

## Wesley United Methodist Church

March 17, 2019

“Who Lives in You?”

Luke 13:31-35

Who lives in you? That’s the question that comes to mind as we read those words of Jesus this morning when he tells the Pharisees, “Go tell that fox (Herod) that I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow and on the third day reach my goal.” I will do what I must. For God lives in me. I am a citizen of heaven. Let him do what he must.

Let your imagination run free for a moment and picture yourself, your personality, who are you really, as a house. Any kind of house will do, just so it’s yours. For some it may be a huge castle, with lofty turrets and banners waving in the breeze, a place that is safe and secure. For others it may be a rustic cabin, tucked away in the woods or on a hillside, a peaceful and quiet refuge. For others, still, it might be a nice little retirement home, with a rocking chair on the front porch, a shade tree in the front yard and a nice warm breeze blowing stirring flowers in a bed. Now, move in closer and imagine the front door of that house. Picture someone pushing the doorbell, clanking the knocker, or rapping on the door. If someone came to the door of your house, who would they find inside? Who lives in you?

I’m not sure about you, but I’ve met people who gave me the distinct impression that if I went inside the houses of their lives, I wouldn’t find anyone home. Or if I went inside their houses, they would be so cluttered with junk that there wouldn’t be room for anyone. Or someone whose houses are great and impressive on the outside, but once I entered everything would be artificial. Who lives in you? That’s the question for us to address this second Sunday in Lent. Who lives in you? What guides your decisions? What sets the course of your life? What determines the way you think and treat others around you? Most of us would like to say it is our Christian faith that determines who you are. But is that so? For there are two kinds of people who can be home—citizens of the world and citizens of heaven. Who lives in you? Think back over the decisions you’ve made this past week. Who made them—a citizen of this world or a citizen of heaven? Recall the way you spoke to those around you and the way you treated others. Who was present then? What about the offering you bring to church, what kind of relationship with God does it reflect? Is it a citizen of heaven, the child of God, who is present in us? Or is it a stranger of this world, one who cares little about others, who thinks first of himself, whose actions fail to give witness to the allegiance we claim to have with God? Who lives in you? What stirs you each day of your life?

We’d like to answer that it is our Christian faith, but can we? For the Christian faith is more than just a set of doctrines, more than some creed we recite, more than assertions we study. Our Christian faith is the lives we live—the set of moral principles that guide our decisions and are reflected in the words we use. It is our response to the poor around us. It is our record of worship, our interest in Scripture reading, our attention to prayer. For the reality of our Christian faith is our relationship with Christ, the same kind of response that Jesus gave those Pharisees, “Look and see how I act,” he said. “See, I go about my business, I will continue to care for the sick and proclaim God’s Word.”

Who lives in you? The answer must always be, “Christ lives in me.” The same love, the same compassion that Jesus had is present in me. The same life, the same power of God that was present in Jesus is alive in me. I am a citizen of heaven. God is my Father. And it is up to me to live according to that citizenship. I cannot say I am a citizen of heaven, a child of God, and make myself a stranger to the house of God. I cannot say I am a citizen of heaven and live as an “undercover agent,” afraid someone during the week will discover my true identity. This season of Lent calls us to look within ourselves and ask the question: “Who lives in me?” It calls us to be honest with ourselves and admit that even though we claim to be citizens of heaven, we often live as strangers before the Lord.

When we claim to be citizens of heaven and yet live as strangers to God, it is because we think no one will notice the difference. After all, we are not as bad as others around us, are we? And we bring an offering to church, even though it may be less than we spend weekly on entertainment. And we do plan on reading our Bibles and saying our prayers, sometime, don’t we?

The season of Lent reminds us that God knows. That we may be able to fool ourselves and even those around us, but we can never fool God. For God reads the human heart. God knows who lives in our house. Who lives in you? If you want to know the answer to that question, review your thoughts and actions in the light of the cross. How does your light reflect Jesus’ love? How do your actions make God’s compassion more visible? Jesus tells us that two kinds of people cannot live in peace with one another, “No one can serve two masters,” he says. Either we live as people whose lives are oriented to the world, who strive for happiness and fulfillment in the things of this world, who find our joy in the pleasures, pursuits, and possessions of this life, or we find our peace and joy in Christ. Both kinds of people cannot live under the same roof.

We cannot live dividing our priorities between serving ourselves and serving God. We cannot live as citizens of heaven and be strangers to God. Jesus says, "Either you will hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. No one can serve two masters." It is impossible to hold dual citizenship.

To be a child of God is to allow God to be our Father. To live as citizen of heaven is to allow Christ into our hearts. For when we have the love of Jesus in our hearts, we know that a life of discipleship and devotion, of faith and faithfulness, of conscience and commitment will follow. But we must allow Christ in! We must allow the love of God to rule our lives, direct our thoughts, and guide our actions. The love that Jesus expresses in the face of threatened death, the love that goes about its business, in spite of the consequences. Love that adopts us as children. Love that makes us citizens of heaven. Love that puts us in our places and gives us our inheritances. Who lives in you? May we all be able to say, "Christ lives in me for I live in him." Amen.