



## WEEKLY STUDY May 14-May 20, 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

As we continue in the liturgical season of Easter, we begin a new sermon series for May called "God of the **MOVEMENT**." The play on words is intentional. We believe in a God of movement – calling us forth, sending us out; the ebb and flow of discipleship. And we believe in a God of the moment. We believe in a God who speaks to us here and now, all day long, through other people, Scripture, nature, signs and wonders – in moments both large and small.

### **Our scripture is: Luke 24:36-49 (NIV)**

"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, 'why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'" (NIV)

- 1)** While we continue in the season of Easter (which ends with Pentecost Sunday on May 28), we continue our theme for our May worship: God of the **MOVEMENT**. Pastor Sam explained our theme this way. God is on the move. We worship a creative God and creation is always changing, always moving, always going forward. And at the same time, God is with us in this moment – speaking to us, leading us. Pastor Sam said on Sunday, "...there is something life-giving, life-changing really about being solely in this moment. It is the only one we are guaranteed...." This made me think of the times when I was in the midst of experiencing something life-giving and instead of letting the

moment soak over and into me, I was thinking about what I needed to do next, or how to capture the moment, or distracted by worries that kept me out of the moment. Her reminder that life is in the moment made me vow to stay more aware of how I might be cheating myself out of the present because of distractions of the past or looking to the future.

**Question: *What takes you out of being in the moment? In what ways can you encourage yourself to be fully in the present, noticing life and God's presence instead of looking back to the past or jumping forward to the future?***

- 2) Starting with Easter Sunday, our scripture in worship has led us through the appearances of Jesus after his death as they are told in each of the Gospels. This week we turned to Luke's account. In Sunday's scripture we find the disciples gathered, talking about what had been recounted to them by the two who had seen Jesus on the Road to Emmaus. (Read Luke 24:13-35 for this account). Pastor Sam highlighted Luke 24:45: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." This reminded me of what has been an important slogan for many United Methodist Churches: "Open Hearts; Open Minds; Open Doors. In so many ways the teachings of and the example of Jesus is one open hearts, open minds, and open doors.

**Question: *How do you see the teachings of Jesus encouraging us who seek to follow him to be a people with open hearts, open minds, and open doors?***

- 3) One of the questions Pastor Sam asked us on Sunday was: "Can you witness (tell others; live a life that shows this) to the most true thing you know?" She talked about Ernest Hemingway who, when he found he could not get going on a new book, he would think, "Do not worry. You have always written before and you will write now. All you have to do is write one true sentence." She asked us to write one of the truest sentences we know – about faith – about Jesus – about God – about life. Something we could bear witness to through our words and actions.

**Question: *What is one true sentence you can witness to through your words and actions?***

- 4) This Sunday, in the 10:30 worship we were led by our children through scripture and music. The sanctuary was filled with their joyous singing. We sometimes forget that at different times in church history, clapping, laughter, the inclusion of and leadership of children were frowned upon. (And some of that frowning was in the not-so-distant past). There was a belief that worship should be solemn to be sacred. But the earliest Psalms contain moments much like the joy of the children in presenting and the joy of the congregation yesterday in receiving their offerings of word and song and movement. It was indeed worship.

**Question: *Think of the different generations who gather together at BMUMC each Sunday for worship. What gifts do each generation bring to worship? Create a prayer of thanks to God, naming each generation and praying, "Blessed are we O God for (children, youth, young adults, middle-aged adults; older adults) who bring the gifts of (name a gift for each generation) to our community of faith."***

**Prayer:** (With the continuing images of Jesus being known through the breaking of the bread, through meals he shared, and meals he prepared, this prayer in the United Methodist Book of Worship, from # 399 *Intercessions for the weeks of the Easter Season*” feels appropriate.)

**“O God, our bread, our milk, and our honey:**

**In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us to your table.**

**Feed us with your plant, and enlarge our table for all the hungry;**

**Through Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.”**

**Weekly Challenge:** In the Christian Church, we celebrate the season of Easter until Pentecost Sunday. This year, make Easter more than a day. Start each day by saying “Christ is Risen. Christ is risen indeed” to yourself or to others. Daily look for God’s movement in life around you and ask God to lead you in this moment for ways to join God’s movement.

*(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)*