are clouds and a voice honoring Jesus, and telling the disciples to pay attention and "listen" to the beloved Son of God. Then it's all over and they started down the mountain and Jesus told them not to tell anyone. What? They were told not to tell anyone? Can you imagine what the disciples thought of that? Perhaps Jesus understood that those kind of mind blowing experiences of God need to rest in the heart, soul and mind of a person. One can tell others about the experience, but the telling often lacks the power of what had happened. The real test of the experience is how a person lives afterwards and how they serve God and love others. *How will you do that during this season of lent?*

Friday, February 16, 2018

"And while he thus always exercises his love to God...this commandment is written in heart, *"That he who loveth God, loves his brother (and sister) also."* And accordingly loves his neighbor as himself; he loves every one as his own soul. That a (person) is not personally known to him, is no bar to his love; no, nor that he is known to be such as he approves not, that he repays hatred for his good-will. For he "loves his enemies," yea, and the enemies of God....he ceases not to pray for them, though they continue to spurn his love. ***"The Character of a Methodist, John Wesley***

May we take these words to heart during our Lenten journey. May we truly love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. As John Wesley has stated, *"we do not have to know others, approve of their behavior, we are called to love them as God does."* *How will you live out that love in your life?*