Cooper Devotion for 3/29/20

 It is an odd feeling to be sitting in the Sanctuary on a Sunday morning alone. I know Dan wouldn’t mind but if he walked in right now he would find me sitting in his normal spot. I can picture Don and Larry not far behind me, the Montgomery’s close by, with Pat and Steve, Karlynne and Betsy, and Mrs. Becky behind them. I should be able to look to my right and see Glinnie, Debbie and the family, and Mrs. Pat. Or glance behind them to see Jeaniene with the grandkids, or Chuck and Eddie behind them, with Olga, Mary and Mary Beth on the end. I haven’t been bothered, I mean asked any questions by Steve about our sound equipment and do not hear the voices of Susan, Lisa, or Glen. I miss our regular guests including Michelle and Sherri (who goes back to G.E. tomorrow) and J.C. who as a respiratory doctor my prayers are with. Bob hasn’t handed anyone a bulletin. It feels odd to not be together with everyone this Sunday morning.

 I have chosen to write this week’s devotion during the time that we would normally be together because I miss you all and because I have been working on a class project noting 25 of Wesley’s sermons. In Wesley’s sermon titled Sermon on the Mount IV, Wesley makes the case that Christianity is a social religion. Our Faith is one where God’s love is poured into our hearts in such a way that we cannot contain it. Our thoughts and actions become rooted in God’s love for us and for others so much so that we are witnesses of God’s love to all of those around us. To be that witness for God to others, we have to be around others. God calls us in the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nation, in Acts 1 Jesus tells the disciples you will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes to you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the Ends of the Earth. We are called and commissioned to go out and be with people and in being with people we are to witness to them what God’s love is like. Wesley believed that Christianity is a social religion and as we find ourselves cooped up in our homes this Sunday morning, maybe we feel in our hearts that same need to be in social and in connection.

 Wesley would push against those who thought they could be spiritual without being socially connected using as an example, these verses from the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5:13-16:

**13**“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

**14**“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. **15** No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

 Wesley teaches that we cannot be the salt of the earth if we do not flavor those around. In order to be the salt and provide the flavor that is the love of God for the earth and it’s inhabitants we need to be in relationship and in connection with others. We need to provide encouragement, love, and support when times are good and when they are hard as well. We need to be examples of God’s love and witnesses of Jesus Christ.

 Wesley teaches that Christians are the light of the world. In being a Christian, a known child of God, we understand that God has called us out of darkness and we heard that call leaving darkness behind for the light, grace, and mercy of God. In knowing God’s love in our own hearts we become the light of the world. We are to share this light with other since our thoughts, words, and actions are rooted in God’s love that is found in our hearts. We are doing a disservice to the work God has done in us if we try to hide the light of God under the ‘bushel basket’. We are not living in faith when we do so. Yet there are times when anxiety, fear, and temptation causes us to not shine as brightly as we are supposed to. What is keeping us from shining as God has called us to?

Marianne Williamson authored “Our Deepest Fear” found at <https://www.personalgrowthcourses.net/stories/williamson.ourdeepestfear.invitation>

**Our Deepest Fear**By Marianne Williamson

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness
That most frightens us.

We ask ourselves
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually, who are you *not* to be?
You are a child of God.

Your playing small
Does not serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine,
As children do.
We were born to make manifest
The glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us;
It's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,
We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we're liberated from our own fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others.

Our playing small does not serve the Lord. Let us make manifest the glory and love of God that we know in our hearts in such a way that other will see and know God’s love for themselves by our witness. We are fortunate that though we are in our homes, we are still connected to so many people. Whether it be an internet message, a phone call, text, or written card, we can and are called to be God’s witness in these times. Amen.

**Questions to consider:**

During this time, what does it look like for the light of God to shine through me?

How can I be a better witness of God’s love and light to the world?

Who may be feeling a spiritual darkness and is in need of seeing the light of God through me?

How can I best reach out to them?

**Continue to pray for:**

Those will illnesses, especially Covid-19. The doctors, nurses, and hospital staff as well as their families. Those who have lost their jobs and are worried about a loss of income. Our leaders in Louisville, Kentucky, and the United States as well as the leadership across the world who people are relying on in this trying time. For those who have lost love ones.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

**Additional Worship Resources:**

Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6Odk49ZvD4&list=PLiG2wiwZPw_8Zytnip8FdTinjHl7LvOC_&index=19&t=0s>

Oceans by Hillsong United: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GGFb6LcX3U>

Come Thou Fount: David Crowder Band: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcjifzaV1Us>