



JOIN

the journey

September 8, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

***Call to Worship**

L: We are on a journey.

P: A journey with Jesus.

L: Today that journey brings us together to worship our God,

P: To remember, to learn, to be renewed for service in Christ's name.

L: Today we celebrate being the Church.

P: Let us praise our God together!

***Hymn:** "Living for Jesus" TFWs #2149

A Time for the Child in all of Us Commissioning Teachers

Prayer (unison)

O God, we want to be faithful disciples of Jesus, to walk with him and live our faith in the world. So often, we know that we barely live up to that, but we trust in your guidance, forgiveness, and blessing as we keep on walking the walk. Inspire us to persevere even when we feel we have put other things first, and help us to reset our priorities so that we can continue to grow into your love and share that with others. Amen.

Sung Response: "Fill My Cup, Lord" UMH #641

Ministry of Music

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: Luke 14:25-33

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "Walking the Walk"
Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn:** "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" TFWs #2158

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

***Doxology:** (*Please join in singing the following:*) UMH #94

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

O God, we are bold enough to claim our discipleship. As tokens of our faith in your work through us, we offer our gifts to others in order to extend your ministry to those who are in need and to keep us mindful of your call to be generous in our giving. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "More Love to Thee, O Christ" UMH #453

***Choral Benediction** (*Congregation encircles the Sanctuary*)

May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.

***Pastor's Charge**

Postlude

**Please stand as you are comfortable*

TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters

Welcome!

Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshipping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!

Rev. Deb Hanson



Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards

Liturgist - John VanReenen

Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Acolyte - Marilyn Stebbins

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Greeters - Dave Atkinson

Ushers - Al & Jan CAnsdale

Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek

Worship Service Tech - Nancy Chesser

Photographer - Dave Atkinson

Sunday School - Rosie Buswell & Aerial Silanpaa



**Come join us for coffee hour
after church service in
Sanborn Hall. We'd love to
catch up with you and see
how your week has gone.**

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...



Ken Young

Rev. Bill & Gayle Gardei

Marion Collinshaw

Sylvia Bartlett

Gil Stebbins

Woodie Lange

Jim New

Bobbie Noble

Barbara Glidden

Judy Doyon

Charles Gilman

Ruth Griffin

Jim Slater & Family

Barbara Sylvester

Barbara Millar

Barbara Clement

Joette MacKenzie

John Richards

Rev. Charles & Anona Hartman

Our Denomination

Our Church Family

UPCOMING EVENTS

9/8 is Rally Sunday, when we begin a new season for our Sunday school. The first half of the school year, the children will learn the story of Moses and the Ten Commandments. In December, they will begin rehearsing for a pageant, which will be presented in December. Helpers are always welcome, and when we need materials, we will let everyone know what donations are needed.

9/10, at 9:30 am, Tuesday, the Peace Circle will be meeting. Check with Yvonne for the location.

9/11, our 11th Annual Golf Tournament will be held at Pease Golf Course. Team sign-up sheets are on the office counter. Golf teams are needed.

9/14, Trustee Clean Up Day, from 8 -12 pm. Please see Dave Richards for more info.

9/14, we will have a Blessing of the Animals service outside on the church lawn at 10:00 am. Bring your pets to have them blessed! We celebrate all creatures, great and small.

9/15, our new D.S. Rev. Taesung Kang will be worshipping with us. Please join us in welcoming Rev. Kang. SPRC will meet after service in the Randall room with Rev. Kang.

9/21, Pumpkin Patch set up us at 9 am. Help is needed!

9/28, Pumpkin Delivery will be at 9:00 am at FUMC.

9/1 - 10/31, Need an excuse to clean out your “stuff” and have the church get paid?! Bag or box up your good, clean, working, sellable condition items and put them on Sanborn Hall stage (stage available *after* 9/1). We need to deliver everything all together to Savers on Nov. 6th., for weighing. Here’s an example: 14 lbs. of “Soft Goods” = about a 13 gal. trash bag and a black garden leaf bag from 30 to 40 lbs. Our goal is 10,000 pounds which equals approximately \$2000.00.

Just a friendly reminder, please try to keep your pledge up to date so we can meet our financial obligations as a church. Thank you for your faithful giving!

Anyone still wishing to purchase a CD from Sal Hughes, one of our guest musicians this month, there is still one left for \$10 in office. Please see Sue S. if interested.

We continue to celebrate those in Senior Living. Please send a card from the table in Sanborn Hall to brighten their day. Stamps are available in the office or leave on counter for mailing. Thanks!



**In Loving Memory of Skip
Love Sue & Kaya**

PRAYER FOR COMMISSIONING
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Leader:

God of Creation, you have gifted these men and women with teaching skills, creativity, and curiosity. We pray you would fill them with the power and compassion of your Holy Spirit. Fill them with energy and insight into your Word, the story of Your faithful heart.

Teachers:

You have not called us to be perfect

You have called us to be faithful.

You have not called us to be all-knowing

You have called us to believe.

We dedicate ourselves to the call and task of teaching. Grant us wisdom, patience and joy in our preparation and teaching of your Word.

Congregation:

God of hope, Guide each teacher as they study your Word. Strengthen the gifts you have given them, and energize their compassion, Remind us to find ways to support and encourage them throughout the year. May we share in their joy and times of difficulty.

ALL:

We commit ourselves, each to our part, in this joyful task.

May your steadfast, faithful, covenant love guide all we do.

Amen.



As each has received a gift, use
it to serve one another, as good
stewards of God's varied grace.

- 1 Peter 4:10



FUMC PORTSMOUTH

A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



New England Annual Conference Tri-State District
The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop
The Rev. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm
[call to ensure availability]
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

SCRIPTURE: Luke 14:25-33

THEME: Jesus is the foundation of our lives.

Imagine walking along the road in Galilee and this happens: A friend comes to you and says, “Hey! See that crowd up ahead? They are all following Jesus of Nazareth! Do you know about him? He does miracles! He heals the sick, feeds thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread and some fish, and he talks back to the temple leaders! Want to go find out what this is all about?” Most of us would probably answer, “Sure. Let’s see what’s going on.” The crowd becomes larger and larger as Jesus and his disciples make their way through the streets that are already full of merchants and their wares, donkeys, camels, and people who are doing their marketing.

But everything seems to come to stop when Jesus stops. It’s like the old, old commercial about EF Hutton: in a noisy, crowded room full of conversation and movement, an EF Hutton representative opens his or her mouth to speak and the room immediately stops so people can hear what is going to be shared. Maybe Jesus was tired of all the people around him, and he probably was tired of being known for his miracles. His popularity may have worn on him because so many people simply didn’t understand the message he was trying to share.

So, maybe he said the things in our scripture passage to scare some away, and I’m sure he succeeded, too. “What? Hate father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, life itself in order to be his disciple? I don’t think so. I’m out of here.” For those who stayed, he added, “You must carry a cross.” Most likely, everyone in Jesus’ day knew what a cross was, and it wasn’t pretty. The cross meant execution by the government with a slow tortuous death by being nailed to it and hanging there until the person died. Uh – uh, not doing that, Jesus!

Those who still remained heard an explanation about what they needed to know in choosing to follow Jesus. If they were going to follow him, they needed to go past the miracles, past the food, past all the publicity he had received, and be ready to follow him to the very end. It would be just like a builder who has to estimate the cost of the tower so he has enough material to finish the project, and a king who assesses whether or not he has the right number of troops to win a battle. If not, he figures out a way to negotiate a treaty and peace.

I suspect the crowd had whittled down quite a bit by this time, and Jesus puts in one last instruction just to be sure everyone who was still there understood: “If you follow me, you MUST give up all your possessions.” Oops – the final straw. I wonder how many were still there after that one! I wonder how many of us would be there, too. I wonder how many of us understand all this!

In the commentaries I read, many of the writers said that this was a very difficult passage, and they suspected that a number of pastors would be looking for something else on which to preach. But it seems to me, that would be the very reason to use it as the basis for a sermon, which is why I decided to use it. It’s definitely a challenge!

What DOES it mean to follow Jesus? We believe he is God in the flesh, so ultimately, we are asking what does it mean to believe in and live following Jesus' example and teachings about being a child of God here on earth? What is required of us? Do we really have to hate our families?

Years ago, I read a story about a woman who was brought up in a home without faith or any belief in a power greater than herself. As she grew up, she felt as if something was missing, and in her mid-forties, a friend invited her to attend church. Something happened inside her, and she knew she had found what had been lacking in her life. Over the course of months, she attended church, Bible studies, prayed, and participated in discussions. Eventually she was baptized and joined the church. All this time, she had not told her husband, children, parents, or siblings that she had found God and was transformed, although they had seen a change in her. Finally, after her baptism, she shared her experience and invited them to join her.

All I can remember from her story was that they all demanded that she give it up and rejected her new-found faith. They were threatened by her confidence and assurance in having Jesus as the anchor of her faith. Her husband eventually divorced her, her children separated themselves from her, and the rest of her family disowned her. She was, by all appearances, completely alone in the world except that she had a church family who then became her family. Over the years that followed, apparently one of her children came around, but for the most part, she ended up choosing God over her family.

Most of us don't have to make that choice, but there are places in our world where it still happens. A family member of another religion converts to Christianity, and their families disown them or worse. Some people have, even in this day and age, been imprisoned for their belief in Jesus. There are folks who experience ridicule for being a faithful follower of Jesus, and they are ostracized at work or in a group or at school. Does that merit hating those who reject them, even – or maybe especially – when they are family? No.

The parallel passage in Matthew 10 reads: *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;* ³⁸ *and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.* (NRSV) The writer of Luke has a much harsher approach and the translators for the Luke passage chose "hate" which, in Greek, actually means more about priority rather than what we think of as rejection and strong negative feelings that are associated with the word "hate."

Carrying the cross is Jesus' letting the people know that he will experience his death on the cross. He knows what lies ahead, and he not only is preparing them, but also himself: if we choose to follow Jesus, we follow him to the cross. When we think of the cross, it is helpful to remember that the cross was not the end but the beginning. It was the beginning of forgiveness of sins, the beginning of life in Christ, the beginning of the opportunity for fulfillment in Christ.

We often think of it as a negative thing, but bearing – or carrying – the cross means that we choose life: life following the one who gave us life. Jesus' point is well taken: following him demands commitment, perseverance, and sacrifice. Sometimes we sacrifice something we really want to do in order to minister to someone else or to help in making a church event

happen. I think of the dedication of SO many people here who pitch in so that the Pumpkin Patch will run for an entire month (and a little more than that actually).

I think of the people who have boarded planes to go to the Dominican Republic to help clean up there following Hurricane Dorian. Whether or not they are followers of Jesus, they are still doing important work and giving up something at home. The people involved in the UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) are all over the world, and they have to be ready to show up following a disaster to help others. They give up time, money, comfort, and time with their families in order to help the people who are suffering loss of home, all they have, and some even have lost family members.

Putting Jesus first means leaving our need for things at the bottom of our priority list. It means that number one on the priority list is Jesus, and everything else comes afterward. Can we do that? Probably not – at least not consistently. But I have learned as I continue to study, pray, observe the saints in our churches, and the ones in the family of God that having Jesus as the number one priority doesn't take all the rest away, but puts it in perspective.

Dave always says about the possessions we have, "They are just things. They can be replaced." Of course, people can't be replaced, but we can grow in our relationship with Jesus so that we live as he would have us live and love even more fully and with more gratitude about the people in our lives who are so important. Putting Jesus first – God first – doesn't take all that away, but gives us a grounding in order to see what we have as a blessing and to work at our relationships, our giving, and our purpose here on earth.

How do we understand the importance of following Jesus as a priority? One pastor talked about it as a kind of pride - the good kind of pride. The pride that we feel when we want something to be special because we believe in what we are doing and the kind of pride that speaks to others because we have done well and witnessed to how worthwhile what we do is. He writes:

When I was in high school, our band director instilled in us a sense of pride that permeated the group. Because we were proud of the band to which we belonged, we were willing to work harder to perfect our half-time show or hone our concert performance. We weren't satisfied with second-best, so we regularly took top honors in the contests we entered. Our pride also extended to the way we behaved at school, and even off-campus. "Everything you do reflects on the band," Mr. Kuentz would say. "Don't do anything to disgrace the uniform you wear." That kind of pride was positive, because it encouraged us to do our best, and it fostered esprit de corps. [a feeling of pride, fellowship, and common loyalty shared by the members of a particular group] (Tod OL Mundo, found in the commentaries for this week's lectionary passages)

Being a follower of Jesus isn't about the kind of pride that fosters a sense of superiority, but it's just doing what we are called to do as his disciples in this world. Sometimes it means making choices that are difficult. When children decide to be in some traveling sports group, they are required to be fully committed, and that means giving up some of the other things they may want to do. Unfortunately, it often affects deciding to skip Sunday school or youth group. But if we think about this as an analogy, it is helpful in considering what Jesus is asking of us.

I borrowed some of these ideas from Rev. David Lose:

A lot of parents give up nearly every weekend for their kids' travelling sports team. And lots of career-minded folks put in long hours in jobs they don't love in order to secure their futures or just to make ends meet. Lots of our people are spending hard-earned money to join a gym or participate in diet programs to get healthier. And how many of our families sacrifice in order to make sure their kids are dressed well and have a chance for further education?

Because these things are important to us, we make these and other sacrifices. We sacrifice according to our priorities. And in today's passage Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God he proclaims and the kingdom life he exemplifies should be a priority, actually be the priority.

So when we look at Jesus' parable a bit, put it into today's context, we can ask, "What parent wouldn't count the cost before signing up for the traveling soccer team and what new employee wouldn't consider whether she is willing to work every weekend her first year?" Many people are already making sacrifices, and in this passage, Jesus is saying that Christian discipleship calls for the same type of giving of our time, talent, and treasures. (David Lose, Working Preacher, found at Text This Week under commentaries for today's lesson, edited and adapted.)

How do we set our priorities? How can we put following Jesus first and keep working at keeping him there so our discipleship informs our decisions about how we spend and give of our money, how we help others, how we find ways to give generously of our time, talent and treasure, how we interact with family and friends, how important our possessions are to us and whether or not they have a hold on us, and how we continue to be the Church of Jesus Christ in the world.

This isn't an instant zap, this becoming a disciple and keeping Jesus as our top priority. It's a journey. It's learning and growing so we walk the walk and talk the talk. It's living so others can see Jesus at work in and through us. And we all are gifted with the ability to be uniquely who we are as God's beloved child. God has called us to this place, to this ministry, to this blessing so that we can be a blessing to others. We do it together as the Church. We do it together with Christ. Thanks be to God!

Let us pray (SING):

More like you, Jesus, more like you.

Fill my heart with your desire to make me more like you.

More like you, Jesus more like you.

Touch my lips with holy fire and make me more like you. (FWS #2167)

Amen.