

First United Methodist Church

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We are in the season of graduations. DWU, MTI, Mitchell Christian, Mitchell High School, Kindergarten, Preschool; the list could go on. There are so many graduations taking place. Graduations celebrate accomplishments achieved, but they are also about recognizing that a chapter in life is ending and that a new chapter is beginning. Graduations really highlight that changes are taking place in a person's life. Or at least I can say for my life that every time I graduated it meant changes were coming in my life.

As I reflect on Jesus interaction with people in numerous stories in the New Testament of our Bible, Jesus was continually inviting people to graduate. He was constantly inviting people into a "season" of closing a chapter and beginning something new.

I think of the woman caught in adultery. Jesus invited her to graduate to a new understanding about living. I think of Jesus inviting the individuals that became his disciples, his closest followers. He invited them to graduate to a new understanding of God's Kingdom. I think of the Samaritan Woman at the Well. Jesus invited her to graduate to a new understanding of worship and of self-worth. I think of the rich young ruler. Jesus invited him to graduate to a new understanding of what is really important in life and what truly makes one wealthy. I think of the Pharisees and how Jesus invited them to graduate to a new understanding of righteousness and Godly living. I think of Zacchaeus. Jesus invited him to graduate to a new focus in life. This list could go on. Jesus is continually inviting people to graduate, to gain a new understanding, to move into a new dimension of life and living.

Now it's true, none of these "graduations" that I've referenced with Jesus and people he encountered, involved a cap and gown, a party, or even a diploma. It was simply an invitation to a new way of thinking, a new way of feeling, a new way of living in the world, but especially a new way of living with God.

So, my question today for each of us is, have you had any graduation celebrations in your life lately? I'm not talking about family members or friends who have donned the cap and gown, walked across a stage, and received a diploma. I'm thinking more of, has Jesus invited you to some sort of new understanding or perspective? Some new attitude or course of action for your life. Has Jesus invited you to graduate to a new way of living out your faith or living God's love?

Years ago, I heard a statement that really spoke to me. "God accepts you just the way you are but loves you too much to leave you there." There is great truth and power in that statement, I believe. To me it speaks of the reality of Jesus continually shaping and molding us into the people of faith that we can truly be. It's a daily journey. It's a continual experience of learning, growing, and graduating to a new path of faithfulness. So, in the midst of all the graduations of this season, may we each consider how Jesus is inviting us to new ways to experience and express God's presence and love in our world.

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

Remember, next week we move to our Summer Worship Schedule. There will be one service on Sunday mornings, beginning May 27, at 9:30 am. Our Mid-Week Wednesday Casual Worship Service will continue to be a 6:00 pm. Come join us for worship all throughout the summer!