

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - July 27, 2009

The Pastor's Pen

A man and his dog were walking on the beach when they came upon another visitor to the beach. The owner of the dog, proud of his dog's newly mastered feat, said to the visitor, "Watch this!" Whereupon the dog's owner threw a piece of driftwood out into the ocean and told the dog to fetch it. The dog ran out on top of the waves, got the piece of wood, and brought it back to its owner. The visitor just stood in amazement as the owner of the dog repeated this two more times. Then the dog's owner said to the visitor, "Did you notice anything unusual?" And the visitor said, "Yeah, I did. Your dog can't swim." (From Illustrations Unlimited, James S. Hewett, Editor).

Beginning in Epiphany, continuing through Lent, and into the season of Easter Alecia and I did a sermon series on "The Apostles' Creed." With that we talked about what we as Christians believe. We covered what could be considered basic Christian belief.

After that series was complete we did a series on The Beatitudes that we titled "The Character of Christian." In that series we talked about the attributes of character that should be a part of the Christian life. So with those two series we covered "The Faith of a Christian" and "The Character of a Christian."

For the remainder of this Christian year (from now until the first Sunday of Advent) sermon topics will come under the heading of "The Practices of a Christian." There is no doubt that it is important for us as those who belong to Christ to know what it is that we believe. Beliefs are important. Beliefs form us as Christian people. Beliefs ground us in a particular identity, the identity of a Christian.

But the attributes of Christian character are also very important. Without the attributes of a Christian we not only appear to be hypocrites. We are hypocrites. We don't practice what we say we believe unless we have those attributes of Christian character. We are phony. So Christian belief and Christian character are both important.

But equally important are the practices of a Christian. There are some things that we as Christians do. Without these particular practices it is hard for us to remain Christian. You might call them the habits of a Christian, or holy habits.

The first of those practices that we will hear about this coming Sunday is that disciples pray. Other practices included in the series will be that disciples worship, disciples seek a personal relationship with Christ, and disciples seek to live a life of holiness. Also included in the series will be a four part series within a series about the Christian use of money.

My hope is that this series of sermons will help us focus on some very important things that really need to be a part of our lives as those who belong to Christ. We don't want to be like the man's dog in the story above. We don't want to be accused of not being able to swim. There are some practices that are important to the living of a Christian life.

So with this new series of sermons during this year we will have had the opportunity to think about the beliefs of a Christian, the character of a Christian, and now the "practices" of a Christian. These are definitely things for us to think about.

Until next time, *Bro. Jim*

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