

BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH March 19, 2023

“STILL LOOKING FOR A ROOM”

Pastor Mike Corwin

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

TEXT: LUKE 22:7-13, 19-20

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 8:18-22

I – HOMELESS:

Julie and I were over in Mansfield a couple weeks ago shopping and had to stop at the Kohl's store for something. We got whatever it was we wanted and then headed back out of the shopping center. As I neared the street I got stopped about two cars back from the light and got a chance to see a man who was wrapped up in an old army coat against the cold, crouching at the exit. He was holding up a sign that said, "Will work for food" as he shivered in the snow. More than him though, I was watching the driver of the car in front of me. You could tell he was uncomfortable by this man's presence; he was squirming around in his seat, looking in every direction except the man's, until the light changed and he got to pull out and leave.

Homelessness is a fact of life in our times, and you don't have to go to Cleveland or Columbus to find victims. You can find them right here around us. I remember recently reading an article a few years ago about a man who was taken to the hospital in Columbus with frostbite because he was living under a bridge in Bucyrus. There are bag ladies and street people right here in your community, I've dealt with some of them since coming here. According to the most recent statistics I could find from the year 2022, there is an estimated 582,462 homeless people in our country. 70% of those are families with children.

We'd like to think this is a new phenomenon, but it's been around for years. I can remember as a young police officer, at least weekly we let someone sleep in the city jail, without charges, so they'd be safe and warm for the night until moving on the next day.

II – JESUS WAS HOMELESS:

As you read through the Gospels you note that Jesus gave instructions about taking care of such people, about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty and so on. Jesus obviously cared for them, loved them, and wanted them taken care of. Jesus of all people could understand what they were going through...he was homeless too.

In the reading you heard earlier this morning one of the teachers of the time told Jesus, I'll pick up my cross and follow you. I'll follow you anywhere you ask me to go. And Jesus tells him the cost of

following him in verse 20:

But Jesus said, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have no home of my own, not even a place to lay my head” Matthew 8:20

Jesus said, “I’m homeless.” I don’t even have it as good as the wild animals or the birds, who have their holes in the ground or nests in the trees. I have no idea where I’ll lay down and sleep tonight, or even what I’ll eat tonight.

If you look at the life of Jesus you realize this wasn’t just something that happened when he started in the ministry, this started at his very birth:

- When he was born, there was no room at the Inn.
- After his birth he became a refugee as Mary and Joseph took him and fled to Egypt so Herod wouldn’t slaughter him.
- He may have had a few years as a child in a house with his parents in Nazareth, but that didn’t last long. Remember the first time he preached after being baptized was in his hometown and the people got mad and drove him away.
- He spent the next three years traveling from city to city, sleeping in the homes of strangers and the bottom of boats. His clothing wasn’t stylish and he sometimes went hungry. He was homeless by anyone’s definition and his homelessness lasted until the very end.

III – TEXT – LUKE 22:7-13:

We find that on the day he’s supposed to be arrested and the Passion begins, he’s still homeless:

Luke 22:7 - 13 (NLT)

⁷Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lambs were sacrificed. ⁸Jesus sent Peter and John ahead and said, “Go and prepare the Passover meal, so we can eat it together.” ⁹“Where do you want us to go?” they asked him. ¹⁰He replied, “As soon as you enter Jerusalem, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. At the house he enters, ¹¹say to the owner, ‘the Teacher asks, where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?’ ¹²He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is the place. Go ahead and prepare our supper there.” ¹³They went off to the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover supper there.

The festival is in full swing and the day of the Passover celebration has arrived. The lambs are being sacrificed for the coming meals and religious ceremonies. Jesus, soon to be a sacrificial lamb himself, wants to share this last Passover meal with his disciples. He knows his time is short. He rode into town on the back of a donkey to the cheers of the people on Sunday, but later tonight he’ll pray in the garden and be betrayed and arrested. Later tonight he’ll start being drug before the various religious leaders and later the Roman leaders to be questioned and tortured.

Tomorrow the same people who had been cheering his arrival on Sunday will be calling for his death on the cross. Before this happens he wants to spend some quality time with his closest friends, even he who was about to betray him. But he had no home in the city, he had no tent he could pitch on the outskirts, and he had no funds to rent a room at the Inn, although it was probably full again just as it was at his birth.

He sends his two trusted disciples, Peter and John, ahead of the rest to find them a place to eat. He says that as soon as they enter the city they'll see a man carrying a jug of water, and when they see him they are to follow him to the house and tell Him Jesus needs a room. You and I know that Jesus hadn't arranged this ahead of time, we know that Jesus was the Son of God, he's divine. he knew what the future held, he knew this man would be there, but I think there's another reason Jesus had Peter and John look for this sign, because it marked the kind of man who would make room for Jesus. You see only women carried jugs of water around in public. Men used leather pouches if they had to get water, they would never be caught dead in public doing a woman's work, and yet here was a man who was doing just that. Jesus knew such a man must have a heart for hospitality. He knew that a man who would do such work, regardless of public opinion, was the kind of man who would make room for him. Peter and John did as they were told and the man led them up an outside staircase to a large upper room where the table and cushions, the dishes and the utensils were already in place. Jesus had a room this night to eat with his friends. For a few brief hours Jesus was no longer homeless.

IV – STILL LOOKING FOR A ROOM:

I want to tell you that this very day, 2,000 years after that first Holy Week, Jesus is still looking for a room. The room he's looking for isn't in a stable, the room he's looking for isn't in a Temple, and the room he's looking for isn't up a flight of steps where he can eat the Passover meal. The room he's looking for is within each and every one of us. The room he's looking for is in our hearts. When he says that we have to pick up our cross and follow him, it means we have to have room for him in our lives.

Jesus still wishes to eat a meal with his disciples, to commune with his followers, even those who have betrayed him in some way like Judas did after eating with him that night. Jesus is still looking for rooms that have been set up, have been prepared for him. He still sends his disciples ahead to find those who will be hospitable, to seek room for the Savior. I am here this day on such a mission. Do you have a room for my Savior? Has your heart been prepared to let him in?

V – MAKING ROOM:

Any time we get ready to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion, to eat with our Savior the meal he instituted to remind us of his sacrifice, we need to give everyone the time to prepare the room. When Jesus arrives as you take the bread and the cup, I want Jesus to find the room already set up and prepared for him so...close your eyes and take this journey with me.

PREPARING THE ROOM:

TALK ABOUT SWEEPING THE ROOM, PAST SINS THEY HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN OR FORGIVEN THEMSELVES OR SOMEONE ELSE FOR, HATRED OR GRUDGES THAT KEEP JESUS FROM ENTERING IN. ALL HAVE SINNED, ALL FALL SHORT, BUT JESUS TOOK CARE OF THAT FOR US. TURN IT ALL OVER TO JESUS. HE DIED FOR YOU SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP THIS DIRT IN THE CORNER OF YOUR ROOM. LET IT GO, OPEN THE DOOR AND SWEEP IT OUT. MAKE ROOM – COMPANY'S COMING.

Note – the prayer wall has been replaced with a cross. On the table below that cross are pieces of purple paper. As we move closer and closer to Easter you are invited to sweep your heart and prepare the room for Jesus. You are invited to write down your sin, grudges, regrets, hatred, all of the things that take up room in our heart that you need to rid yourself of so Jesus has full access.

INVITING HIM IN:

JESUS SAID BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK, IF YOU HEAR ME CALLING AND OPEN THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN AND WE WILL SHARE A MEAL AS FRIENDS (REV. 3:20). ALL WHO CALL ON HIS NAME WILL BE SAVED. IF YOU ACCEPT JESUS HE WILL ACCEPT YOU. HAVE YOU OPENED THE DOOR? HAVE YOU INVITED JESUS IN? WILL HE BE SHARING THE MEAL WITH YOU TODAY AS A FRIEND, OR JUST AS A PERSON IN A BOOK YOU READ ON SUNDAY? I HOPE YOU'VE LET HIM IN AND HE SITS NOW AT YOUR TABLE. UNLIKE THAT FIRST MEAL IN THE UPPER ROOM, JESUS WON'T LEAVE YOUR ROOM. ONCE YOU LET HIM IN HE'LL STAY WITH YOU NOW AND FOREVER.

SHARING THE MEAL:

YOU'VE REPENTED OF YOUR SINS, YOU'VE INVITED JESUS INTO YOUR ROOM, NOW THE GOOD NEWS. HE WILL DINE WITH YOU THIS DAY, HE WILL SHARE THE BREAD AND THE CUP WITH YOU THIS DAY. HE WILL FILL YOUR HEART WITH WARMTH AND LET YOU KNOW THIS DAY THAT YOU ARE FORGIVEN! YOU DON'T NEED TO WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT TIME WE HAVE COMMUNION TO SIT AND EAT WITH JESUS. DO IT OVER A BOWL OF SOUP AND BREAD, OR EVEN EGGS AND TOAST. THE MAIN THING YOU NEED TO BE AT THE TABLE IS JESUS AND YOUR OPEN HEART.

The last two verses of this particular passage tells us that Jesus dined with his disciples that night, just as he does with us when we set the table, hear his knock, and let him in.

Luke 22:19 - 20 (NLT)

¹⁹Then he took a loaf of bread; and when he had thanked God for it, he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This wine is the token of God's new covenant to save you—an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you.

May you find the time to dine with Jesus.

AMEN