

**New Castle United Methodist Church
510 Delaware Street
New Castle, DE 19720**

**The Message for October 25, 2020
“On the Road to Damascus”
Pastor Ray Eck**

Last week, we were with followers of Jesus who, having witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, left Jerusalem on their way to Emmaus. On their way along the dusty road, another man joined them to inquire what they were discussing that day.

Jesus will do that, you know. He comes to us when we least expect him and ignites us to action so that his purpose might be fulfilled. Have you ever felt that gentle tug from Jesus, directing you in the direction you should go, even though feeling his presence was the last thing you were expecting at that moment? I have, but that’s a story for another day.

Today, we join Saul of Tarsus, a Jew, and persecutor of early Christians, as he is on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, Syria, with a mandate from the high priest, Ananias, to seek out and arrest followers of “The Way”, those who were followers Christ, with the intent of returning them to Jerusalem as prisoners for questioning, and possible execution.

It is important to note that Saul the persecutor did not become Paul the Apostle. Saul was told by Jesus to go to the Gentiles and teach them about Jesus and His mission here on earth. The Gentiles spoke Greek, not Hebrew, so Luke, the author of The Book of Acts, simply calls Saul by his gentile name, Paul. Jesus always referred to Saul as Saul, his Hebrew name since Jesus spoke Hebrew to Saul.

And so, Saul of Tarsus speaks to us in Acts 22, while on the road to Damascus with his friends; and says this:

⁶ “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

⁸ “‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting, he replied. ⁹ My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

¹⁰ “What shall I do, Lord?” I asked. ‘Get up”, the Lord said, “and go into Damascus”. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ ¹¹ My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

¹² “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. ¹³ He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

¹⁴ “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. ¹⁵ You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

¹⁷ “When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’

¹⁹ “Lord,” I replied, “these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.”

²¹ “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”

And so, Saul was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He then set out to witness and to spread the Good News of Jesus as Savior-Messiah. News the Jews had been waiting for, for over 2000 years.

After gaining a hearing and establishing common ground with his audience, Paul gave his testimony. He shared how he had come to faith in Christ. Sound reasoning is good, but it is also important to simply say what Christ has done in our lives. But know this, no matter how we present the message, not everyone will accept it and Paul knew this. We must faithfully and responsibly present the gospel message and leave the rest to God. These people listened intently to Paul, but the word “Gentiles” brought out all their anger and exposed their pride. They were supposed to be a light to the gentiles, telling them about the one true God, but they failed by becoming separatist and exclusive. God’s plan, however, would not be thwarted; the Gentiles were going to hear the Good News through Jewish Christians, such as Paul and Peter.

God's word to Saul was clear. "Go! I will send you far away to bring the Good News to the Gentiles."

Saul's dramatic conversation on the road to Damascus was the beginning of an incredible journey. And while each of us is commissioned by Jesus to live in obedience to Him and love one another, we must live in fellowship with each other, sharing in their sufferings, and become more like Jesus in all that we do.

Now go and tell the world of the wonderful riches found only in Christ. Tell them like their eternal-lives depend on this wonderful news, because it does.



We're preparing a page in the November Spark where you can offer 2-3 sentences celebrating something you are thankful for. This will give us all a chance to share that thanks with others in the NCUMC family -- something that happens so often in our weekly joys and concerns, but due to the pandemic, something that we've missed sharing in person.

We're on a bit of a deadline so we get the Spark out on time, so please send your 2-3 sentences of thanksgiving to Bill Mathews at wrmaago@gmail.com or just reply to the email your Weekly Message came from (newcastledeumc@gmail.com).

We'll need them by this Sunday, October 25.

"Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart"



Music for October 25

-- Bill Mathews, Director of Music Ministries

It was a little over 500 years ago that Pope Leo X authorized the sale of indulgences to help build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. And it was on October 31, 1517 that Martin Luther, who preached against it despite being ordained as an Augustinian friar, nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

In Albert Bailey's book, "The Gospel in Hymns," he writes that the accomplishments of Luther were that "he established the Protestant Church in Germany and he gave the people in their own language the Bible, the Catechism, and the Hymnbook so that God might speak directly to them in His Word, and they might directly answer Him in their songs." As long as the hymns were evangelical, Luther allowed freedom to anyone who was inspired to write, resulting in new hymns that were not only full of joy – but "spiritual songs which flooded the homes and the school as well as the church and became a never-failing spring of spirituality in people's hearts and lives."

In 1529, the midst of the Protestant Reformation, Luther wrote his most famous hymn – *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. Based on Psalm 46, "God is our refuge and strength," he immediately refers to his "helper" – God. He speaks of "mortal ills" that were not only in the fight with the Roman church, but also in 16th century society – hopeless poverty, leaders who were ignoring the needs of the people, and oppressions through barbaric laws. He attributed these ills to "our ancient foe," but he knew that to defeat him, we needed to place our confidence in Christ Jesus, "the man of God's own choosing." For through the "Lord Sabaoth," we will not fear a world "with devils filled;" after all, we have the one little word that "shall fell him." And it is through that word – Faith – that the "Spirit and the truth are ours." 491 years after Luther wrote this hymn, God's "truth abideth still."

A Mighty Fortress is Our God, UMC Hymnal, no. 110, sung by The American Boychoir

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=GS-NT3KRqCA>

Verse 1

A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

Verse 2

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth, his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.

hymn continues on the next page

Verse 3

And though this world, with devils filled,
 should threaten to undo us,
 we will not fear, for God hath willed
 his truth to triumph through us.
 The Prince of Darkness grim,
 we tremble not for him;
 his rage we can endure,
 for lo, his doom is sure;
 one little word shall fell him.

Verse 4

That word above all earthly powers,
 no thanks to them, abideth;
 the Spirit and the gifts are ours,
 thru him who with us sideth.
 Let goods and kindred go,
 this mortal life also;
 the body they may kill;
 God's truth abideth still;
 his kingdom is forever.

In Pastor Ray's message, he encourages us to tell others the Good News of Jesus as Savior-Messiah. It reminded me of an old Spiritual, *Ain'-a That Good News*, which became popular as a choral work through an arrangement by William L. Dawson, an African-American composer, performer, and music educator. In 1931, Dawson became the director of the 100-voice choir at the Tuskegee Institute and in 1934, he wrote his own *Dawson's Negro Folk Symphony*. His arrangements of the old Negro Spirituals are considered to be among the finest examples of the genre. I've included two versions of *Ain'-a That Good News* in this week's music – the first by Kathleen Battle, soprano, and Christopher Parkening, guitar; the second, Dawson's own arrangement sung by the Tuskegee Institute Choir with the composer conducting (you can even hear the sound of the needle dropping onto the record!)

***Ain'-a That Good News*, Kathleen Battle, soprano, and Christopher Parkening, guitar**

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=MZcfU_S1Pfw

***Ain'-a That Good News*, Tuskegee Institute Choir, William L. Dawson, arranger and conductor**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67Wx0WosrMY>

I 've got a crown up in the Kingdom,
 Ain't that good news!
 I've a crown up in the Kingdom,
 Ain't that good news!
 I'm going to lay down this world,
 going to shoulder up my cross,
 Goin' to take it home to my Jesus,
 Ain't that good news!

I 've got a robe up in the Kingdom,
 Ain't that good news...
 I've got a robe up in the Kingdom,
 Ain't that good news...
 I'm going to lay down this world,
 going to shoulder up my cross,
 Goin' to take it home to my Jesus,
 Ain't that good news!

I 've got a Savior in the Kingdom, Ain't that good news...
 I've got a Savior in the Kingdom, Ain't that good news...
 I'm going to lay down this world, going to shoulder up my cross,
 Goin' to take it home to my Jesus, Ain't that good news!
 Good news, Good news, My Lord! Oh, ain't that good news!

An invitation to a virtual music event on the next page



The Wanamaker Organ at Macy's in Philadelphia is the largest operating pipe organ in the world with over 28,000 pipes! And the Court Organist, Peter Richard Conte, is an amazing organist. Couple the instrument and organist with Halloween and we have a real musical treat (or trick?)

If you are interested in hearing this concert from the comfort of your home, the Friends of the Wanamaker Organ are offering this full-length streamcast presentation for FREE! Yes, tickets are FREE (and up, if you wish to help offset the cost!)

SO... if you love organ music and/or Halloween...

The concert is Friday, October 30 at 8 PM

with a repeat showing at 11 PM ET.

Ticketholders will be sent a link on concert day with instructions on how to tune in.

For more information and to get your ticket, go to:

<https://wanamakerorgan.com/>

Our Prayer Requests and Food Closet needs are on the next page.



Tristan Beeson, Pam Whary's nephew
 Ruth Ann Chisholm
 Paul Coffin, Michelle Jordan's godfather
 Hoover & Anita Counterman
 James Costenbader, Hoover & Anita's son-in-law
 Wilbert Esler, Sharon Kimmel's father
 Richard Hastings
 Rev. Jerrold, Sally, Elizabeth, and Jennifer Knotts
 Tammy McAleese
 Joan Skilton's daughter, Sue, and her family
 Margaret Weyl

Greyson, a 3-year-old boy, diagnosed with neuroblastoma. We have been asked to "Pray for Grey" each day going forward and his Aunt Jennifer will keep us informed on his progress. More information will be coming in the November *Spark*.

The family of Elfriede Schlumpf; Elfriede, who passed away on October 19 at the age of 92, was a church choir mentor and long-time friend of Bill Mathews.

Those diagnosed with the coronavirus and the families of those who have lost loved ones

The staff and the patients of our nursing homes

The homeless

Those who struggle with addiction

If you have someone that you'd like included on our Prayer List,
 please let us know by contacting either
 Doris Poultney, Prayer Chain Coordinator,
 @ 302-378-1184,
 or Pastor Ray @ 302-740-3932 or
snowman3girls@gmail.com



✓ **Food Closet Needs**

- ✓ Instant Potatoes
- ✓ Rice a Roni or 1 lb. bags of rice
- ✓ Dry Unsweetened Cereal...
 Cheerios, Corn Flakes, etc.
- ✓ Peanut Butter & Jelly
- ✓ Canned entrees – stew or chili

*Now that the weather is getting colder,
 here are a few items that will be needed more:*

- ✓ Canned Soup... Chunky or Progresso
- ✓ Instant Oatmeal packets

And remember, store brands are always acceptable.