



Sermon, June 24, 2018  
Rev. Dr. Craig S. Pesti-Strobel  
Coburg and Junction City United Methodist Churches

Sermon Series: Tending the Path  
**“The Path Articulated: JP21”**

**Scripture: Galatians 5:1, 13-26**

**5** <sup>1</sup> For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup> If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

*The Works of the Flesh*

<sup>16</sup> Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

*The Fruit of the Spirit*

<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

**Anatomical Charts and diagrams – how the body fits together**

**“Dem Bones” – articulation of bones**

**Articulating the Path of Jesus for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – “JP21”**

**Headlines describe a world out of joint:**

- **“Trump administration heads to court, seeking to hold immigrant families in detention.” (LA Times, June 21, 2018)**
- **“‘White civil rights’ rally marking Charlottesville anniversary set to be held next to White House.” LA Times, June 20, 2018.**

- “Reporter sexually harassed at World Cup.” BBC News June 21, 2018.

### **Reboot in 21<sup>st</sup> Century:**

- Recognize it as a Path of Transformation – selves, communities, world. Paul is all about the transformed life that Jesus Christ makes possible. He uses a lot of comparisons to bring the idea of transformation home. One of the contrasts he likes to use is “Flesh” in contrast to “Spirit.” ‘For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup> If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.’
- Divest ourselves of all things antithetical to transformation
- Divest faith of nationalism, any form of supremacism, whether in regard to class, race and ethnicity, gender expression, religious expression, etc.
- Recognize transformation as an expanding spiral: We go through phases and cycles in our growth, but if we are growing, our awareness continues to open upward and outward.

### **Bigger Mind in 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- Unitive thinking, non-dualistic, non-binary, embrace complexity.
- Beyond Us-Them, I-It, into I-Thou, realization of how we all are a part of a Greater Whole, and we all have a part to play, and we all need the transformation of growth, development, wisdom. The JP21 will need to embrace Loving our neighbor AS ourselves; caring for the natural world not as a commodity, but as a part of ourselves, our own nature; perceive and realize that humanity is One, we are not separate tribes at war with each other.
- Paul describes this shift comparing the ways of flesh in contrast to the ways of the Spirit. At Annual Conference, we learned that this

describes two basic mindsets that people have: a mind at war and a mind at peace. The mind at war expresses what Paul calls the fruits of the flesh: everything is focused on “me.” You exist to benefit me. You are either a path to my happiness and fulfillment or a barricade. The other mindset is the mind at peace, expressing what Paul describes as fruits of the Spirit. Here we exist for each other. “Through love, become slaves for one another.”

### **Bigger Heart in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- Faith communities of goodwill and progressive transformation need to seize the reins of social media and new modes of communication to truly connect peoples all across the globe.
- New bottom line to existence needs to be Compassion, Mercy, Kindness, Love, and Empathy.

### **Bigger World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- We are going to have to get serious about caring for Creation and tend to the needs of the planet upon which our Path is placed. More than that, as the fully conscious self-expression of the Natural World, might we not also realize that our consciousness is an emergent unfolding of Nature itself, and that our full health requires that we become fully are of Nature as part of ourselves and ourselves as part of Nature?
- Interfaith and Interspiritual – Multicultural, diversity, appreciation of complexity functioning together
- Listen again to Paul’s description of the fruits of the flesh, and think about what is being lifted up on the national and international stage these days:

<sup>16</sup> “Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. <sup>18</sup> .... <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger,

quarrels, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

- Because our world is more populous than ever before in human history, we have to view ourselves as part of one diverse human family. Jesus said very clearly, “And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven” (Matthew 23:9).

### **Bigger Life in 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- Kingdom/Realm of God/Heaven is now, a quality of existence, of mind and consciousness, of heart and soul, of neighborliness and compassionate justice. No longer Us vs. Them, but all of us in this thing called life together.
- Pursue Wisdom as the Goal of a fully-lived and fully-realized life – seeking integration of one’s life experiences in order to mentor and benefit others who are coming along on their own paths toward integrity of action and belief.
- Integrate Science with Spirituality and Religion – Weave into the teachings of spirituality the insights, discoveries, and laws of science, and offer back to science:
  - depth of insight into meaning and significance of the universe,
  - deep morality based upon what it means to be human in the universe and to possess free will,
  - integrated vision and articulation of human, social, and environmental wholeness.
  - Insights from physics, astronomy, biology, chemistry, etc., will help expand our understanding and concept of the creative participation of God in human and universal reality.

### **Hope for JP21**

What gives me hope is that I see these things happening in various ways around the world already. Nothing I have described here is entirely

original with me. But what should give us pause is that, although all these things express the heart and mind of Christ in various ways, very few people who profess the name of Jesus Christ are actually pursuing these things. If the Christian faith, if the Way of Abundant Life that Jesus Christ lived, taught, and bequeathed to all who would follow him is to survive and continue in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond, it needs to be at the forefront of every healing, reconciling, reconnecting and restorative effort on the globe. “For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Paul named it nearly 2000 years ago. It’s time for us to claim it and maintain it, and never shame it in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.