

## **2010 Living Our Legacy: Our Human Legacy - “Created and Loved”**

Welcome to Legacy UMC. It is my joy to be the pastor of one of the greatest new churches in Bismarck, and the Dakotas! I can't tell you how proud I am of each of you who generously supported our recently experienced Christmas Miracle of Generosity. We have raised over \$26,500 to date. I am humbled to serve with such a great staff, and honored to be part of this generous community of faith. We are far from perfect, just a bunch of Jesus followers trying to be faithful; and God has blessed us beyond what we deserve...amen?

As we embark on this New Year...and this new decade, it is with a new name that I hope and pray will direct us and define us for the immediate and long-term future. I'd like to invite you to join with me as we begin to memorize our new name, and begin to practice our new priorities:

*Because of the Legacy we have received,  
We build the Legacy God desires,  
To leave the Legacy the world needs.*

### **Legacy United Methodist Church;**

Followers of Jesus who practice:

- Radical Hospitality
- Extravagant Generosity
- Passionate Worship
- Authentic Faith Sharing
- Intentional Faith Development
- Risk-taking Mission and Service

I would also like to introduce you to the new theme for 2010, and the new series I'll be preaching over the next few weeks. Our theme for this year will be:

**“Living Our Legacy”**

We've ordered new stationary, new business cards, new magnets, a new sign, and new coffee mugs. We'll be offering them to you in just a few weeks. I've chosen this theme, because I've always believed that an organization owning a vision is one thing, and an organization that is "owned by" its vision is quite another. I believe there to be nothing more powerful on this earth than a like-minded group of people, fully committed to a vision and strategy that is willing to work and sacrifice, to achieve its goals, objectives and vision. I think Jesus called it a Church, and remarked that the '*gates of hell could not prevail against it.*' I think our recent miracle is just one in a long line of miracles that proves we are being owned by our new identity: It is our Legacy; and we must receive it, we must achieve it, and we must leave it! This year we will begin this three-fold process as we learn how to Live Our Legacy. I'm glad you are along for the journey; I invite you to be part of the process; not as observers, but participants.

I'd like to mention a few of the series we'll be doing in 2010. I'll begin the New Year today with a Series called our Human Legacy. I'll follow that up with a series called our Historic Legacy, where we'll consider how we've become Legacy UMC from Jesus to John Wesley, to today. I'll spend a few weeks considering our Theological Legacy. Next fall I'll flesh out for us what each of our Legacy Practices look like, what our Legacy of Giving ought to look like, and what our new Christmas Legacy might look like. Interspersed will be a few shorter series; including one from Peter, and one from Ernie that we'll tell you more about later.

For today I want to begin to consider our human legacy by considering that we are Created and Loved. Next week that we are Fallen and Forgiven, the following that we are Gifted and Called, the following that we are Empowered and Sent, and the last that we are Perfected and Finished! I hope you'll make it a priority to come and learn to Live Our Legacy! Now consider today's text:

*This is the family tree of the human race: When God created the human race, he made it godlike, with a nature akin to God. He created both male and female and blessed them, the whole human race. Genesis 5:1*

In my mind it is above debate that the single greatest facts known to the human race are these: that we are created by God in the image of God, because we are loved by God. To those of us who've been reared, long or short, in the faith; this seems an obvious, (though often misunderstood because of its ramifications), statement of fact. We know we are created, and we know we are loved. It just seems above dispute to most of us at least. But that is not the way many people in our society believe.

At the turn of this century a number of conferences were held across this country for the express purpose of answering this question: What will it take for humanity to survive another 1000 years? As you might expect, many answers were offered, but one veteran futurist, Joe Coates argued that; *“for humanity to survive another 1000 years, it will be critical that humanity give up religion.”* Continuing to quote reveals his logic:

*“It is obvious that this age is an age of extreme religious zealotry, driving global and regional conflicts. What makes this new religiously-inspired extremism so dangerous are the amplifying effects of modern weapons, communications, and travel. What is at work is no great mystery. The zealotry we see is mostly about money, power, and land. Religions, most particularly Christian and Muslim, want global market share, and the money and power that comes with it. Unless these dominant religions give up this quest for power, we are in for chaos. Could there ever be a time when the dominant religions give up the quest for more converts, more power, and more money? Could religion just be a personal matter, and kept out of the affairs of state? Short of that, the future is in peril.”*

Coupled with this outright rejection of the Gospel's mandate for Christians, is the secularist scientists who reject any notion that humankind is anything but body and mind. The preeminence of evolutionary theories being taught and believed as the only 'logical' explanation for the origin of the human species, is troubling at best, and damaging at worst.

Are we as human beings nothing more than the off-handed by-products of eons of evolutions? Are we nothing more than advanced gorillas? Are we nothing more than petri-dish, or big-bang remnants? Are we nothing more than flesh and intellect? We all know that we are more...don't we? Consider:

*God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth." God **created** human beings; he **created** them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He **created** them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth." Genesis 1:26 or consider this:*

*Look around you: Everything you see is God's—the heavens above and beyond, the Earth, and everything on it. But it was your ancestors who God fell in **love** with; he picked their children—that's you!—out of all the other peoples. That's where we are right now. So cut away the thick calluses from your heart and stop being so willfully hardheaded. God, your God, is the God of all gods, he's the Master of all masters, a God immense and powerful and awesome. He doesn't play favorites, takes no bribes, and makes sure orphans and widows are treated fairly, takes **loving** care of foreigners by seeing that they get food and clothing. Deuteronomy 10:14*

We are loved, and we are created. I have often wondered what part of God's image is created in us, have you? Was it God's skin tone, or hair color, or facial features that we inherited, like we do from earthly parents? Obviously, no. Was it God's perfect temperament, or God's perfect power, presence, and intellect? Obviously, no. What was it of God...that God fashioned into us? I believe it is one thing...the fact that God is Spirit. We are created by God as Spiritual beings, and no amount of denial, or disregard from those God created will ever change that. One might choose to ignore the Spiritual life, and our world is filled with examples of people who've made that choice; but to do so places you in eternal peril!

Not that we need social scientists to prove that we are loved and created as Spiritual beings, but to balance the Joe Coates quote from above; not all scientists agree with Coates. Neale Donald Walsch is one of them.

*“This is an extraordinary world we live in, but if we are not careful, we are going to destroy it. At the very least we will terribly disrupt, if not completely end, life as we know it. There is no need for us to do that! Yet the direction in which we are going is taking us right there. The crisis humanity is facing is not a political, economic or military crisis – yet we continue to try to solve it with political, economic, and military means. The crisis humanity faces today is a spiritual crisis, and it can only be resolved by spiritual means.”*

This is an extraordinary world in which we live, and receiving, achieving, and leaving the legacy that we are indeed Spiritual Human beings is one with which we each must come to terms. We must not only believe we are Spiritual Human beings, we each must choose to live in that reality. I hope this quote from visionary French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin might be as helpful to you in this process, as it was to me:

*“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience”.*

As profound as that simple statement might at first glance be, upon further investigation, it changes everything. We are first and foremost Spiritual beings. Long before we became ‘human beings’ we existed in the mind and heart of God, and the first order of infusion by the breath of God was to breathe “Spirit” into us! We are Spiritual beings having human experiences.

If you like that quote, then I hope you’ll give equal if not greater attention to this one also from Chardin:

*“Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in them. Fill the Heart with Love, the Head with Wisdom and engage your Hands in Service. You can do all the meditation, know all the scriptures, but selfless service is the quickest and shortest way to get to divinity. When you use your energies in the service of society, the Divine Power in you gets surcharged. If your heart is pure, all that you think and do will be pure. Therefore the first requisite is purity of heart and purity of the mind.”*

I think we’ve experienced just a slice of this with our most recent Miracle of Generosity. I believe we have many more to learn as we continue to Live Our Legacy!

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