

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Where Are You At? Part 1 - New Birth & Spiritual Growth**

July 10th, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 3:1-8**

1. The Sin Problem

- **God created us** as perfect wholesome beings, **in God's image, covered with God's glory.**

"God created mankind in his own image,

in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27 NIV

- **When Adam and Eve sinned** (by disobeying God), **sin came into the world and affected all their descendants (us!)**

"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;" Romans 3:23 NRSV

- Problems we see in with all humans in the world today are the result of sin

- **Sin is the humanity's biggest problem.**

- **Because of sin, God's wrath and judgement comes on humanity**

"Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for **because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient."**

Ephesians 5:5-6 NRSV

2. The Gospel/Good News - What is it?

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Paul explains the good news, which is **"of first importance"**:

- **"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" v3**
- **"He was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" v4**
- **The resurrection is a fact.** There were many witnesses to the fact that he came back to life - he appeared to many people v5

The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us, and is the power that transforms us in Christ - Romans 8:9-11

- **“By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.”** v10
 - In other words, Paul was saying, ‘God’s grace has been working in me, and look at its effect in me.’
 - John Wesley defined **grace as “the power of the Holy Ghost enabling us to believe and love and serve God.”**¹

3. The Almost Christian²

- John Wesley described the person who is devout, an almost Christian. Such a person has
 - Practices “heathen honesty” - does his/her best to be honest in all things
 - Gives “regard to truth as well as to justice.”
 - Has a “sort of love and assistance which they expect from one another.”
 - Has a form of godliness, what Wesley describes as “having the outside of a real Christian.” Such a person “does nothing which the gospel forbids” and does their best to avoid “all strife and contention, continually endeavoring to live peaceably with all men.”
 - “Labors and suffers for the profit of many.”
 - Frequents the house of God and engages in prayer

4. The New Birth / New Creation

Jesus told Nicodemus: **“no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.** Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?” 5Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, **no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.”**

John 3:3-6 NRSV

¹ John Wesley, *Instructions for Children*, p.10

² This is the title of a sermon preached by John Wesley in 1741

- A person who is born-again:³

Wesley points out that a person who is genuinely born again:

- Loves God completely with heart, soul, mind, and strength
 - Loves neighbor as self
 - Has genuine living faith in God, not just an intellectual understanding of the gospel or dead faith
 - Living faith leads to repentance from sin
 - Has a “sure trust and confidence” that they are forgiven of their sins - an assurance of their salvation
 - A person with living faith purifies himself by God’s power within from all unrighteousness.
- **Being born again is the transformative work of the Spirit of God in us.** How does this happen? **With our active permission and willingness.**
We must invite God into our hearts and lives to do this transformative work.
 - **What must we do to be saved?**
 - **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ** - Acts 16:30-32
 - Saving faith is **not “only an assent, an act of the understanding”⁴ of the gospel?**
 - **Living, saving faith is “sure trust and confidence in God that through the merits of Christ” your sins are forgiven, and you reconciled to the favor of God⁵**
 - **Receive Jesus** - intentionally open your heart to Christ Jesus
John 1:12
 - **Repentance from sin and a life of sin: acknowledge, confess, receive forgiveness by faith.**
Let the Holy Spirit throw light on your sinful nature and life of sin. Give up sin. Throw yourself completely on God’s mercy. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot depend on our own righteousness or any good deeds we have done. We are only saved by the mercy of God because all have sinned.

³ Some evidence cited by Wesley in sermon The Almost Christian.

⁴ John Wesley, sermon titled “The New Birth,” 1748

⁵ John Wesley, sermon titled “The New Birth,” 1748

“Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ” Acts 2:38 NRSV

- **Yield or surrender your will, and everything to Christ.**

Hold nothing back from God. Total surrender.

“He [Jesus] died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.”

1 Corinthians 5:15 NRSV

- **Genuinely make Jesus the Lord of your life** - now and always.

This must be genuine and not just lip service. Yes, confession with your lips is important, but it also involves heart belief and commitment.

“If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 10:9 NRSV

5. Spiritual Growth - So, where are you at?

- Are you a Christian? Have you been born of the Spirit of God?
- Do you know that you are saved from the wrath of God to come?
- Have you truly repented of your sins, confessed your sins to God and fully yielded your life to Christ by faith?
- Then, what next?
 - How long have you been a Christian?
 - Have you grown in grace and the knowledge of Christ?
 - Are you still growing?