

Metho-huh? Week 1: Called "Methodist"

Scripture:

Genesis 32:22-32

The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' ²⁷So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' ²⁸Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.' ²⁹Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.' ³¹The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. ³²Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

John 14: 15-23

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.' ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' ²³Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'

Questions:

- 1.) Pastor Sandy emphasized that the core of faith for Methodists is love and the transformation that love brings to the world.

In the John text, what is the nature of love? What is the relationship between God and humans?

What is the nature of love in the Genesis text?

How are these expressions different? Can they co-exist? Can wrestling and abiding in love form each other and how?

- 1.) Sandy mentioned a UCC pastor in Illinois who preached: "Please do not bore me with the title 'spiritual yet not religious'. Though Christians see "God in the sunsets" as well, our faith challenges us and asks something of us.

What is your gut reaction to this? What did she mean? Do you agree? What does our faith ask of us?

- 2.) "Love is seeking to find us and transform us...the "method" behind Methodism is how to make it so"—Pastor Sandy. The early Methodists were recognized for their "methods", while Sandy wishes our predecessors were recognized for love and called "Love-odists". What are the methods that the Methodist tradition use for this end?

(Prayer, small groups, studying scripture, journaling, service.)

- 3.) In Wesley's time in England, most Britons were part of the church. The Church's role was clearly defined as maintaining order, but didn't seem to encourage deeper spiritual growth. John and Charles Wesley's involvement in the Oxford Holy Club seemed to encourage fertile ground for Charles to hear God's voice telling him: "You are loved by me", and then John's famous Aldersgate experience of the strange warming of his heart.

How has church and various community groups within made fertile ground in our lives? What is our hope for this particular group? How can we help each other love and be loved?

The Wesleyan tradition is very intentional about discipleship in order to embody love more fully. Is there a particular discipleship method from our tradition that we may feel called to try?

- 4.) How have we loved this past week? How can we embody love this coming week?

Lord, our goal is Love. Help us to be greater conduits of your Love for ourselves and for the world.