

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - April 20, 2009

The Pastor's Pen

"By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts." This verse appears in The New Testament Book of Hebrews in chapter eleven, a chapter that is often referred to as the roll call of faith. In that chapter the author of the Book lists the names of persons in Scripture who served God through faith. Abel is the first one listed.

Yet when we go back to the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 3, we find no mention of faith. The story simply says that Cain was a tiller of the soil and Abel a keeper of the flocks, and that in the course of time Cain brought an offering from his produce from the ground and Abel brought an offering, the fat portions of his sheep. And God accepted Abel's offering but did not accept Cain's offering. And from there the story really is about Cain more than it is about Abel. The only other mention of Abel is that Cain met him out in the field and killed him.

So how do we know that Abel's offering was given in faith while Cain's evidently was not? Well, we know that Cain's offering was most likely not offered in faith given Cain's reaction to his offering not being accepted while his brother's offering was. But there's really no mention of anything Abel did that would indicate to us that he made his offering in faith.

However, we might consider this. Giving in faith really does not require "a big to do." Giving in faith asks no fanfare. Giving in faith doesn't have to be recognized as that. Giving in faith simply trusts God and brings the offering to God out of love and gratitude to God. It just may be that if we desire a lot of fanfare about our giving, we are not really giving out of faith. We may be giving more out of an expectation of approval than out of faith, which is more in line with what Cain did than what Abel did. And we see the result. When Cain did not receive the approval he expected, he got angry. Abel simply offered his gift to God and went on his way. It was offered in faith that it would be accepted by a God who is good.

So maybe what Abel did really does tell us something about faith. The writer of Hebrews surely seems to think so. Living by faith doesn't seek a lot of recognition or fanfare. A life of faith is itself its own reward. That seems to be the case with Abel. There is no indication of anything other than a right relationship between Abel and God, and the quietness and the peace of the relationship show the faith. And then faith asks nothing more than the opportunity to walk with God and serve God. It is its own reward. That surely seems to be the example given by Abel.

The only problem is that those who don't enjoy that kind of faith relationship with God are often envious of it. Such was surely the case with Cain. And Abel lost his life for his faith relationship. The jealousy his relationship to God evoked out of his brother cost him his life. One can wonder at this point if walking with God in a faith relationship really is worth it. Abel's faith relationship with God did cost him his life because of the jealousy it evoked from his brother, but listen to the rest of the verse quoted above from Hebrews 11. "He died, but through his faith he still speaks."

In the culture in which we live today would that there would be some jealousy of people that live by faith in God. About the best we can say today is that those who walk by faith in Christ just seem to be ignored, or at the most ridiculed as not being very smart, as needing some kind of crutch, or as not being very sophisticated. People who walk by faith in God are often seen today as terribly naive and rather quaint. There seems to be little jealousy of those who walk by faith in God and in Christ.

But wait - maybe that is the way we lose our lives, not literally like Abel, but we lose our life by being ignored. And yet our lives, like Abel's, when lived in faith do speak. We die figuratively speaking, but through our faith we still speak. We say through our living that there is a way of living that brings peace, hope, joy, and contentment, and that way is the way of walking by faith in God and in Christ. Even though we lose our lives, the life of faith still speaks, just as Abel's life still speaks. Just something to think about.

Until next time, **Bro. Jim**

WITH ONE ANOTHER

David Robertson

Freddie Mae Jackson
 Oscar and Agnes McCarter
 Bill Evans
 Scottie McMackin
 Rev. Clifton Johnston
 T. J. Moore
 Norman Marston
 Jean Cone
 Gracie Henson
 Scott Dean
 Georgia Childress
 Brian Beller
 Al Harlan
 Barbara Harlan
 Eloid Brock
 Flossie Looper
 Hannah Englett

HAPPY ELDERS TRIP TO DICKSON

The Happy Elders have 14 tickets to the Renaissance Center in Dickson, TN to see the play 'Tuesdays with Morrie', May 7, 2009. The best-selling memoir of all time comes alive in a stage adaptation of Mitch Albom's touching visits with a former college professor who is dying from Lou Gehrig's disease. This is a Senior lunch matinee. The cost is \$30.00, which covers the play, lunch, gas for the van and ticket for the driver. Sign up and pay should be made at the church office or call Jean Robertson at ***** **by May 1, 2009**. We will leave the church west parking lot at 9:45 a.m. and we usually return by 5:00 p.m.

HEAR, YE! HEAR, YE!

All maidens are cordially invited to attend the Royal Princess Breakfast on Saturday, May 9, 2009 at 9:30 a.m. in the Christian Life Center. All ages are welcome, bring your daughters, sisters, grandma, friends and of course your mother. Come and celebrate with us as we honor mothers and celebrate that we are all Royal Princess's in God's eyes. (Princess dress is optional). To register individually or to book a table of 8, call the Church office or email Alecia at youth911@Hotmail.com. **Please RSVP by Wednesday, May 6th, 2009.**



**I Will Be Loyal
 To The United Methodist Church And
 Support It With: My Presence:
 Sunday, April 19, 2009**

8:15 a.m. Worship Attendance.....45
 Sunday school Attendance.....83
 10:30 a.m. Worship Attendance.....82

My Service: Sunday, April 26, 2009
Acolytes: Katie Wayne & Alexis Fann

Loaves and Fishes: Tues. & Thurs.
Tues. April 28 Linda Newton, Ray Price and Jerry Gibbs
Thurs. April 30 Elmer Cooke, Jean Robertson and Jerry Gibbs

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SUPPER
MENU - APRIL 29

Lasagna, Salad, Garlic bread, Apple crisp
 Workers: Jerry Thomas/Stellar Classes

INFORMATION REQUEST

The church received an email (from the pastor at Summertown UMC) requesting some information concerning a former minister and his wife (Madison Rice and wife Hannah). This

pastor may have served here in the mid to late 1800's. He passed away in 1895. If you or someone you know has any information concerning this pastor, please contact the church office.

VBS - JULY 20-24, 2009

Check out our website for more information, to register or to volunteer.

www.vacationbibleschool.com/firstumclawrenceburg

