
St. Matthew Today

Wed., July 26, 2023

St. Matthew United Methodist Church

Our 126th year

Did Paul Tell a Secret?

Friday's Word

Houston Smith, who died in 2016 at ninety-seven, was a great scholar of world religions. He was a Christian.

But as a young man, he was attracted to some of the Eastern faiths.

He could not abide by the Christian teachings of hell.

On a retreat, he met a priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church. He was fascinated by him. He talked to him and missed other retreat activities.

He told the priest he could not settle on the Christian faith because of eternal punishment in hell.

The priest said, "Listen, you know that story where Paul was taken up to heaven?"

He meant Paul's NDE, his near-death experience. (II Cor. 12)

Paul was so reluctant to share the story he put it in the third person. But it is clear Paul was talking about himself.

Paul said he was told in heaven things he could not repeat.

"I know what he was told," said the priest to Houston Smith. "He was told that all people will be saved."

That did it for the young man who would become the great scholar. He then felt free to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

And Paul did let the secret out. He said in Romans 11:25 that "the full number of Gentiles" would be brought to faith and then "all Israel will be saved."

Well—that's everybody.

Is there a hell?

Of course, there is. There must be a place for evil people when they die.

Hell is in eternity— another dimension. But hell is not forever.

There is no limit on God's forgiveness nor on God's saving power.

Through Christ, the world is reconciled.

We are all loved.

We are all forgiven.

FOR SUNDAY, JULY 30

Mary returns and Mary preaches.

Blake is still in England.

NOTES

Rev. Bob and Mary Weathers are on vacation several hundred miles away. They will be back after one more week.

Blake is in England—singing. I think.

We will find out all about it when he gets back.

My sister, Jackie, will start her study of interesting NDEs in a few weeks. She has to get through kidney stone removal first. (That day surgery is coming soon.)

Madelyn Gonzalez will celebrate her "Fifteenth" in a service at St. Matthew this Saturday, followed by a celebration in our fellowship hall. Madelyn is the daughter of Laura Lopez and granddaughter of Jose and Liz Lopez, long-time members of St. Matthew. I will lead the service. We pray that this will be a great day for Madelyn.

I have a friend of over 50 years who is seriously ill and not expected to live. Thomas Coker is a former student, former member of a youth group I worked with, and beloved friend. He is in my prayers.

FOOD AND FLOWERS

We are enjoying breakfast every Sunday—thanks to Winston Detrick-Kirkpatrick—and the beautiful flowers on the altar each week. This Sunday, there will be a donations box for breakfast. (My idea.) No one has to put anything in, but some of us will do so to help fund the project. It is really great to have breakfast waiting for us at church.

Starting soon, we will have a Flower Calendar out so that any who want to can "sponsor" the flowers for a given Sunday in memory or in honor of someone we love—perhaps on a birthday or as a memorial of someone's passing. We will have a card in the pews for folks to fill out to reserve a Sunday. We can give a gift of any size to cover the flowers for that day.

See you at breakfast.

God Bless—MB

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Mary's Corner

Hello, St. Matthew and friends!

I missed being with you on Sunday, but I have watched the sermon and I know you had a marvelous experience. I look forward to being with you this Sunday. I will be preaching a sermon about names. My scripture text is John 10: 27-28 for those who like to play along. **YOUR HOMEWORK:** research the origin of your first name, write it on a small note card or piece of paper, and bring it to church Sunday morning. This guarantees two things. First, you will have done a little homework, which has not happened in your life for decades. And, second, I will know who actually reads my newsletter articles.

I spent a joyous time with my family this past weekend, being blessed to attend the wedding of my dear nephew Jacob Teague to a spectacular woman named Emily. I look forward to spending much time with them as they grow in love and in life.

Don't forget August 4th is happening very soon!!! Our Back-to-School Bash is becoming a reality. We will have hot dogs and be watching "Puss 'n Boots 2" in the fellowship hall. I still need a few helpers and the sign-up sheet to help is on the bulletin board in the hallway. I also need 27 more \$25-dollar Walmart Gift cards (or the cash equivalent) to give to the 30 children I am praying for God to send to this event. It will be unforgettable! Brian McCosky has an exciting plan for marketing to our neighborhood. Please let me know this week if you can help. I love you all and am looking forward to our time together this Sunday. PS. Do not forget your homework! All my love, Mary

Sunday Breakfast

Come hungry. Leave filled! Breakfast is served in Brunson Hall each Sunday morning, starting at 10 am. Stay for service at 11 am.

Chair Yoga

Join us each Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday morning for free Chair and Standing Yoga in Brunson Hall at 10 am.

Kids' News

We were talking about King Nebuchadnezzar this week. The King was insisting that when music played all people were to stop what they were doing and fall down and worship him. He went so far as to make a gold statue of himself that was 90 foot tall and 9 feet wide. Sort of what we would call a totem pole. Now the king insisted that at the sound of music, everyone was to stop what they were doing and fall down and worship the statue. Anyone not bowing to the statue would be thrown into a fiery furnace.

As Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego followed God's laws. They were to worship God and not worship an idol. Therefore, they refused to bow down before the statue. When King Nebuchadnezzar found out, he gave them one last chance. They told the king, "If our God can save us, God will save us. But even if God doesn't save us, we will never bow down to your statue." What an act of courage! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego believe in God so much they are willing to risk dying in the fiery furnace. As he promised, the king had the furnace fired up extra hot, and he had his men throw the three men into the furnace. As the three were thrown into the furnace, a fourth person appeared with them!

God did save the three men from the furnace, and the king was so impressed that he made a new decree. Everyone was to worship the one true God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This is a wonderful example of the bravery of these three men to stand up for their beliefs. What would we do? Fortunately, we are not tested to this degree, but we have daily opportunities to share our faith. We pray to see our kids in Sunday school this week! Blessings, Mrs. Sue, Mrs. Vickie

Back To School Bash

Friday, August 4th at 6 pm.

Help us kick off the 2023-2024 school year with a fantastic celebration, as we gather to support and uplift our students, teachers, and their families. We will be blessing the first 30 families with Walmart gift cards.