**When Faith Meets Life: The World Community**

**Isaiah 2:4**

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If you were going to guess what recorded song has been played most often in the history of recorded music, what would be your guess? I’ll let you mull on that for a moment while I tell you a couple of songs that it’s not. According to an article in Time magazine a couple of years ago, there are various sources that say that the Righteous Brothers’ “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling” has received over 8 million plays on radio and television since its release in 1964, and the Beatles’ song “Yesterday” is said to have been played at least 7 million times in the US alone.

Yet, the same Time article claims that in an unscientific count, the most played song in music history has been played nearly 50 million times. Let’s hear it, Henry. “It’s a Small World” was inspired by the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and was written by the Sherman brothers to accompany a ride at the 1964 World’s Fair. The ride was officially called "PEPSI Presents Walt Disney's 'It's a Small World' — a Salute to UNICEF and the World's Children."

After the world’s fair closed, the ride was moved to Disneyland and then replicated at Disney World as well as the Disney parks in Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong. All together, it has run at the five parks for the equivalent of about 150 years. Take off a few years for times when the parks were closed. Add in twelve months or so for the world’s fair. And you get a ballpark of 148 years or 54,020 days. Disney says that in their busiest seasons, the parks are open 16 hours a day and the song plays roughly 1200 times. However, the average day is twelve hours. So, say 900 times a day for 54,020 days equals 48, 618,000 times for “It’s A Small World”. I don’t know for sure that makes it the most –played song in history, but it seems likely!

What’s interesting to me is to consider just how much smaller our world has gotten since 1964. We live in an increasingly global economy as goods and capital flow through transnational corporations. We can travel from continent to continent faster than ever before. With the advent of the internet, we can communicate instantly with people across the country and around the world. And we are learning more and more about how the life choices of people in developed countries impact the quality of life for those in developing countries.

So, what does our faith tell us about how we as Christ-followers are to relate to this ever smaller world? We are in the middle of a sermon series on the United Methodist Social Principles – the basic principles of our faith that help us consider how following Christ informs, motivates, defines, and inspires our day-to-day lives.

There are six categories of social principles.  Doug has already preached over the last few weeks on the natural world, the political community, the nurturing community, and the social community.  Here, on our global music weekend, I have the opportunity to speak to you about the social principle entitled The World Community.

But before I do, let’s take a look at this very familiar story of the Good Samaritan as I think it tells us a lot about how Jesus would have us relate to other nations and their people. The story starts with a young lawyer testing Jesus to see if he really knows Jewish law.  What do I have to do to inherit eternal life? He asks.  And, as is typical of him, Jesus answers with a question.  “What does the law say?”  The young man answers, as any good Jew would, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live,” Jesus replies.  But the lawyer isn’t satisfied; he pushes a little further.  “And who is my neighbor?” he asks.

And Jesus answers with a parable.  A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when a band of robbers robs him, beats him, and leaves him for dead.  A priest walks by, but when he sees the beaten man, he looks the other way and continues on the other side of the road.  Then a Levite walks by.  He, too, turns a blind eye and hurries along his way.

The third person to walk by is a Samaritan.   You may remember from last week that there was a great deal of hostility between Jews and Samaritans – the Jews distrusted the Samaritans and saw them as unclean.  So, what a surprise to Jesus’ listeners when the one who stops to help the robbed and bleeding Jew by the side of the road is a Samaritan.  He not only stops – he cleans and bandages the man’s wounds, takes him to an inn, and pays for the innkeeper to care for him. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Go and do likewise. How are we to relate to the world around us? We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Who is our neighbor? The entire world – including but not limited to those we have learned to fear. And how are we to love? With mercy and compassion.

The opening paragraph of the Social Principle entitled The World Community states, “God’s world is one world. The enforced unity of humanity, increasingly evident on all levels of life, presents the Church as well as all people with problems that will not wait for answers:  injustice, war, exploitation, privilege, population, international ecological crisis, proliferation of arsenals of nuclear weapons, development of transnational business organizations that operate beyond the effective control of any governmental structure and the increase of tyranny in all its forms.  This generation must find viable answers to these and related questions if humanity is to continue on this earth.  We commit ourselves as a Church to the achievement of a world community that is a fellowship of persons who honestly love one another.”

Love your neighbor as yourself and all the world is your neighbor.

This social principle has four subheadings.  The first is Nations and Cultures, which states that just as individuals are affirmed by God in their diversity, so are nations and cultures.  As a Church, we regard nations accountable for unjust treatment of their citizens and others living within their borders.  While we recognize differences between cultures, we stand, as Jesus did, for justice and peace – in every nation, always.

The second subheading is National Power and Responsibility.  We recognize that some nations have more military and economic power than do others.  We urge the major political powers to use their nonviolent power to maximize the political, social, and economic self-determination of other nations rather than to further their own special interests.  We encourage all governments to work for the development of more just economic systems.

Third, War and Peace.  We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ.  We therefore reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy.  We believe that human values must outweigh military claims as governments determine their priorities.  Consequently, we endorse general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Finally, Justice and Law.   Believing that international justice requires the participation of all peoples and nations, we endorse the United Nations and its related bodies as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law.  We commend the efforts of all people in all countries who pursue world peace through law.

Each of these subheadings has much more in it, but I’ve tried to pick a few sentences from each that give you a sense of the overarching themes – themes of inter-connectedness, love, justice and peace.

I think what’s hard with this particular social principle is taking these broad categories about the global community and knowing where we fit in. How do we as individual Christians or as the local church enact these principles of our faith?

First of all, we educate ourselves. We learn about the unjust distribution of resources in our country and our world. Learn about food waste and global warming. Learn how the choices we make in our day to day lives impact the world community. Look up the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society. See what they do to partner with the United Nations in support of global peace and human rights.

Secondly, we become Good Samaritans. We reach out to those who have been beaten down physically, emotionally, financially – from victims of domestic violence to victims of human trafficking to refugees and immigrants. We bandage their wounds and offer them a safe place to rest. We feed the hungry in Ann Arbor, Appalachia, Costa Rica, and Kenya.

Third, we work tirelessly for peace. We teach our children non-violence; we advocate for the United Nations, we hold our own nation accountable to finding alternatives to war.

And finally, we take it upon ourselves to build relationships, reach across divides, and learn to see our own biases. We live by the teachings of Jesus – modeling love for our enemies, speaking truth to power, and recognizing the inherent value of each citizen of God’s one world. After all, there’s so much that we share, that is time we’re aware, it is truly a small, small world.

May it be so. Amen.