

“If it Ain’t Red, Leave it in the Shed”

Luke 9:61-61; Galatians 3:23-29

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This city slicker was driving out through the country one day and missed his turnoff. He saw a small drive and decided to turn around.

Misjudging the drive and not familiar with soft shouldered country roads the fellow found his Cadillac sliding into the ditch. Well it wasn't too long till a farmer came along on a tractor and saw the car in the ditch and stopped to help.

As the farmer was taking a tow chain out of the tool box the city slicker walked up and asked the farmer, "What are you doing? You can't hook that dirty old tractor to my \$45,000 Cadillac!"

The farmer scratched his head a few seconds, put the chain away and said, "Your right, I can't hook my \$65,000 tractor onto your \$45,000 Cadillac!" and the farmer drove away.

So today we are going to talk about tractors. How many of you own a tractor (working or not working)? How many of you know someone who owns a tractor? What color is that tractor?

How many of you are John Deere people?

How many of you are IH people?

How many of you are Oliver people?

How many of you are Case people?

How many of you are New Holland people?

How many of you are Massey people?

Anything I missed?

Ok, so we all have our favorites. I grew up in Janesville and grew up believing that John Deere was the best. Then I married my husband who worked at Johnson Tractor (IH), but whose true love was Oliver. Being a city girl, I never really knew the differences between all the tractors (I still don't), except that they are painted different colors. I

mean after all, what is the difference? If you have the guts to actually ask that to a farmer (or up here in public) you will get a mighty ear full. So this is what I know...

If it ain't red, leave it in the shed

If it's red, leave it in the shed

Nothing runs like a Deere

Nothing runs like a Deere, thankfully

When you're bored with your ford, get down with a brown

Buy an Oliver, buy the best; buy a chain and tow the rest

Nothing has a chassis like a Massey

If it's not blue it's not for you

Nothing runs like a Deere been towed by a case

You'll never keep pace with the case

If ya buy a new Holland stay in bed because ta be honest she should be left in the shed

6 in a line sounds mighty fine!

Friends don't let friends drive _____color_____ tractors

People really do have their favorites. And they stick to them... with fierceness.

This may sound a little silly to those of you who don't own a tractor. And you might be wondering what all this has to do with church or our Galatians reading for today. You might not care if your neighbor has a red or a green tractor, and you might not get involved with that controversy. But I bet you have an opinion about other controversies.

Here are some controversies within the church

More conservative / less conservative

Only sing from the red hymnal / use more of the grey hymnal

Traditional / contemporary

Do not change / change

Butter the buns / put mayo on the buns

Burgers / brats / walking tacos at the food stand

As humans, we all have opinions. But sometimes those opinions set us up against other people. So what does this have to do with our Galatians reading today? Well, I'm glad you asked!

There was a big controversy happening in Paul's day. Paul was out converting people to Christianity. In the Galatian church, a faction existed that said believers must keep the Mosaic law if they wished to be truly Christian. It was not enough to be "in Christ Jesus," you had also to keep the Old Testament dietary laws and the various customs and traditions of Judaism. In other words, they said you must be a Jew before you can be a Christian. Paul knew that this was never going to work. The Gentiles would never convert to Judaism to become Christians. He also knew it did not make any sense. If we are made acceptable to God by keeping laws and regulations, we do not need Christ at all. So Paul argues fiercely against these Judaizers.

It is faith in Christ makes us one, eliminating all distinctions and prejudices. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This is a startling truth: Jesus Christ is the answer to all the prejudice, bitterness, hatred, oppression, and inequalities on the earth! It's especially startling when we think about the context in which it was written: It was written two-thousand years ago, when Jews thought that they were the one chosen race....and looked down upon everyone else....it was written long before the abolition of slavery, it was written when women were generally thought of as having no rights whatsoever....and were merely and literally the property of men.

Paul's statement that we are all one in Christ Jesus went completely against the grain of the way everyone up until this point had ever thought....therefore it is an unbelievably radical statement....and it gives us an incredible insight into the big picture of what

Christianity is all about! And unfortunately, many of us have not gotten that big picture even today...even two thousand years later!

Maybe you don't have an opinion on the tractor controversies, maybe you didn't have an opinion on the church controversies either. So where might you fall on these?

Wisconsin/USA controversies

Packers / Bears

Democrat / Republican

Unions / non-union

Other political agendas

If the state insect is the honey bee / mosquito

Everyone is on equal footing before Jesus Christ. God makes no distinctions....even if we do!

Yes, Jesus Christ accepts us all (even the Vikings fans, and even the IH lovers)through faith in Him. God loves everyone...God looks at the inside of people rather than the outside.... Jesus Christ reaches out and embraces all people...calling all people to come to faith in Him....and so should we!

The barriers that get in our way.....color, nationality, social status, what kind of tractor is owned, or any other differences mean nothing to God. For we all have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory. Therefore we are not to judge other people, just because they are different than we are, or drive a different color tractor.....as a matter of fact....Jesus tells us that we are not to judge anyone!

And let's face it, Jesus was a radical! Jesus stopped the ones in authority from stoning a prostitute. He did not join in with them when they were about to kill another human being because of her sin. Jesus spoke to that woman...whom no one else would speak to....he accepted that woman whom no one else would accept....He saved that woman whom everyone else wanted to destroy.

And what about the woman at the well? Do we realize just how radical Jesus' actions were in that situation? Not only was it demeaning for a man to talk to a woman in that day and age, but for a Jew to talk to a Samaritan woman? Unheard of! She was out in the middle of the day by herself, not even her own townsfolk wanted to be seen with her. She was an untouchable, but Jesus touched her, and the entire city was saved because of His touch.

And what about the lepers? Jesus actually hung out with those people. They were His friends. Can you imagine what the religious rulers must have been saying behind his back? But we don't have to imagine, we know...they will say crucify Him!

And why is that? Because Jesus did not discriminate..... Like the United Methodist logo AND our Mission Statement, "Open hearts, Open Minds, Open doors" Jesus meets people with an open heart saying "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and him with me." Jesus meets people with an open mind, meeting people where they are...not judging them, but loving them...seeing the potential within them....seeing what good God can do with their lives once they feel God's touch. Jesus meets people with open doors.... accepting, and forgiving, and recreating anyone who comes to Him.

This is the big picture....This is what Christianity is all about....this is what we are all called to do! We are called to have open hearts, open minds, and open doors....

It's up to us to accept people where they are (even if they like John Deere)...it's our job to love everyone who comes through our doors...it's our job to meet people with open minds...believing that Jesus Christ meets people where they are, and that He came not to judge people but to free people. And we are called to have open doors, believing and trusting that through Jesus Christ all people are equal in the eyes of God.

We are called to do what Jesus did....we are called to be friends with the outcastes....to show them Christian love....to offer them living water....to tell them about Jesus without judging them....to let them know that Jesus loves them...to prove to them that not all church doors have been shut in their faces... let's do what Jesus did....let's offer them a place where they too can worship God. Let's accept them for who they are and let God take care of the rest.

We are called to come together as one and to not judge others. It's like this... Do you know what part this is? It's a . Who were my John Deere people? Would you put this on your tractor? Who were my IH people? Would you put this on your tractors? Exactly! When it comes down to the bare parts, tractors are a lot alike. Things like these (tractor logos, football logos...)... LABELS. These are the things that separate us. But we should only really be concerned with one label, and that is this (slide saying child of God, Christian, blessed...) label. Our opinions on non-important things divide us. Our faith in a very important thing- Jesus Christ- unites us.

What a wonderful blessing Brodhead United Methodist Church is! The people of this place do great things, and we can do even greater things than these! So let's go outside the doors of this building. And spread the love of Christ to people who are hurting, people who feel as if no one loves them, people who have been marginalized and discriminated against, and people who have been verbally attacked and judged by the very institutions who claim to love them.

We are the light of the world.

We are the salt of the earth.

We are called to do what Jesus did. We are called to see the big picture....
By truly being the people of the United Methodist Church....people with open hearts,
open minds, and open doors.

Tractors, tractors big and small

Old or new I love'em all!

Start'er up and let'er run,

Watch those tractor's get'er done!