



## SERMON OUTLINE

JANUARY 13, 2019

### SCRIPTURE READING:

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

(The story of Jesus being baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.)

- Baptism creates a bond stronger than all other human bonds. Through baptism we become united together in Christ.
- The United Methodist Church's current struggle with the issue of human sexuality is a case study about the human temptation to divide ourselves by lines that are not of God.
- The UMC general conference will be held February 23-26 to look for a way to keep us together as a church even in the midst of great disagreement.
- We are discussing this to foster trust and awareness in our church family.
- The UMC Book of Discipline contains the rules the church is governed by, and it has things to say about homosexuality. First, it says that all people, regardless of their race, nationality, language or sexuality are of sacred worth to God and that the church is called to be in ministry with all people. However, there is also restrictive language that says practicing homosexuality is incompatible with

Christian scripture. Self-avowed homosexuals cannot be ordained, same-sex marriages are not allowed, and individual pastors cannot preside over same-sex ceremonies.

- There are four basic positions on this issue in the church:
  1. Traditional Compatibilists believe in the traditional view of sexuality and marriage and are in agreement with the Book of Discipline, but they are also OK with being members of a church alongside people with whom they disagree. Different local churches can hold different views on the issue.
  2. Traditional Incompatibilists insist on total agreement with the restrictive language across the church.
  3. Progressive Compatibilists don't believe homosexuality is a sin, but they are also OK with being members of a church alongside people with whom they disagree. Different local churches can hold different views on the issue.
  4. Progressive Incompatibilists insist that the church needs to be open to all people and are not OK with disagreement on this.
  
- There are three plans to be voted on at the conference:
  1. The Connectional Plan, under which sub-denominations (liberal, conservative, middle of the road, etc.) would exist under the larger UMC umbrella. This would significantly change the church structure, though, and probably won't gain much traction.
  2. The Traditionalist Plan, which says the restrictive language should be left as is and should be enforced with consequences for those who defy it.
  3. The One Church model, which appeals to both compatibilist sides who want to figure out how to live together. This would allow churches, pastors and conferences to follow their own conscience as they feel led by God in the mission of the church. The plan removes the restrictive language and adds new language that says local churches cannot get in trouble for being either too traditional or too progressive on this issue.
  
- The three most likely outcomes are:
  1. Nothing happens, no plan wins, and things stay as they are, though this would probably lead to many traditional Incompatibilists leaving the church.
  2. The traditionalist plan passes, possibly leading to many progressives leaving the church.
  3. The One Church plan passes, which might lead to many Incompatibilists leaving the church.
  
- As United Methodists, we have hope and know there is more than this, but it is important nonetheless.
  
- In covenanted relationships, God wants us to do all we can to live together as a family and love each other.

- Baptism, God's claim on us, is stronger than death and stronger than our divisions when we fall apart.
- We are God's family. Please pray for our church.