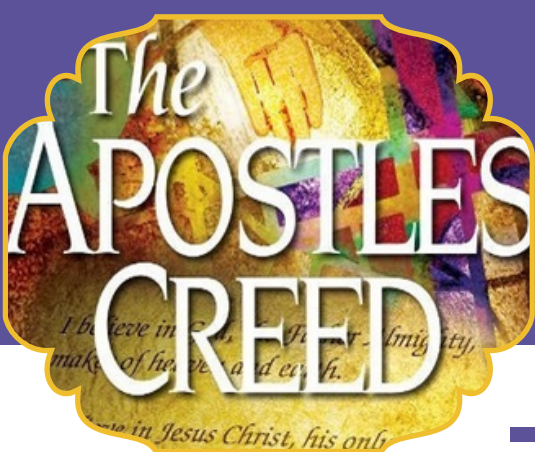




FAIRVIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Loving God & Loving Others = worship + missions

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

R2019-Sept 4 | By Brian Dennert | wearefaith.org

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*universal

The Apostles' Creed reminds us that a key tenet of the Christian faith is the forgiveness of sins. When we confess this belief we are saying, "I believe that God, because of Christ's satisfaction, will no longer remember any of my sins or my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life. Rather, by grace God grants me the righteousness of Christ to free me forever from judgment." These words note that forgiveness of sins is not simply having our past wiped clean so that we can start over. In Christ's death, he takes our punishment for sin and also gives us his righteousness so that we are made right with God (2 Corinthians 5:21); we are right with God not based on what we do after we believe, but rather for the life that Christ lived for us. Instead of being condemned for what we have done, we are made right because of what He has done. Our sin has severed our relationship with God, but because of God's forgiveness, we have hope for our present life and the life to come.

Much could be said of this amazing truth that is at the center of the Christian faith – and what really differentiates the Christian faith from others. However, as I considered this truth again as I journeyed through the Apostles' Creed, three implications for my everyday life stood out:

1) I Am Not Perfect

Believing in the forgiveness of sins means that I believe I am a sinner who needs forgiveness. This means that I know I am not perfect, which is something that can be hard for a perfectionist like me to believe, but I need to. I should be able to readily admit my faults, not just my finite shortcomings, but the things I do that wrong other people – the things I think, say, and do (or fail to think, say, or do). Rather than being defensive, I can admit when I have messed up. In addition, I can confess and acknowledge that I am a work in progress, that though I am in Christ, I am still tempted by sin and stumble into it. Believing in the forgiveness of sins allows me to be open and upfront about my shortcomings, both to myself and to others.

2) I Am Not Defined By The Worst Thing That I Have Done

When I admit the wrongs I have done, I also need to remember that these things should not be what define me. I am the sort of person who can walk around with much guilt from the things that I have done – rehearsing in my head the things that I should or should not have done earlier that day (and in the past). Confessing my belief in the forgiveness of sins means I do not need to define myself by this; I can let go of the things I have done because God has done that already. I should learn from my errs and seek to turn from sin, but I should not dwell in them, with dwelling on and in our sin being a strategy of the devil, not of our gracious Father.

3) I Am Not the Only One Forgiven

When Jesus teaches us about the forgiveness of sins, he reminds us that we are to forgive others as well; this forgiveness is for us but also for others, and we should be vessels of this forgiveness in our world. We should not be like the unmerciful servant who is forgiven an enormous sum and then threatens someone who has a small debt to him (Matthew 18:21-35). Rather, we are to ask God to forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors (Matthew 6:12). Experiencing forgiveness means that I should have great joy like the woman who washed Jesus's feet (Luke 7:36-50), with this joy leading me to not harbor resentment towards those who have wronged me nor withhold forgiveness from others. I am not better than others, but need the same grace they need – may I show that grace to them as one who has been forgiven. I am not perfect, nor to be defined by my sins – and neither should others.

JUSTICE-SEEKING

#BeUMC
ResourcesUMC.org/BeUmc

Amos 5:24: But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Book of Discipline, ¶102. Section 1—Our Doctrinal Heritage: Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice and renewal in the life of the world.

Matthew 22:37-39: You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.

Often, our ideas about justice are connected to our politics. Our faith, however, calls us to seek justice for all people. Prophets like Amos talked about it. Jesus worked for it. Our United Methodist Church advocates for it around the world.

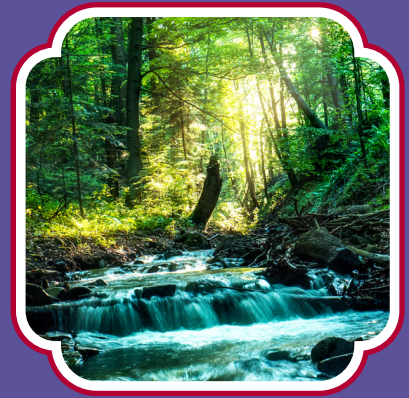
- God speaks through the prophet Amos to tell people to put away their worship, songs and sacrifices because God actually wants justice and righteousness. Why might God not be pleased with our piety? What do justice and righteousness have to do with our faith?
- When you think of the word justice, what comes to mind? How is the biblical understanding of justice the same or different from the ways we understand justice today?
- In this passage, justice and righteousness are linked. How are they similar? How are they different? How does the biblical understanding of righteousness differ from ways we use that word today?
- What is the connection between our personal piety and a passion for justice?
- Why is it important that the church be involved in working for justice around the globe? In our community? In our families?
- What injustices bother you most? How are you seeking and advocating for justice? • We often view justice as the work of politicians and policies, but there are injustices that occur at work and school, among our friends, etc. How can you work for justice in the lives of the people around you?

When someone asks Jesus what the greatest commandment is, he gives two. How are our love of God and love of neighbor related? Those of us familiar with this passage don't often think of it as a lesson in justice. How might loving our neighbor include acting and advocating for justice?

In his "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King Jr. famously quotes Amos 5:24: "we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream." How do we continue to seek justice today? How are you a justice-seeking person of God? How could you and your church grow in this area?

Closing prayer (Prayer of St. Francis, UM Hymnal 481)

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.



Better Together

**Wednesday,
April 19, 2023
2:00-4:00 p.m.**

The Virginia Community Senior Center would like to welcome all seniors, 55 years and older, to participate every third Wednesday. Please join us **at the Virginia United Methodist Church's Fellowship Hall.**



OUR STAFF AND SERVICES AT A GLANCE

FAIRVIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

3135 N. Cr 800e
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10:00 AM Fairview Sunday School
10:50 AM Fairview Worship Service

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