

**BGO Sermon for 11-6-16 – Revival: It Comes Through God’s Grace**

**Eph. 2:4-10 (NLT) Eph. 2:10 (Msg) Matt. 25:31-40 (NLT) James 2:14-24 (NLT) John 9:1-7 (NLT) Luke 6:31 (NLT, Msg)**

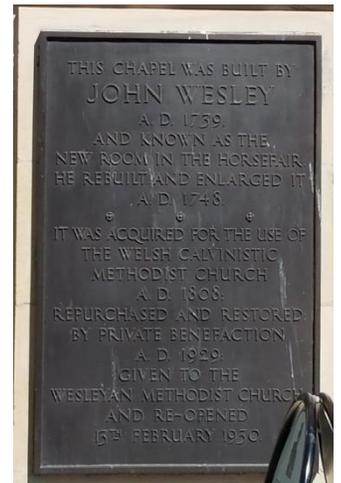


Bagley's Foundry, on the northern side of the City of London. It was named after its founder, Matthew Bagley. It was also known as the King's Foundry, as it made cannons for the British military. At least it did until the explosion. Ironically, the explosion came not from gun powder but from steam, as moisture in a mold caused extensive damage, killing 17 men,

including Mr. Bagley. The building was abandoned with a new foundry built to the southeast of London. So what do you do with a bombed-out building abandoned for 30 years? Well, if you're a Methodist, you turn swords into plowshares, and turn a building for molding cannons into a place for molding people's souls.

We're on the last legs of our "Revival" sermon series, and at the last stop in the tour of Wesley's travels. This week and the next, we'll be focusing on London, and how the mission that the Wesley's started grew from a movement into a full-fledged ministry. Again, Wesley wasn't trying to start a new "church", a new denomination; he was trying to bring a spiritual revival to his native England. And that's the goal for us here: Revival - reviving our spirits, reviving our churches, and reviving our place as part of that moving of the Spirit that birthed not only a revival in England, but brought about the United Methodist Church as we know it today.

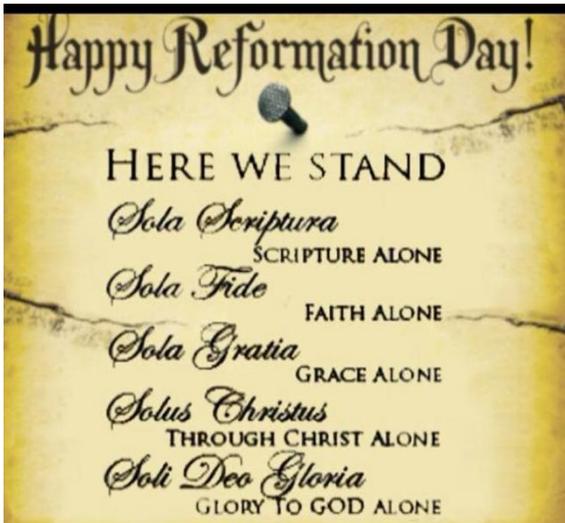
Last Sunday we talked about the field preaching outside the city of Bristol, and about the New Room, the meeting house Wesley had built in the city, where people would meet in small groups to strengthen their faith, and those who felt called to preach would come to practice their preaching.



We also mentioned last week that, as the ones who felt called to preach came to Wesley, he would listen to their sermons to hold them to sound Christian beliefs. Now we've talked a lot in this sermon series about where we've come from out of the Methodist movement, and what we do in the world as Christ Followers and Kingdom Servants, but we haven't talked much about what we believe – what defines us as part of the Body of Christ, the church.

Going through what we Methodists believe is true about God and our relationship to God would take a month of Sundays. I'm going to try and hit the high points today, and if you have any questions, let me know and we'll see if we can find the answer together.

When we share the Apostle's creed and say we believe in the holy catholic church, That's catholic with a small "c" - as in universal, not the part of the church with the Pope. Because as much as Methodism grew from Wesley's Church of England, with its roots in the Roman Catholic church, we are rooted in the Protestant Reformation.

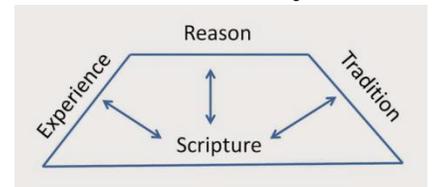


Last Monday was Reformation Day, remembering Martin Luther's movement to revive the Roman Catholic church, which eventually led to the breaking away from the influence of Rome and the Pope, instead focusing on God's Grace through faith in Christ that all people can see in Scripture. Ignoring the Latin, the theology of the Reformation comes down to those five points: Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Through Christ Alone, Glory to God Alone. In those we can see echoes

of Paul's words to the Ephesians: ***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.***

I would imagine that Wesley saw the truth in those five points, but not in the way many others saw it. Through his study and through his observation, he refined these ideas, some in ways that many even in his movement disagreed with. Let me try to interpret Wesley's point of view on these for you.

He might say: Scripture Alone...but we use tools to understand it. Wesley's beliefs always went back to the Bible as the source of truth, but he realized that many had gone off track from looking at it the wrong way. His approach to understanding Scripture used the points of what would be known as the Wesley quadrilateral. He would look at Bible passages through the lenses of Reason (does the way you understand that passage make logical sense, and not just on its own, but with the whole of Scripture), Tradition (how Scripture been understood by those before us down through the centuries, not just one opinion), and Experience (how the meaning is lived out in practice, not just in theory).



It's Faith Alone... but we have the freedom to choose it. Many churches believe that God has already decided who would be saved, chosen before the beginning of time. Wesley didn't see that. What he saw in Scripture was people choosing to follow or not follow God, like Abraham choosing to be obedient and God counting him as righteous because of his faith. Experience, Reason and Tradition confirmed to Wesley that we have free will, and all are invited to respond to God's offer of a relationship through Christ.



In a way, you can picture it like a house. We begin our lives on the porch, seeing that household of faith. It's only in believing in God, trusting in the sacrifice that Jesus made for us, that we choose to walk through the front door.

Then comes living in the house. Our relationship with God, and our faith in it, it's something that grows and expands as we explore our life in Christ, a journey of trusting, in believing, and in following.

So in Wesley's theology, it's Grace Alone... but we are called to live to it. A quote from the United Methodist Church's Website: *Grace is central to our understanding of Christian faith and life. Grace can be defined as the love and mercy given to us by God because God wants us to have it, not because of anything we have done to earn it.*

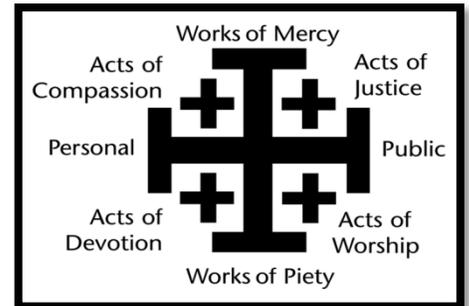
Back to the picture of the house. God's love and mercy comes to us even while we are on the porch, before we know God or recognize our need for saving - ***even when we were dead in transgressions***, as the Ephesians letter puts it. While in that state, God's grace stirs up within us a desire to know God and empowers us to respond to God's invitation to be in relationship with God. It's convicting Grace, Prevenient Grace, Grace that goes before us.

Then comes the point when we really believe, when we come to faith, when we walk through the door. That's when God gives us the mercy of forgiving our sins, and gives the gracious gift of counting Christ's righteousness as ours – making us alive with Christ. That's converting grace, justifying grace.

Some people think it stops then. But Wesley came to believe that God, through the Holy Spirit, continues to show love and mercy by transforming us, making us fit more and more into Christ's righteousness. We grow and mature in our ability to live as Jesus lived. It's living in the house, it's transforming grace, it's sanctifying grace. But all of it is a gift from God, and a gift can remain unwrapped and unaccepted.

Another way I've heard grace described - God's Riches At Christ's Expense. So our life in God is through the saving act of Christ Alone... but we need to respond because of it. Jesus says, ***"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you...I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit."*** One of those commands in that same passage: ***"Abide in My love."*** And another: ***"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."*** John Wesley saw in this a balance, that we grow both in holiness and in service, reflecting those two great commandments: love God and love our neighbor.

In Wesley-like words, we demonstrate that love in works of piety and works of mercy, in acts of devotion, acts of worship, acts of compassion and acts of justice.



We grow and mature in our ability to live as Jesus lived. As we pray, study, fast, worship, and share in fellowship with other Christians, we deepen our knowledge of and love for God. As we respond with compassion to human need and work for justice in our communities, we strengthen our capacity to love neighbor. Our inner thoughts and motives, as well as our outer actions and behavior, are aligned with God's will and testify to our union with God.

Jesus redefined loving neighbor by giving what we know as the Golden Rule: ***Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*** The Message paraphrase shows the emphasis Jesus put into it: ***"Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them!"***



It was in taking the initiative that convinced Wesley to buy that bombed-out building in London, which became known as the Foundery. But oh, what he did with it! It housed a school, bringing poor kids an education. It housed a pharmacy and a surgeon's office, to bring healing. It housed a lending office, not only staving off creditors, but helping to start new businesses. All of that, along with a 1500-seat preaching house, and rooms for the growing number of small groups.

That "grabbing the initiative" has continued ever since, with the Methodists starting colleges and universities, hospitals and clinics, shelters and food pantries, help for those suffering from poverty or natural disaster.

It's the question we asked last week: so what does all this say about revival, for us and for our churches? Let's start with our church families. Wesley had his building; we have ours. What can we do with our buildings to grab the initiative and show God's love to those around us? We've provided toys for children in poverty, here and around the world; could we help those families so they could have an even better Christmas, or even better, help them so they could have a better next year? We help provide for the food pantries; could we find a way to help some of the families so they wouldn't need to go to them?

Then for each of us individually: you might have noticed I didn't say anything about the last one on the list: Glory to God Alone. That might be the key to it all. It's when we keep our focus on God, doing all that we do for God's Glory, responding to Christ's sacrifice to save us by loving God and neighbor, that will allow God's Grace to flow more and more in and through us.

We have a history and a legacy – we are the people of the field preachers, of the camp meeting, of the circuit riders, of the faithful saints down through the ages. Let us be faithful, so that history and legacy will continue.



One of my favorite experiences in England happened in Wesley's Chapel in London, the building that replaced the Foundry. But some of the appurtenances of the Foundry were saved, and brought to the Chapel's...chapel. I had realized earlier that day that I had been spending too much time as a tourist, taking pictures, and not enough as a pilgrim, connection with God, spending time in prayer and worship.



Perhaps in a way to help me in that, God nudged me into the chapel, where I found a group from the offices there getting ready for communion. And as I joined them, I found myself feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the connection with those who had worshiped in the Foundry, and all who had gone before us and would come after. On this All Saint's Sunday, as we come to the Lord's Table, let us come remembering the saints who have brought us to this place in our lives, and look toward those to whom we can share God's Grace.

## MATTHEW 25:31-40 (NLT)

<sup>31</sup> “But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.

<sup>35</sup> For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. <sup>36</sup> I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? <sup>39</sup> When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

## JAMES 2:14-24 (NLT)

<sup>14</sup> What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? <sup>15</sup> Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, <sup>16</sup> and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”— but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

<sup>17</sup> So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

<sup>18</sup> Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.” <sup>19</sup> You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. <sup>20</sup> How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?

<sup>21</sup> Don’t you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. <sup>23</sup> And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” He was even called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

#### EPHESIANS 2:4-10 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

#### EPHESIANS 2:10 (Message)

He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

#### JOHN 15:11-17 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

<sup>11</sup> “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, that you love one another.

#### LUKE 6:31 (NLT, Message)

Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

“Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them!