

## **The World is our Parish...World Communion Sunday.**

October 4, 2009

John Wesley was the father of the Methodist Movement and the Methodist Church. He said that the World was his parish, not just one church or one country, England. The whole world is our concern and our congregation? When John Wesley said that, the world was a large place and news was very slow...so was transportation. Now we see things instantly and travel is easy and fast...although expensive. But Wesley's view of Christian faith and ministry was expansive and powerful.

We can not put God in a Box that limits God to our church family or our neighborhood, family, community or country. God is the God of the whole world...in fact, of the whole cosmos! He set the stars and galaxies in motion and spread the milky way out like a blanket at the beach! He holds the spinning constellations in the palm of his hand! The whole earth and all who are in it are God's concern...and there are Christian brothers and sisters in ever corner of it.

We are called to pray for the world and to take the good news to the world. To share the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ through out the globe. We need not be ashamed or afraid. The message is one of love and forgiveness and it gives no offense. Be confident and kind in its' telling. We have good news, be not afraid. We have good news, different than any and every world religion...a word of hope and help for today and forever, from a God who loves us actively and forever.

And we are called to engage the world. Jesus said to be in the world, but not of it. The moral center and values of a Christian should be different than that of the world generally...but that we should not separate ourselves from the world and those in it...how can we love them if we do not know them and engage them? We are to be of

assistance and really care for people. This means to live out the Christian ethic of loving our neighbor as our selves and doing unto others as Christ as done to us...

As United Methodist we have a long history of helping people live better. To engage them spiritually and physically. To care for the whole person...body, mind and spirit. We have started Hospitals, Universities and churches everywhere we have gone. To care for the whole person. We continue to be at work through out the world making people's lives better, bringing clean water, working to prevent malaria, to provide medical care, to bring appropriate agricultural assistance and cooperating with local government and other agencies like Bread for the World, World Vision, Heifer Project, and others. We start schools, medical clinics and have built a major university in the heart of Africa to train teachers to go back to their countries to teach and raise up new teachers there.

And we work in ongoing emergency relief. We are already at work in Samoa helping with earthquake and tsunami relief, and in Indonesia as well...providing tents, blankets, rice and medical supplies. You can make a donation today by making a check out to the church and marking it Samoa or Earthquake or Umcors...and leaving it at the back of the room as you leave!

We are merely responding to God's call in our lives. God calls us to our community and to our world. Because God is at work in the whole world. Not just our group our area. It is easy to think that God is focused on me or us...that America is God's favorite people or country. We have been blessed with many freedoms and many blessing and great bounty as a nation, but that does not mean that God loves us more than anyone else. And remember, to whom much is given, much will be required.

The story of Pentecost from the book of Acts is instructive. It is the story of the start of the church. It is supposed to set the tone for the Church's mission—to empower and direct the apostle in their work. It is often called the miracle of tongues, but in reality it is the gift of languages. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes with power like a mighty rushing wind and blows through the Christians gathered (not just the Apostles, but everyone...another lesson) and everyone begins to speak in other languages as the spirit gives them the ability...these languages are not celestial, but rather the languages of the countries of the visitors to the city that flock to it for the Passover celebration that was on hand. They speak in languages that they did not know the mighty miracles of God. The Spirit gives them energy and power they never felt before, and a means to share the good news! These simple fisherman were able to speak in dozens of foreign languages to several thousand souls in their native languages the wonderful works of God in raising Christ from the dead! This is the miracle of Pentecost.

God speaks in your language. And uses the church and its members as the means to tell the story of salvation in a way people can understand. When we go, we speak their language...and learn their culture. Not make them learn ours. They do not need to learn English...and dress in American ways to be Christian (and listen to our music...) I mean Albert Switzer carried an Organ through Africa! Wasn't African music good enough for the African people to worship God with? This has been one of the greatest sins of our missionary activity, forcing indigenous peoples lose their languages and culture as they embrace the faith. This does not mean that we don't introduce advances in science and agriculture and medicine and the like, but that we allow people to figure out how to be Christian and Indian...rather an make them like us first. This has been the struggle of the church for a long time, and was the issue of the first church council recorded for us in Acts 15...so it is nothing new. God speaks each groups language...like a native...

God Speaks the language of every group. He knows their history, their hopes, their dreams, and their fears. He calls to them and speaks words of hope and grace, forgiveness and love to each one. God speaks the language of every culture, every group.

And more than that, God speaks the language of every individual, every heart. He knows each person deeply, more deeply than they know themselves. And he loves them with a love that is too deep to fathom. Before there is a thought, before there is a word on our lips, God knows it already. He Knows it all, yet he love us enough to send in only Son Jesus to be the means by which we can be forgiven. He loves us and calls us by name...by NAME. God speaks your name. He loves you, and forgives you and calls you to a new life and a new relationship of fulfillment and joy. He calls you home to hope and joy and fulfillment.

That's the balance. The world is our parish, but you are our parish too. God sees the whole world, but sees each individual in it and knows the number of hairs on each persons head. He Sees the world and loves the world and all in it. God sees each and every person and none escape his notice...nor his great love. He calls each by name. He knows your fears and your hopes, your dreams and dreads. And he calls you by name and hopes for a deeper relationship with you...full of love and forgiveness.

So we celebrate World Communion Sunday. It is both the near and the far. Today churches around the world who are part of the world council of churches in Christ band together to celebrate communion and receive an offering to help with a variety of issues from education to emergency assistance. On this the first Sunday in October, Christians in Cathedrals and in huts on every continent, every country, every climate, nearly every domination you can think of and some you don't know...will bind their hearts together in prayer as we break the bread and share the cup together today...creating one world wide table of

grace. Remembering the Apostle Paul's words, how there is now no slave or free, no man or woman, no Jew or Greek, but that we are all one in Christ Jesus....

Today we gather around the table as individuals, we are all alike around the world, wherever we are, whatever language we speak, regardless of our education or heritage, or how much money or anything we might have...we are all equal before the Lord—we are all sinners in need of grace. We are all simply Children of God, Children of Grace, come to receive anew Jesus' gifts of grace and mercy symbolized in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup: "this is my body broken for you, this is the cup of the new covenant poured out for you..."

Take again the Body of Christ, broken for you...One body, throughout the whole world.

Receive anew the cup of Grace, for the forgiveness of Sins. Take, drink, and remember what he has done and is doing for you... the cup of Grace, the Cup of God's Spirit, the cup of new life...Jesus' blood, given for you...come, drink, all of you, and as often as you do it, remember me.

The Table is set, the Lord is with us. The invitation is given...come, come to the table of Mercy. Come and receive these elements of God's forgiveness! All are welcome, all across the world. Whether from this church or any church...this is a moment between each person and God, a God who speaks their language! The language of the whole world.