

LIFE IN THE VINE

Pray

July 4, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciple for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Luke:

The Gospel of Luke is the only Gospel addressed to a specific individual, "most excellent Theophilus" (1.3). Theophilus was a common name in antiquity. It derives from the Greek words for "God" and "love"; the name means "lover of God". The dedication could be strictly symbolic, suggesting the Gospel is dedicated to anyone who is a "lover of God," or the name could refer to some unknown person in antiquity.

The Gospel is part of a two-volume history that concludes with the Acts of the Apostles. The opening words of Acts refer back to the Gospel as a book in which the author recounted all that Jesus did and taught. The attribution of the Gospel to Luke is due to its association with Acts. Clearly, the same person wrote both books and the author of Acts appears to be an intermittent traveling companion of Paul's throughout the last half of Acts. Paul's letters even mention Luke as a doctor and friend of Paul's.

When read side-by-side (as they were probably designed to be), Luke and Acts form our most important sources for understanding the history of earliest Christianity. The two books are held together by the theme of the plan of God. The history in these volumes relates how God acted in Jesus of Nazareth to bring peace and justice into the world and how God continued this same mission through the apostles whom Jesus chose.

Luke's Gospel has a particular emphasis upon Jesus' role as a prophet who spoke for God and who called his followers to be diligent in caring for those without privilege.

-from the Wesley Study Bible, pp1237)

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 11:1-4

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ² He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

This Week:

We're in the third week of our Sermon Series titled 'Life in the Vine.' This series is based on the theme for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity based on the words of Jesus found in John 15:1-17. In that Scripture, Jesus refers to himself as the Vine and his disciples as the branches meant to bear fruit. Jesus gave the picture of the Vine to describe his life with his disciples and their lives in relation to each other. Today, we look at prayer.

We find our Scripture for this lesson in the eleventh chapter of Luke. It is the prayer that Jesus shared with his disciples after they asked, "Lord, teach us to pray." In Luke, we find more emphasis on Jesus' practice of prayer than any of the other Gospels, reporting that the Spirit came upon Jesus while he was praying and that he withdrew to desolate places periodically to pray. He also prayed before significant turning points in his ministry – e.g., the call of the disciples, Peter's confession, and the transfiguration. Later, Luke will report Jesus' prayers at Gethsemane, and the cross, and at table with his disciples.

By the first century there were set prayers. A devout Jew would repeat the prayers in the morning and again in the evening. If the situation prohibited reciting these prayers in their entirety, a shorter version could be said.

For us, prayer can be solitary or shared with others. It can express wonder, complaint, intercession, thanksgiving or simple silence. Sometimes the desire to pray is there, but one has the feeling of not being able to do so. Turning to Jesus and saying to him, "teach me", can pave the way. Our desire itself is already prayer.

Getting together in a group offers us support. Through hymns, words and silence, communion is created. If we pray with Christians of other traditions, we may be surprised to feel united by a bond of friendship that comes from the one who is beyond all division. The forms may vary, but it is the same Spirit that brings us together.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Jesus gave us a model prayer, and his life was an example. In addition to that, how did you learn to pray? Who were your earliest teachers?
2. How does your life model prayer? How are you teaching others to pray?
3. Many of us feel quite comfortable praying in solitude but not in community. What may be keeping you from offering a public prayer?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
3 Give us each day our daily bread.
4 And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.”