

AUGUST 10, 2025

Marion weekly update

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SERMON August 3 - 'Shining a Light: Redemption' Psalm 51, Colossians 1:3-14

This week in our series of colors we look at a color most of us forget about in the light spectrum. We've been using the storytelling of the Green Lantern as a reference point. It takes the spectrum of light, and each color has an energy associated with it. What fuels that energy is some form of emotion or trait that an individual embodies to their core. Using a ring they harness that energy in a way that allows them to be great heroes and defenders, and at times even villains.

So far we've seen green, blue, yellow, orange, and red. Today we have the color indigo.

This has its own unique properties as have all thus far. This energy is the energy of compassion which is also very much the power of redemption. Where the other energies find the user because they embody the spirit of the energy, this energy actually transforms the user to be the opposite of what they are.

Compassion seeks out those who are truly rotten. They exhibit poor character and nasty dispositions. When it finds them, it internalizes in them and transforms them. The compassion makes them new. All the bad passes away to be replaced with a burning compassion and desire to see everyone in the universe turn from their badness and embrace their goodness. They want to see all of the universe redeemed.

Their powers are to teleport, and to affect the emotion of those nearby. It's not nearly the deadly kind of power that makes for exciting art panels in a comic book, which may be why they don't get as much air time. That said, this power may be the closest to illustrate the very heart of our faith.

We are all about redemption. Christ's work on the cross, which we celebrate in communion today is the hope of us all. No matter what we've done, how we've believed, how much trouble we've caused or been party to, we can be forgiven. We can be redeemed from the parts of us out of step with God to become people who are closer and closer imitations of Jesus.

We speak of this power in our faith as grace, or the Holy Spirit. John Wesley spoke of several kinds of grace. Prevenient, the grace of God that draws us to Christ. Justifying, the grace of God that forgives us, or saves us. And Sanctifying, the grace of God that changes us throughout our lives to become more like Christ. The power that transforms.

It is fitting to have this message on the heels of last week. Last week I made a statement that anger, fear, rage all rob us of the soul of the faith we proclaim. Redemption is why.

The gospel is about the redemption of all creation. The desire of God is that all would come to redemption, that no one would be left out. Everyone is invited and everyone given the same offer of grace. That compassion is the spirit that represents this makes sense. When we see someone who is broken and hurt we are moved with compassion. Even when that someone is acting in very hurtful and damaging ways compassion is a core response because we understand that what they are doing, how they are being, is often the product of brokenness and pain.

How do we stop the bad acting? Help them find the redemption that comes through healing and the grace of God.

Anger, fear, and rage do the opposite. If I look at someone with rage I am not looking for their redemption. I am most likely looking for revenge and retribution. I want them to be punished and because they hurt see them hurt. This is the opposite of redemption. If their problems are caused because they have been hurt and broken, seeing them hurt and broken more only makes it worse.

If the soul of our faith lies in redemption, rage takes our desire to see redemption in another. It takes the soul out of our faith.

This is so important if we want to understand just how incredibly powerful and life altering redemption is. There is a moment where Batman addresses the notion of redemption in a comic. Not necessarily the most cheery of characters and always suspicious he says that "redemption is ultimately a selfish pursuit."

If we only see redemption in the superficial layer he's right. If we only look at grace as that power of God that forgives and that's all there is to it, then he's right. In that instance redemption is nothing to do with this life and only to do with having a handy fire insurance plan to protect me in the next. It begins and ends with saving myself.

That isn't redemption Biblically.

Psalm 51 is a beautiful example of this. We read words of humble, heartfelt confession. There is recognition

that sin cuts off from being right with God. There is the famous request to “create in me a new heart and renew a right spirit in me.” What is the point? The point is so that the rest of life is filled with living rightly before God.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.

14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

15 Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

17 My sacrifice, O God, is [b] a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

18 May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.

The renewal and the redemption is for the purpose of helping others find that same redemption! It's impossible to do that if we aren't participating in it ourselves.

Colossians is similar. The passage is fully about the joy in knowing these believers are living into the salvation they received. It ends with “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

The redemption and forgiveness is EVIDENCED by the lives they live. It isn't some later on experience. It isn't just doing what we want in this life waiting for what comes next since we have been forgiven. It is living that faith, that compassion, that grace and mercy every day here. Why? So that the world can be redeemed as others choose to follow the path we have chosen.

Redemption transforms us.

The question asked sometimes when we talk about phrases like “are you saved?” or that “we are redeemed” is “saved and redeemed from what?”

The superficial, selfish answer is “from my sins” or maybe more fully “from the punishment for my sins”. This isn't the fullness of redemption.

We are redeemed and saved from continuing on in the same behaviors for which we've been forgiven. The reason this isn't selfish is because we are also protecting others from the consequences of those behaviors as well. Have you even thought to yourself when battling some serious sin or problem in life “I don't want to be like this anymore?”

Workaholics recognizing that they are running themselves into the ground, but maybe more so that they are abandoning their family in pursuit of the dollar. “I don't want to do this anymore, I'm tired of hurting my family”.

The smoker desperately trying to quit. Tired of shortness of breath and growing medical concerns “I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want my family having to worry about me.”

The one struggling with mental health. Tired of long depressions, aggressive outbursts, or crippling anxiety they finally seek help. “I don't want to be like this. I'm tired of hurting my family.”

Examples could go on and on. Sometimes we hear Christians say that if we just have enough faith God would fix us in the blink of an eye. Sometimes that happens. Most times it doesn't. Most times it takes time and a lot of effort leaning on the grace of God and the forgiveness of others to keep forging ahead and seeing the sickness, the brokenness, the sin healed until with God's help we've overcome that problem.

When Jesus came He came to redeem all of creation. We often talk about Him returning to restore all things and make them perfect as they were intended to be. In other words to finish the redemption work He began. What did He do in the meantime? He told His disciples to continue His work. Keep bringing people to faith so that they too can experience the redemption Jesus came to bring. Keep living into our faith in a way that changes the world around us for the better.

Like creation, we are a continual work of redemption.

We are redeemed through God's grace from the guilt and consequence of our sin. That we have embraced this is shown by the ongoing work of our lives being transformed and redeemed a piece at a time. That's the adventure of it.

Once we have overcome one piece of life that is out of step with God, at some point another one will come to our

attention. Then we work to overcome that piece. And so on.

Which means that over and over again life gets better. As our lives here and now are redeemed a piece at a time, a piece at a time life becomes more fulfilled, more beautiful, and more peaceful.

In the process, as Psalm 51 reminds us, in our redemption we seek the same for everyone around us.