



I hope you enjoyed our look at creation and the origin stories of human existence from a biblical perspective. Remember, you can catch up on any you missed on Facebook! We will continue a focus on our origins to help us better understand our purpose as a local gathering of the global and eternal Church. The United Methodist Church is a complex and expansive organization. An understanding of who we have been, both as members of Christ's global Church, and as members of the Methodist movement, can be informative to who we are called to be today. We will begin with a study of the church in general and our practices as we gather for worship and disperse for the life changing work of the gospel. Have you ever wondered why we sing our praises? Or why we decorate the church the way we do? We will examine these questions together in the coming weeks.

When I was very young, one of the key features that let me know I was at my grandparent's house was a basket of nuts that sat on the fireplace by the back door (that was really the front door if you were family). I don't ever remember seeing anyone eat pecans or walnuts while I was there, so I did not understand the reason for the shiny contraption on top of the pile. It was simple, consisting of two shiny metal rods joined together at a hinge, but I could not imagine their purpose or how they related to a basket of nuts. They looked like the nun-chucks from my favorite ninja movies, but Granddaddy sure got mad when I swung them around like that. Sometime later, Granddaddy decided I was responsible enough to learn how to use this tool he called a "nutcracker". He showed me how to separate the shell from the delicious insides as I looked on with wonder. Years later, that old two handled nut cracker was replaced with a larger and more complex model that served Granddaddy's purposes better. It was of little comfort to me that this new model was a more efficient cracker of nuts. The old one had become precious to me as a marker of having entered that beloved home.

In a church, there are endless markers that we have entered the house of God, but it is important to remember that everything in the church is, or was at one time, a critical tool for furthering the goal of discipleship. The songs we sing today became beloved long ago because they softened hearts for God to mold and save. Stained glass windows tell the story of God. Icons remind us of the work God has done. But even holy relics can become idols if we forget their holy purpose, or believe the Father is more attached to the tool than its purpose. I hope the following weeks will help us to understand the purpose behind our practices, so that we can more effectively understand and accomplish our mission in this world that is badly in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Gods blessings,
-Pastor Matt

(Friday, August 16, 2019)
