



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

June 2, 2024

“The Means of Grace”

Recap of sermon from June 2, 2024

Scripture: John 1:16, 1 Corinthians 11:17-27

The “Means of Grace,” are another term that is distinctively Methodist. In his sermon called “The Means of Grace,” John Wesley names the three chief ways that we can get to know God. These are gifts that God has given to us so that we may know God better. These are the study of Scripture, prayer, and sharing the Lord’s Supper.

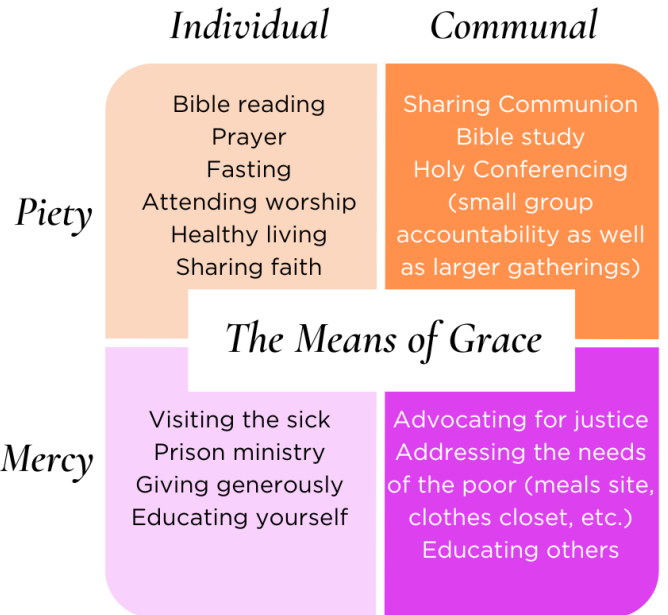
Wesley felt it was important to defend these practices as gifts from God to stand in opposition to those who claimed that he preached a gospel of “works righteousness.” There were theologians at the time that claimed that Wesley’s “methods” were little more than Catholic-ish ways for people to earn their salvation.

Wesley argued however, that “From his fullness we have received grace upon grace” (John 1:16). In other words, God has given us these gifts as a way to know Christ, which is the way to know God. While Bible, prayer, and communion are the chief ways to know God, Wesley believed that there are many ways to encounter the Divine. These “Means of Grace,” can be divided into a four-part quadrant. Two parts are individual and communal. The other two parts are works of piety and mercy.

Individual and communal seems self-explanatory. There are things we do alone, and there are things we do in a group. Works of piety are things we do for ourselves. Works of mercy are things we do for others. Sometimes in a church we talk of ministry and mission in the same way. Mission is the things the church does for those on the outside. Ministry is the things we do for those on in the inside.

“Remember also to use all means as *means*; as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If therefor they actually tend to this, well’ but if nor, they are dung and dross.” (John Wesley, sermon #16, “The Means of Grace” (1746)). In other words, these are things we do to know God. If we do them for any other reason, we are missing the point, and as you see, Wesley pulled no punches in describing what you achieve if you are not becoming more holy, just, and loving as you do these things.

And this is Paul’s main point in the eleventh chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul warns against the community sharing the Lord’s Supper without understanding what



it is all about. Some use 11:27 “This is why those who eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord inappropriately will be guilty of the Lord’s body and blood “ to help drive a wedge between groups of Christians, or to keep children from the Table. This is totally missing the point.

The Lord’s Supper is meant to bring people together. It is meant to help create community. It is meant to be the family meal for those who wish to encounter Christ. Instead, it was another place of division. In verses 17-22 Paul is describing a community that doesn’t care for one another. This is the “inappropriate” eating and drinking he warns against. Communion—along with the other means of grace—are a way to encounter God, build community, and make the Kingdom of God real in our lives.

So consider how you use or don’t use these means. We are meant to grow. We grow by stretching ourselves. Most of us excel at one of the quadrants, but lack in one of the others. So we can lead from our strengths and grow in our weaknesses. We grow getting out of habit, by leaving our comfort zones, failing, and trying new things.

Evaluate yourself. Are there strengths you can share? Are there places you can step into leadership? Are there weaknesses you can work on? Are there areas you can grow? Spend some time in the chart above and ponder what you may do to grow in grace.

Next Week: Part 4 of 6 of “Strangely Warmed”
Practical Divinity, James 2:14-26