

## Mid-Week Reflections May 16, 2018

### Thoughts About Us

Experience certainly determines our perspective on so many issues and our understanding of one another and our world. Last night at Finance Team, one member was celebrating the great soaking rain they had Monday evening and another, with great surprise said, "You are kidding. We barely had more than a drop in our rain gauge." Both were living their reality. Both were speaking their truth. As close as we live to one another and as similar as our lives appear to be, the reality is all we experience shapes us each quite differently.

That is almost a non-issue, but you get the point. It isn't about rain. More real is how our families of origin shaped us, or in many cases wounded us. Not all of us had two loving stable parents. Statistics tell us that today about 40% of marriages end in divorce. (That is actually down a bit from the 1990s when divorce was closer to 50%.) Only 40% of Americans now claim to regularly attend worship. (That is virtually the same as was reported in 1939...but that is very difficult data to collect.) One issue affecting worship is likely the vast number of options for worship today, many of which are not "mainline" denominations.

What I would argue that all that data suggests, is if we are paying attention to what is going on around us, and I admit that is tough to do some days, it has become more obvious that the "sameness" of my growing up years has been replaced with a buffet of different life choices. Now, it is common for men and women to both be working outside the home. Now, day care is a necessity. Now, generations of one family most often do not live in one home, or even the same state. Now, sports and dance and other organized recreation occupy the lives of children starting at pre-school age. Now, many retail businesses are open late many evenings and Sundays. Now, there are hundreds of options for entertainment: cable and satellite television stations as well as streaming possibilities.

All of that is who we are. It isn't a bad thing, but it does separate us a bit. At 8:00 on Sunday evenings we are not all gathered around an 18" black and white TV watching a western in our living rooms. So...you know there is a question coming. So...what? What do we do with this info? How do we navigate and even embrace this world we live in? How do we claim some control of our lives and embrace what has meaning and will shape the lives of future generations in a positive way?

I suggest we listen...to Jesus. I suggest we each establish or re-affirm the priorities that define us as followers of Jesus. That was and remains my intent with the current sermon series, "Hearing Jesus in a Noisy World." There is so

much going on in our lives. How do we find a grounded-ness? How do we find time to rest and restore our souls? It is a choice Jesus invites us to make every day.

This Sunday is my favorite day of the church year. It is Pentecost. It marks 50 days since Easter, but more importantly it marks the promised coming of the Holy Spirit...to all the people. And, the amazing thing is they were empowered to speak to one another in a way that they could hear and understand.

Take time in the next day or two to read Acts 2: 1-21. Read it out loud. It is action packed excitement that is the birth of the church. God's Spirit came, to all. The invitation again today is to receive the gift. And what I know, is it is tough to receive or embrace anything if our hands and lives are already full. What needs to be let go? What is occupying your heart and mind and time that is not giving your hope and peace and joy? Let it go. Really.

Listen to and for Jesus. Make worship a priority. Pray. Read scripture. This week we return to Matthew the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter and focus on verses 37-40. It is the primary teaching of Jesus...and unfortunately, we still are not living it too well. Remember, in all our busyness...in all that separates us and differentiates us from our ancestors and from our neighbors...these two things, just two, unify us in both our purpose and action. Love God. Love your neighbor. The sermon is "Rule Breakers, Rule Followers." We will be holding those graduating from Shawnee Heights in our prayers as they will "walk" at 1:00 Sunday afternoon. I hope to see many of you in worship.

**Coming Up:**

**I Care Garage Sale: June 7-9. Donations accepted June 3-5.**

**Children and Youth Ministry Team:**

**Monday, May 21<sup>st</sup> @ 7:00 Big Spring UMC**

**Church Council:**

**Wed. May, 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:00**

Blessings.

*Barb*