

***Three Simple Rules: Do Good***  
**Message for North East United Methodist Church**  
**Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**  
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**Video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGU2KYGljI8>**

Jesus was asked, “*Of all the commandments, which one is the most important?*” Jesus responded, **Mark 12: 30-31**, “*The most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these*” (NIV).

For John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, the Great Commandment superseded all others as “*a guide to the highest form of faithfulness.*” Around 1739 Wesley outlined practices, “General Rules” and instructions...formed classes where men and women were held accountable and took steps to grow in and live out their faith. Out of the Great Commandment came Three Simple Rules that guided these groups, guided the church, spurring individuals onward in their walk with Christ...

- 1. Do No Harm**
- 2. Do Good**
- 3. Stay In Love With God**

Last week, we spoke of the first Simple Rule, “Do No Harm,” and how God challenges us, **Romans 13: 8-10** (NIV), “*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”*”

Today we look at the second Simple Rule, “**Do Good**,” and as Bishop Rueben P. Job writes, “*Now things begin to get even more complicated. Just when we thought we were ready to buy into the idea of not doing harm to anyone or anything, we are faced with an even more difficult choice. Once again, we remember the words of Jesus, “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6: 27-28). To do good is a serious challenge from Wesley and a direct command from Jesus...*”

Wesley’s rule, as recorded in the United Methodist Book of Discipline, states, “*By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men...*”

Wesley encourages us to do good to all people – everyone. John Wesley believed that we are to...

1. **“Do Good” To their bodies**, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.
2. **“Do Good” To their souls**, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it."
3. **“Do Good” to them that are of the household of faith** or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.
4. **“Do Good” By all possible diligence and frugality**, that the gospel be not blamed.
5. **“Do Good” by running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves**, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and off scouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.

John Wesley wrote,

***Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.***

God’s Word tells us, **3 John 11** (NKJV), *“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.”*

**Romans 12: 21** (NKJV), *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

**Hebrews 13:16** (NKJV), *“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”*

**Galatians 6:10** (NKJV), *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*

**Psalms 34:14** (NKJV), *“Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.”*

Sometimes it is not enough to refrain from doing harm. The next step of discipleship is to intentionally make the effort to bless others with our actions and words. Bishop Job writes, *“Doing good, like doing no harm, is a proactive way of living. I do not need to be asked to do some good deed or provide some needed help. I do not need to wait until circumstances cry out*

*for aid to relieve suffering or correct some horrible injustice. I can decide that my way of living will come down on the side of doing good to all in every circumstance and in every way I can. I can decide that I will choose a way of living that nourishes goodness and strengthens community.”*

John Wesley had these questions to ask before his prayers:

1. **Have I rejoiced or grieved with my neighbor, as befits my neighbor's condition?**
2. **Have I received my neighbor's shortcomings and failures with understanding and concern, and not with anger?**
3. **Have I taken an opposing viewpoint from any one when I had no good reason to, or have I argued where there was no chance of changing my neighbor's opinion?**
4. **Have I been so concerned with being right that I refused to let a neighbor in the wrong (in relatively unimportant matters) have the last word?**

**Do Good.** As I have reflected over the last two weeks on these first two rules, “Do No Harm” and “Do Good,” it has been extremely challenging, difficult, humbling...To “Do Good”...

About three weeks ago, I got a text message from my daughter, Anna. Anna was born when I was a teenager, sixteen years old...Later, I hurt for my daughter when she made the same mistake I made as a teenager and had a child out of wedlock at nineteen years old...

It has been a difficult journey, trying to raise a daughter when I could barely take care of myself...not having my daughter at home with Deb and I...seeing my daughter, who I love, grow up without her family in tact...It has been difficult in later years as our relationship at times has been strained...as we have attempted to guide her and help her in her decisions only to have our advice rejected...as she has walked down the aisle twice only to see both marriages dissolve...It has been so difficult not being able to see my grandchildren on a consistent basis...not having the relationship with Anna and my grandchildren that I have with my boys...

So about three weeks ago, I got a text message from my daughter, Anna...She’s getting married again...at the end of February...to a man she has met in church and is a Christian...but once again, Deb and I feel she is rushing into another marriage...I want her to wait, to go to college...I don’t want to go to another wedding...I don’t want to see her make the same mistakes...I want to tell her...to guide her...to yell at her...to love her...

A lot of “I” in those statements...

So I got the text message...not the greatest way to hear your little girl is getting married and to a man you have never met...What do I do? The human part of me didn’t want to go...didn’t want

to support this decision...wanted to tell her how disappointed I was and to show her where she was making yet another mistake...

And then, I read and preached on “Do No Harm”...If I was to not go to the wedding, even if I don’t agree, it would most definitely “Do Harm”...What if this is the one? When I’m gone would she remember that I didn’t show up at her wedding? Would she think about it the rest of her life that I wasn’t there? Would it drive one more nail into our relationship?

And now, I read and preach on “Do Good”...This goes beyond just showing up at the wedding...This points toward encouraging, praying for, supporting, doing whatever I can to make sure this marriage works, building a relationship with this new man in my daughter’s life...whether I want to or not...

I think about the many broken relationships all around us...parent and child, husband and wife, sister and brother, neighbor and neighbor...Where does God want you to reach out to even those who are not reaching out to you and “Do Good”?

Bishop Rueben P. Job writes, “[To Do Good]...*this is a challenging way to live. To love God with my whole being and to love my neighbor as much as I love myself was never declared to be easy; but it was declared to be essential to our spiritual life, our life of faith, and our life with God. The three rules are simple; but when I look at this simple and practical step to a transformed world, I begin to see how complicated and costly living with Jesus can become.*”

I have thought a lot about this rule in light of my ministry here in Rock Hall. How many times, I have failed at being proactive and reaching out to others...How many times, I have not given someone who was hurting an encouraging word or a listening ear...How many times, I have allowed people to feel for one moment that I didn’t care because I didn’t go to them, but waited for them to come to me...I am sorry and ask your forgiveness for when my actions did no good...and I pray you will show me grace as I try to show each of you grace in the years ahead.

Once again, this Simple Rule causes us, as Bishop Job writes, will “*require a careful and continual assessment of my life and the world in which I live. It will require an even more bold and radical step than not doing harm to those who may disagree with me and even seek to harm me. For now I am committing myself to seeking good for everyone in my world and everyone in God’s world.*”

We must start with ourselves...we must look in the mirror and make the changes necessary so we can live Christ-like lives...so that we can model Christ to the world...so that we can show grace to those who fail to “Do Good” to us...so that we can love and “Do Good” as Christ, Himself, did...as Luke wrote in **Acts 10:38 (NKJV)**, “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good...*”

Jesus is our model...not your pastor, not your neighbor, certainly not your self...Jesus is our model...and Jesus taught us that every time we “Do Good” we do that good to God, Himself...We honor our Heavenly Father...**Matthew 25: 31-40 (NIV)**, *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’*

*“You did it for me...”* Doesn’t that take your breath away? The thought that one day, God will show us all we did good in the world, during our lives...the people we helped, the kind words we spoke, the hungry we fed, the men and women we held as they cried, their hearts broken, the people we introduced to Jesus Christ...God will show us all we did good and say, *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world...for whatever you did [good], you did for me.”*

This understanding is what gives us strength...because we are not talking about “random acts of kindness”... In doing random acts of kindness, we decide how we are to be useful in the world...It is self-centered...In following this simple rule, “Do Good,” God has decided...It is God-centered...and God decrees that we should “Do Good” to All people, in All situations, at All times...

Such a task is beyond difficult...It is a God-sized task that can only be accomplished if one is connected to the vine, allowing God to love and heal and work through them...It is a task that makes one weary...I am weary when it comes to doing the right thing for my daughter regardless of whether or not she accepts or rejects it...I am weary when it comes to reaching out to parishioners even when they don’t reach out to me...I am weary in trying to do the right thing, to follow God, even when it is a battle every step of the way...

Yet, remembering that we are doing it for God...not for men and women...changes our perspective...If those around us reject our doing good, we can still “Do Good,” because we are focused on our Heavenly Father. As Mother Teresa wrote, ***“The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow...Do good anyway...You see in the final analysis its between you and God...It is never between you and them anyway.”***

As Paul writes in **Galatians 6: 7-9 (NIV)**, *“A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

**We must not give up...We must look up...**We must glean our strength from God if we are to live out this simple rule to “Do Good”...apart from Him we can do nothing...

As God speaks through the prophet, **Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)**, *“but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”*

So it begins...It begins with our relationship with God...turning to God in prayer, immersing ourselves in His Word, attempting to live like Christ...It begins with self-examination, looking in the mirror not across the pew or to our neighbor, but at ourselves, and how we can “Do Good” to all and in every situation...It begins with looking for ways in the week to come, praying for ways God wants to work through us, taking any step in word and action to “Do Good” and shine Christ...

As Rueben P. Job explains, *“My desire to do good is in response to God’s invitation to follow Jesus, and it is in my control. I can determine to extend hospitality and goodness to all I meet. I can decide to do good to all, even to those who disagree with me and turn against what I believe is right and good. And the reward for my doing good is not canceled or diminished by the response to my acts of goodness. I will have the reward of knowing I did what was right and pleasing to God. I will still be identified, known, and loved as a child of God. What could be a greater reward than this?”*

Let us go forth...let us “Do Good.”