

BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH October 7, 2018

“THE GUEST LIST” Pastor Mike Corwin

TEXT: MARK 2:13-17

GOD’S WORD: LUKE 14:7-14

I – MUSIC:

I’d like to do something a little different today. I’d like to start the sermon with a song. I’d Love to have a band here to play it for you, but I don’t, so I’ll have to share it with you on our video system. The song is a Christian song by Casting Crowns called “The Altar and the Door” Feel free to sing along if you know the words.

PLAY THE SONG “THE ALTAR AND THE DOOR”

II – REACTION:

What a wonderful worship song for a communion Sunday. Did you all hear the words? Lyrics like...

*Lord, this time I’ll make it right, here at the altar I lay my life
Your kingdom come but my will was done, my heart is broken as I Cry, like so
many times before
But my eyes are dry before I leave the floor, oh Lord
I try but this time, Jesus how can I be sure I will not lose my follow through
Between the altar and the door...*

And yet, as I look around I sense that not all of you share my joy over the song this morning. I see some of you saying in your mind, “Miley Cyrus was one thing but if this is what he’s going to start doing, I’ll never step foot back in this church again.” As I watched this morning I saw some of you starting to tense up as the music started. I saw your jaws clenched, I heard your ears suck themselves closed, and your face reddened because your blood pressure started to elevate. This was not your kind of music and how dare I subject you to it. It has no place in God’s Holy Church. Let me bring you back down to earth, back into a spirit of worship by telling you this won’t be a regular occurrence during this service in the foreseeable future.

I want you back down to earth so you can understand why you don't like this music. It isn't really the music you dislike; it's the culture it represents. You don't like the music because you associate it with people who have purple Mohawks, nose rings, numerous other body piercings, and a body full of tattoos. Not only that but they dress funny...grunge is in! That music represents a generation of people who are different from you. That's what you can't accept. Your parents didn't dislike Elvis because of his music; they disliked him because of his appearance and behavior. They didn't dislike the Beatles because of their music; they disliked them because they dressed funny and had long hair. Our parents didn't dislike rock and roll, they disliked the hippie generation it represented. It's not different music we dislike, its different people. Music is just a symptom of culture change & we don't like that change!

III – OUR GUEST LIST:

The trouble is we use these same prejudices and personal biases to not only make decisions about what kind of music is acceptable in the Church of Jesus Christ, we also use them to decide what people are acceptable to sit and worship with us in the Church of Jesus Christ.

We look at people and decide they aren't worthy to sit in the same pew as us. I know this hurts, I know I'm stepping on toes, but we need to hear this and act accordingly. Some of us have trouble with people who dress different than us. We have trouble with people who aren't on the same mental plane that we may be on. We look down at people who don't have the same amount of money that we may have. Do they work at a respectable job? Do they have more kids than we think they should have? Is the grass at their house always mowed? Do they drive cars that are too new or too old, or at least an American made one? Do they have a reputation around town? What's the color of their skin? Did I see a Trump sign or Clinton sign in their yard at the last election?

Let me ask you this...which of them should we sentence to hell? Which groups of people are unworthy of the grace of God as found through the blood of Jesus Christ? Who can you think of that Jesus would have refused to associate with? As we come to the communion table this morning, as we prepare to take the bread and the juice as we remember what Jesus did for all of us, who should we delete from the invitation to share in the meal? Who should we take off of the guest list?

IV – TEXT:

According to the example I see set by my Savior, the lessons taught by Jesus, the bringer of God's grace, no one should be excluded from Jesus' table. Listen to one such example found in the Scripture.

Mark 2:13-17(NLT)

¹³Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. ¹⁴As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. **"Follow me and be my disciple,"** Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him. ¹⁵Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) ¹⁶But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?"

¹⁷When Jesus heard this, he told them, **"Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."**

Jesus is walking along the shore on the Sea of Galilee. Just like other Rabbi's would do occasionally. He was walking and teaching at the same time, teaching the followers as he went. As he walks along they come to a tax collection booth. This booth collected taxes from people on behalf of Herod. Jesus stops and talks to the man in the booth.

This in itself was highly unusual. Tax collectors were despised by the Jewish people. It was one of the lowest classes of people there was. They stole from the people and were corrupt for their own benefit. People who became tax collectors were kicked out of the Jewish religion. They were considered to be excommunicated from their entire heritage and on the fast track to hell. But Jesus doesn't only talk to him, Jesus invites him to come and be one of his disciples. The amazing part is that Levi – later to become Matthew – walked away from his get rich quick job and followed Jesus.

Later, maybe that night, it says that Levi threw a dinner party and invited Jesus to be a guest, along with his disciples. Jesus went and had dinner with Levi, some of his fellow tax collectors, and (gasp) other notorious sinners. People that the Pharisees looked at and called them SCUM! How dare Jesus associate with such people! How dare a man of religion lower himself to eating with tax collectors, thieves, murderers, prostitutes, liars,

sexual deviates, and other sinners. There may of even been some opinionated church people there...how dare he!

Jesus replied, How Dare I not? You people don't understand the guest list. I didn't come to save those who thought they were so good they could do it on your own, because they'll never get it. I didn't come to save those who are already saved...I came to save those who can't do it on their own. I came to save those who no one else will help. I came to offer hope to the hopeless, I came to offer joy to the sorrowful, I came to offer peace to those in chaos. I came to offer the grace of God to each and every one of his children. I came to seek and to save all the notorious sinners in the world. Each and every one of them is on the guest list.

V – JESUS GUEST LIST:

As we come to Jesus' table this morning I want us to do it with a feeling of recommitment. Recommitment to the fact that it's his table not ours and he has invited everyone to the table. Whether we deem them acceptable or not Jesus has invited them and they are welcome.

It's Jesus' table, but he allows us to set the table. He allows us to dress it up with the music we choose, the liturgy we choose, the preaching style we choose. He wants us to set it in such a way that it is inviting to all those he has invited. I agree that at this time the music I started the sermon with probably doesn't set the table for you in the way you need it set...but it does set the table for someone else. As caretakers of the table we need to figure out how to set it so that everyone on the guest list feels invited and welcomed. That may mean multiple services, it may mean multiple locations, it may mean different days and times or new and innovative ways to worship. But we have to figure it out so that everyone knows they are on the guest list.

Think about this for a minute. In some of your lifetimes the church as you know it will cease to exist and those you question now will be setting the table for Jesus. Don't you hope they remember you are on the guest list and set a place for you too?

CLOSE WITH COMMUNION

AMEN