

First United Methodist Church

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I like questions. I don't always have the answers to them...but I like questions. They make me think. They make me ask more questions. They push me to look at things from a new perspective. They remind me of something important. They allow me to discover new answers that I might not have considered before.

In our "Discovering Your Strength in Weakness" sermon series for Advent, there have been some great questions raised in the messages. "Where are you going?" and "Why are you here?" were the first questions raised. Then, the second message raised the question, "What does it mean for me, to live today for Thee?" Again, these are all great and powerful questions to ask oneself.

Then Pastor Jerry raised another great question in last week's message, as we looked at the birthplace of Jesus as told in Luke's story. Jerry pointed out that Jesus was born in a stable, an animal shelter, and an animal feed trough was his first bed. Yet just a couple miles away was a place called the Herodium. This was a summer palace and residence for King Herod built on a man-made mountain. Herod built all sorts of grand structures during his reign for his own glory. These were the signs of power and strength that he wanted the people of his kingdom to see in order to draw attention to himself.

Yet if we look at these two individuals today, Herod is remembered, yes as a builder, but mostly he's remembered as a paranoid king who killed anyone who he thought was a threat to his throne, even his own family. Jesus, the one born in a barn in the shadow of the Herodium, is remembered as a one who surrendered his life so others might live. And then resurrection power brought Jesus back to life and he lives within us yet today.

The question Pastor Jerry asked in his message was, "Once we arrive in Bethlehem, which path will we follow? The path that leads to the Herodiums of the world (symbols of power and strength), or the path that leads to the stables in life (a place of weakness, ordinariness, discomfort, but also a place of safety, hope, and life)? That is truly a great question to consider as we prepare for a new year.

This question is why once a year we travel to Bethlehem, as a part of our faith journey, and we all meet at the manger. To be reminded of the one who came, and is still with us. This is the one who is Emmanuel...God with us! This weekend...and in the year to come, we'll meet often at the manger. Remember, God uses the weakness around us to bring strength and hope into our world...and our lives.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55: 8-9

"For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."

I Corinthians 1:25

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

Join us for worship this Sunday morning, December 24. Remember there is just one morning worship service at 9:30 am. There is **no Sunday School**. But we will have birthday cake in honor of Jesus birthday.

Our Christmas Eve schedule is; Friday, December 22 at 5:30 pm – our Early Christmas Eve service (Chapel), December 24 (Evening) we have service at 4:30 and 6:30pm (main Sanctuary). The 4:30 service features Carols and Candlelight accompanied by the pipe organ. The 6:30 service features Carols, Candlelight, and Communion. Join us for worship this great weekend!!