

07/23/17 BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“HOLD THE NUTS!”

Pastor Mike Corwin

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 God's Word: Romans 16:17-18

I - HOT FUDGE:

I never thought that it was possible to ruin ice cream...but it is! Every once in a while when I'm out traveling around and I don't have time to stop for a meal I'll stop and get a milk shake. This will satisfy my hunger and stop my stomach from growling. It's also good. But...they have darned near ruined this basic staple of refreshment. You see I'm pretty plain when you get right down to it. The only real ice cream is vanilla and when I order a shake that's all I want in it - vanilla ice cream. But in this modern day and age evidently you can't get served a milk shake without whipped cream, sometimes sprinkles, and a cherry on top of it. Half the glass is taken up by these additions and there's very little room left for the actual ice cream.

When I'm really sinful, and my wife or doctor aren't looking, I will have a hot fudge sundae. Again all I want is vanilla ice cream covered in hot fudge. I don't want sprinkles...I don't want whipped cream...and please...HOLD THE NUTS!

When did we get to the point we are in society where we think we have to take a plain and simple thing and add all kinds of things into and onto it to the point it's no longer recognizable? Have you driven through a fast food place lately and tried to order just a hamburger? Instead of something that resembles a plain hamburger you get ones with jalapenos, bacon, onion rings, ribs, mushrooms, and even fried eggs on it. You can't even go and get a simple staple like a taco without having half the country of Mexico on it, or a donut that's just some fried bread as they have to have things inserted into them or on them to increase the calorie count and I think get you addicted to sugar. What happened to plain and simple?????

II - PLAIN FAITH:

What worries me is I see this same trend in our faith. The same trend in Christianity. When you get right down to it our faith has four basic tenets:

- Jesus lived
- Jesus died
- Jesus was resurrected
- Jesus is coming back

That's it! Jesus was the Son of God and came to earth, born in a stable, to bring God's love to God's Creation. He was crucified and died on a cross to release us from the curse of sin and its resulting separation from God. He was placed in a tomb for three days and was then resurrected to show us that he even defeated death on our behalf and give us the hope of eternal life. He's coming back to redeem us and the whole Creation once and for all. All we have to do is believe in that, have plain faith, and we will get to reap the benefits of what Jesus has done for us.

It all seems simple...but then humans got involved in it all. Humans took this basic system of belief and had to add whipped cream, sprinkles, and nuts to the top of it. Think of all the rules and regulations that have been added by humankind concerning your faith. Some would tell you that unless you are baptized, and it's done in their church, you are going straight to hell. We argue not only about the need for it, but how it's done too. Do you get sprinkled or dunked before it's recognized by God? How do you take communion? Do you sip or do you dip? And the ushers better be in step no matter what! Is it a sin if the organ isn't played every Sunday, or if drums can be heard, and, oh my goodness, if the writer of the hymn isn't dead and it was written over a hundred years ago we're surely doomed. If the refrain is repeated more than twice, like in praise music, we're going straight to hell.

What does any of that have to do with Jesus lived, died, was resurrected, and is coming back? Religion - the manmade part - has messed up Christianity - the Jesus part.

III - TEXT:

That's the message I see in Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. He's heard some things he doesn't like. He can see them getting pulled in different directions. He can see them getting away from the basics of their faith and he sends them this letter:

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (NLT)

¹Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. ²It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. ³I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. ⁴He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. ⁵He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. ⁶After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. ⁹For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church. ¹⁰But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. ¹¹So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all preach the same message you have already believed.

Paul reminds them of the very basics he had taught them. Jesus died for their sins and Jesus was resurrected from the dead. He tells them again that this is the Good News and it's what will save them if they continue to hold true to that truth. Unless of course their faith was actually empty and worthless in the first place.

And that shouldn't be the case because he gave them the most important information in all of creation...the central part of the Gospel. Jesus died and Jesus was resurrected, and he did it all for us. What else do you need to know?

He really elaborates on the Resurrection. The fact that Jesus died was well known and accepted. But if you don't have and believe the resurrection part you miss a large part of the point. Like I've told you before we're all going to die, it's the getting back up part that's the miracle. So he points out that he was in the grave for 3 days and was then raised from the dead.

And this resurrected Savior has witnesses to that fact. He was seen by Peter and the rest of the disciples to start with. You'd expect them to say such a thing - after all they were his followers. But he was seen by over 500 others. Some who were still alive and testifying to it. His own half brother, who thought he was insane at one point, saw him and became a church leader as did all the other Apostles.

And Paul himself, who says he wasn't one of the original band, who had actually been a disbeliever and persecuted those who did accept it all, had seen Jesus as he snatched Paul out of his life of sin and rebellion. And because of God's grace he was able to work for the cause and God was working through him to spread the Gospel to others.

He closes this section by telling them that it doesn't matter whether he's preaching or someone else is preaching because there's only one message and that's the one they should believe.

IV - ALL ABOUT JESUS:

We have set out on a journey this year. A journey that will set the goals and the work of this church for the foreseeable future. A journey that is going to take efforts, resources, time, and God's power to accomplish. We said that there are five areas of darkness we can no longer stand to see shadowing the lives of those in our community. They are:

- Addiction
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Child care for 2nd and 3rd shift workers
- Job obtaining, training, and retaining.

Through prayer and discernment we have chosen to attack Addiction and Child Care first and we are laying out the plans for meeting and visioning how to do this starting in next two months.

We have chosen these two because to tackle all 5 at the same time would burn us out and use us up. That would happen because we have so many other ministries going on at the same time: meals for those who have trouble feeding themselves, food and clothing pantry each week assisting BORN, visiting those who are part of our family and those who have no family and the list goes on and on.

As we go forth, as we do all of this and so many more I haven't even mentioned, we need to remember we are doing them for God...not for us. We are doing them to build God's Kingdom, not Bucyrus United Methodist's Kingdom. We need to remember the thing we have to offer them that no one else does is the true and life saving information and faith that God loved them so much he sent his one and only Son to die for them so they could be reconciled to him. That after 3 days in the grave he raised him from the dead so we know that when our time comes we too have a better life ahead, a resurrected life of our own. And that some day we will see Jesus return and set straight all the evil and injustice that abounds in this world.

V - HOLD THE NUTS:

In other words, we need to HOLD THE NUTS! We need to keep it plain and simple so people can understand, relate to, and have a relationship with Jesus.

It's not about rules and regulations. It's not about slogans and meetings. It's not about all the extras we can pile on to make people happy and satisfied. It's all about Jesus and what he did for us. If we're not careful, we'll get to the point where people will see the church...but they won't see Jesus.

We proclaimed that we would defeat the areas of darkness by shining the light of Jesus into that darkness. We have to make sure we don't cover the light with all the manmade stuff that will act like a lampshade and dims the light.

Our job is to simply love God...love each other...and make disciples. Nothing more and nothing less and that's not done through the power of our name but through the power of the name Jesus. Lord of lords and King of kings.

AMEN