

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

April 26, 2015

“Love Is A Verb”



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister
Marie Paulus-Nyquist: Children's Minister
Chuck Otto: Lay Reader

Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

John 10:11-15

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

1 John 3:16-18

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

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“Love Is A Verb”

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A man visited a minister in his office. The man said, “Reverend, I know you care about the plight of the poor.” The man said, “I wish to draw your attention to the dire straits of a poor family in our town.” The man said, “The father is unemployed and the mother is busy caring for their nine hungry children.” The man said, “They are about to be evicted from their apartment by their landlord unless they can pay their rent of \$500.” The man said, “Can the church pay their rent for them?” The minister said, “Of course we can and we will.” Then the minister said, “May I ask who you are?” The man said, “I’m their landlord.”

Love is a verb. That's what I want to talk with you about today.
Love is a verb. Now, the dictionary might say love is a noun.
But I say love is a verb. Whether you're a minister or a landlord.
Love is a verb. Whether you're rich or poor. Love is a verb.
Whether you own a house or rent an apartment. Love is a verb.
Say to those around you: Love is a verb. Love is a verb. Love is
a verb.

The Book of First John knows love is a verb. So does Jesus. The
Book of First John says: We know love because Jesus laid down
his life for us - and we should lay down our lives for one another.
The Book of First John says: How is God's love in someone who
has all kinds of wealth, but then sees a brother or sister in need
and won't help? The Book of First John says: We should not
love just in words, but in truth and action.

Action matters more than words. Love is not lip service. Love is
not a feeling. Love is not an emotion. Love is a verb. Love is an
action. Love is a positive movement. You can't just talk the
talk, you also have to walk the talk. Talk is cheap. Don't just
talk about love. If you love someone, don't just say it, do some
kind of loving act for him or her. If you love (or care about) the
homeless, don't just hope they get help, give food, clothing, and
shelter to the homeless. If you love (or care about) peace, don't
just wish for peace, work for peace. Put love into action.

The Gospel of John tells us the kind of religious leader Jesus
was. Jesus said: I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd
lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus said: Hired hands don't do
that, they run off at the first sign of danger. Jesus said: I am the
good shepherd and I lay down my life for the sheep. Jesus was
and is an amazing religious leader.

Religious leaders: What should they do in today's world?
Religious leaders can't just sit cross-legged on a mountain top.

Religious leaders can't just proclaim pleasant platitudes. And religious leaders can't just weave theological theories together out of thin air. They have to do more. Religious leaders have to be brave. Religious leaders have to take risks. And religious leaders have to be willing to lay down their lives for what they believe in.

This church, since I started here last September, has grown theologically, spiritually, communally, and compassionately. This church has grown theologically, becoming a progressive United Church of Christ church - where we emphasize love, rather than sin; where we know that God did not create us to hate us, but to love us; where we see God as a Supreme Being, not a supreme bully; and where God is still speaking. This church has grown spiritually, adding a Wednesday night Bible Study, and soon a Friday morning Prayer Group. This church has grown communally, inviting the community to events like our Halloween Trunk or Treat, our Mardi Gras Donut give-away, and our recent Blessing of the Animals. And this church has grown compassionately, putting a Food Pantry and Clothing Closet in my office to help those in need, and housing 6 homeless people in our church, and beginning May First, when we move the homeless into rooms in our Fellowship Hall, we'll be able to house about 12 homeless people there, including maybe even a family. (By the way, I met with City Manager Rob Johnson and City Council Member Greg August this past week and they support our effort to help the homeless.) I didn't do all these things by myself. We did them together, with the help of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

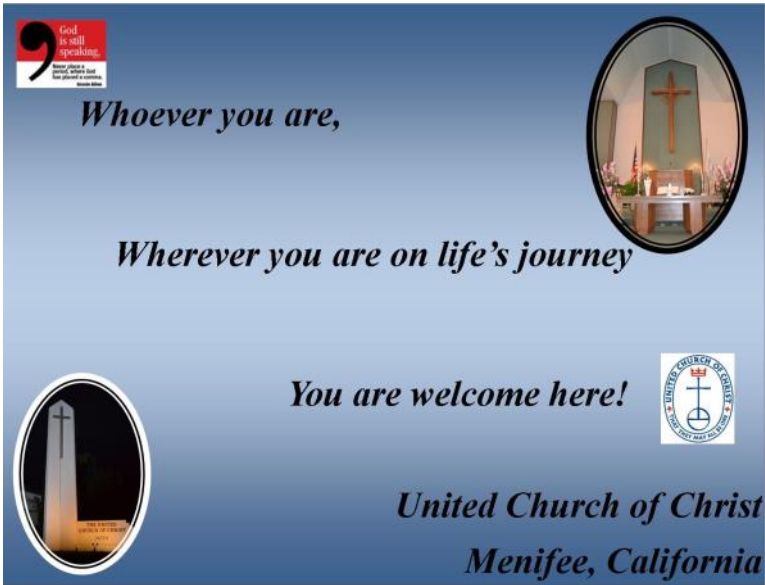
Jesus started a movement, not a philosophy club. This church is not a philosophy club. This church is a Faith Center. And this church is a Works Center. Because: Faith without works is dead. And: Faith with works is love.

Craig, our excellent office manager, and his beloved Johnny, will get married in this church on July 18th. When Craig asked me to perform their marriage ceremony, I was honored. When I said last year that I wanted to perform same-sex weddings, I knew it would upset some people in this church, I knew it would cost this church some members, and I knew it would cost this church some money. But I also knew that this is the 21st Century, not the 19th. And I knew that this is California, not Mississippi. And I knew that this is a United Church of Christ church, which has supported same-sex marriage for 10 years. Look, Craig and Johnny are getting married, not to make a political statement, but to do what other married couples do: demonstrate their love for each other. If love is a verb, if love is an action, if love is the truth, then love - not hate, not bigotry, and not homophobia - must guide this church; and will guide this church every day of the year, including on July 18th.

If Jesus were preaching today, he would probably not do very well financially, but he would do very well spiritually. Instead of saying, "God wants you to be rich," Jesus would say, "Feed the hungry." And where's the money in that? Instead of saying, "God wants you to have a big mansion," Jesus would say, "House the homeless." And where's the money in that? Instead of saying, "God wants you to drive a bigger car," Jesus would say, "Welcome the stranger." And where's the money in that? But then again, Jesus knows that ministry is not about money. Jesus knows that ministry is about love. And Jesus knows that love is a verb.

Let us pray...

*God of Love,
Help us to remember that love is a verb.
Help us to remember that love is an action.
And help us to remember that love never ends.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*



*Whoever you are,
Wherever you are on life's journey
You are welcome here!*

*United Church of Christ
Menifee, California*

God
is still
speaking,

Never place a
period, where God
has placed a comma.

Grace Allen



THE GOLDEN RULE

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*

Judaism

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*

Christianity

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*

Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*

Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*

Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*

Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*

Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*

Humanism