

Today's Gospel Lesson is pretty simple to understand. Short, Sweet and to the point. However, do you find it difficult to imagine that the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a mustard seed? Then again, who are we to question the words breathed by God? So, this is where my journey starts. I don't know if you feel the same way as I do, but sometimes, no matter how hard I try, I cannot understand, relate to, or understand...the scripture lessons.

I hope that this sermon will shed light on the message that I missed in the Gospel reading. Do you feel the same as I do? So, for those of you, who know me well. You may know that I am a "little" stubborn and somewhat tenacious. When it comes to learning and fully understanding my responsibilities as a Christian, I may go overboard. I may or may not drive our Pastor John crazy with burning questions about life and my place in it. Before I forget, when you see the sign posted "Open for Prayers" please stop and just check-in with Pastor John. I can attest that it is a life changer.

So, I believe it was on a Tuesday, Pastor John and I were discussing life, and possibly becoming a church Lay Servant became our topic. Needless to say, I confessed to Pastor John that I am "Afraid of the Bible". He very graciously informed me that one of the responsibilities as a lay leader, is to read, learn and teach scripture..... I went into Panic Mode.

Have you ever tried to wash a cat? Yup, that was me, backing up trying every which way to GET UP and GET OUT of the situation. I was successful, my cell phone rang and of course I had to take that call. So, several days later I was printing out the church bulletins and Pastor John stopped by to say "hi." While we were chit chatting, he mentioned that he bought me a BIBLE. I was blown away, I was going to be a bible owner. I panicked, I needed to plan, make preparation to become a Bible owner.

I know what you are thinking. You are getting a BIBLE not a PUPPY, stop being so dramatic. But, truthfully, I tell you that I felt a sense of responsibility and pride in becoming a Bible owner. A couple days later it was in my hands. The good news, it WAS NOT as intimidating as I thought it would be, mostly because the cover is made of duct tape. It is not very thick and the text that is written, I can surprisingly understand. (The New Century Version). So, now what am I going to do with it. Remember (Tenacious & Stubborn), of course I did what any faithful Christian would do – I turned it into a GAME. "the fortune teller game". I said a prayer, flipped the bible from back to front and read the first scripture I saw. I have to say; my prayers were answered. I received the message from GOD directly from the Bible.

I thought, this will be handy. But, then a bunch of questions started to surface. Where did the Bible come from? Who wrote it and why was it written? I started to ask around. I asked Corky if she ever had questions about the bible. Like. why is there an Old and a New Testament? Why are there so many different types of bible styles? So, you might be thinking, wow – Jeanne has regressed into a child. Why is the sky blue? Can we drive to the moon? Where do babies come from? So, the first RIPPLE WAS CREATED.

Now, let me remind you what I consider a "ripple". The image can be found on the front of your bulletin. An action occurred (someone tossed a stone in a pond), a "small ripple" was created or "many ripples, fast and interconnecting." Have you ever been out on a boat and it started to sprinkle? 1,000 of ripples were created in a matter of minutes. Ok, now let's image that our actions create that same ripple. We are the stone and the rain. When we share our thoughts and feelings with others it set off a chain reaction in us and those people around us. So, I ask you again. Who made the first ripple? The ripple that propelled me was to understand the true nature of the bible.

Was it Pastor John that tossed the first stone, causing my response and reaction. Just by Pastor John, spending time and “hearing” my concerns and trails. Did the act of him investing in me thru time and the gift of a bible directly affect my understanding? The simple answer is YES! So, I have been researching the bible, trying to find the answers to my burning questions. FYI, check the front of your bible before Google. It is faster and easier. I just want to share with you what I have learned. So, I now know that the bible is made up of 67 different books, the bible tells us about God's awesome love for the people, a written love letter.

The first section of the Bible, the Old Testament, begins with how God created the world. It tells the story of God's love for his people from the beginning of time until just before he sent his Son, Jesus, from heaven to earth to save us from our sins. There are 39 books in the OT, and they are divided into 4 categories

The Law

History

Poetry

Prophets

The New Testament consists of 37 different books. Divided into 4 Main Categories.

The Gospel

History of the Church

The Letters

The Book of Prophecies

The word GOSPEL means ‘good news’ The Gospel contain God's good news of the story of his Son, Jesus Christ, and reveal in all its truth, and beauty what Jesus said and did. These narratives are not just filled with information about Christ but are also inspirational accounts of this life and ministry with lessons for us today. The Gospels tell about Jesus' birth, teachings, death, burial, and resurrection to life. The Good News is the greatest is the story ever told!

KJV (King James Version)

NIV (New International Version)

NAS (New American Standard)

NKJV (New King James Version)

ESV (English Standard Version)

NLT (New Living Translation),

KJV (King James Verison) and NAS (New American Standard) attempted to take the underlying Hebrew and Greek words and translate them into the closest corresponding English words as possible (word for word)

NIV (New International Version) and NLT (New Living Translation) attempted to take the original thought that was being presented in Greek and Hebrew and then express that thought in English (thought for thought).

Many of the other translations attempt to "meet in the middle" between those two methods. Paraphrases such as The Message or The Living Bible can be used to gain a different perspective on the meaning of a verse, but they should not be used as a primary Bible translation.

I now have a pretty good understanding of the bible. I hope you do too. Now back to our Ripple, it is starting to grow, become more than just a little ripple. A week after I asked Corky

questions pertaining to the bible, she gave me a very thick book. Inside the cover Corky's Grandmother inscribed with love to Carolee 1978. Now this isn't an average bible, this is from Guidepost a Parallel Bible. It includes 4 different versions of the same scripture reading, The King James, The Modern Language, The Living Bible, The Revised Standard Version. I am happy to share with you, that I now am the owner of TWO Bibles. So our ripples keep growing,

Recently, are very own Lexi with the help of her mother created a multitude of "Ripples." We might want to start to consider them a wave. Jennifer shared on Facebook that Lexi's Sunday School teachers should be happy to hear that after church today Lexi was at the store singing her own made up song proclaiming "I love Jesus Christ!". Another shopper told her that she loved Jesus Christ too. 😊 I consider this more than just a ripple, looks like a wave of love, joy and celebration of the good news to me.

How many stories have we heard about how WE, South Meriden Trinity UMC has helped to improve the quality of life for our neighbors far and wide. We are as small as a MUSTARD SEED, small but mighty, few but many. When we are rooted in our faith and proclaim God's Glory, we grow just as large as the Mustard Seed tree. We are here to provide protection and comfort for the weary. We willing love and speak the living word of our savior Jesus Christ. Our faith in Christ and in others has caused a ripple effect that we cannot stop. Will you join me a ride the WAVE to our salvation? AMEN.