

This Week at Wilkesboro UMC...

Share the Good News of Jesus Christ, Comfort the Troubled, Embrace God's Love

Worship News: Love That Will Not Let Us Go

This Lent, we'll walk through the Gospel stories that remind us of a love that refuses to let go — in wilderness, in confusion, in shame, in grief. Join us as we rediscover the steadfast mercy of a God who never abandons us.

On Sunday we looked at the story of Jesus and Nicodemus and explored Jesus helps us find our center: Held in Love - Bold in Curiosity reminds us that faith isn't always about our "how," it is often about our "why." You can read the attached sermon or watch the entire service on [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#).

[Easter Lily Orders need to be in the office by March 23rd \\$30.00 for each Lily.](#)

[TIME CHANGE THIS SATURDAY, MARCH 7th Time goes up.](#)

Upcoming Events:

Pastor Karen is away this week. If you have need for pastoral care please contact the church office Monday-Friday between 9 and 1 or contact Pastor Jim at 336-984-0810 or reach out to Lay Leader Jean Stetler at jstetler52@gmail.com

Lenten Bible Study - is cancelled this week due to Pastor Karen being away

United Methodist Men and United Women in Faith will meet this Tuesday, March 3 at 6 pm

Come and enjoy fellowship and good food with a meal of pasta and sides and the added company of a group of students from St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Let us show them some hospitality!

Meetings for the two groups will begin at 6:30.

Coffee with Karen is on the move!! - Come check out Wilkes Coffee Co. - Tuesday at 10 a.m.

at 100 West Main Street, Wilkesboro and welcome a new business to town. Even though Pastor Karen is away this week, our regulars will be meeting for a good cup of coffee and a good dose of fun.

Please keep the family of Ms. Rozella "Rosie" Shephard in your prayers. Ms. Shephard passed away on Monday, March 2, 2026. Funeral services will be held at 1:00 PM, Friday, March 6, 2026, at Wilkesboro United Methodist Church with Dr. Jim Brooks officiating. Burial will be in Scenic Memorial Gardens. The family will receive from 12:00 until 1:00 PM in the Heritage Room at the church prior to the service.

Carrying Light Through Lent: Star Word Reflections

During Epiphany, members of our congregation chose a "star word" to guide them in their spiritual journey for the year.

Each week of Lent we will publish a reflection by one of our members.

Star Word: Confirmation

By Jennifer Ledford

Confirmation - 1) The act or process of confirming - such as a Christian rite conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit or a ceremony confirming youth in their faith

At some point or another we all have the deep desire of confirmation in our life. We need that certainty that whatever it is we are seeking is a sure thing.

Whether it be the desire to belong to a particular friend group, hold a certain career, make life decisions, or find assurance in our basic day to day living.

Often in life, there are so many moments we seek answers, waiting for confirmation in some shape, form, or fashion. It is easy to feel deflated when we seek, yet feel the answers are nowhere to be found.

It is my hope as I reflect upon my star word "confirmation" that I will be still, listen, wait, seek guidance as I wait for confirmation in any, and all circumstances of life.

Prayer Requests

Family of Randall Woodruff

Family of Max Joines

Family of Billie Rowe

Family of Rozella "Rosie" Shepard

Daughter (Ann) and Grandson of Cindy and Ernie Winslow (Grandson was born early and weighs only 3 pounds)

Phyllis Austin, Wade & Brenda Church, Margaret Cooper, Brenda Dale, Jim Day, Amy DeSouza, Charles Drum, Hal Emery, Jimmy Epley, Kyson Farley, Ronnie Farley, Craig Freas, Charles Gambill, Terry & Anne Garwood, Cade Gibbs, Jennifer Gibby, Troy Harmon, Sherry Harrold, Kay Hayes, Kimberly Hughes, Francoise Hughes, Shannon Hughes, Mark Johnson, Max Joines, Brenda Kilby, Pam King, Tom Kinlaw, Barbara Kitchen, Aislynn Ladouceur, Bubby McEntire, Janice McHolland, Joe McMillan, John Nobles, Glenda Pierce, Adam Randolph, Debbie Reeves, Mary Jane Rich, James Rizoti, Mary Sallie Styers, Gerald Stierwalt, Mary Summerford, Keith Summerford, Amber Thornton, Donnie Thornton, Bob Taylor, Lee Tedder, Kim Tetzlaff, Cecil Walters, T.A. Welborn, Dorothy Wilcox, Edgar Wilcox, Derrick Wilson, Becky Wilson, Seth Wilson, Ernie Winslow, Gavin Young, Hispanic neighbors, Ukraine, our planet in crisis, for God to bring Peace, for the hearts our president and our country's leadership to be "strangely warmed" with God's love, those affected by storms, our unhoused.

SENIOR LIVING FACILITIES: Brenda Dale (Wilkes Health and Rehab), Cathy Freeman (Harmony at Brookberry Farm/Winston), Wanda Garwood (Rose Glen Village), Barbara Groce (Wilkes Assisted Living), Caroline Randolph (The Pines in Davidson) and Rosie Shepard (Rose Glen Manor)

Series: Love That Will Not Let Us God
Sermon: Held in Love – Bold in Curiosity
Scripture: John 3:1-17

Second Sunday in Lent
March 1, 2026
Rev. Karen H Roberts

Several years ago, Tim and I had the opportunity to take a trip to Paris...one of those last-minute airline specials. Because it was last minute, we didn't really have a lot of time to prepare. I knew nothing about the language, very little about the culture, almost nothing about the things we should do or see. I loved every minute of it...even though we struggled greatly with the language barrier. On our third night at dinner we thought we had hit the jackpot - our waitress spoke perfect English. There was barely even a hint of accent to her English. I was quite excited because this would be the first time in days I would actually know what I was ordering...Until my food arrived and I saw how vastly different it was from what I thought I was getting, I realized that even though the waitress and I spoke the same words - we did not have the same understanding of what those words meant.

Do you ever feel that way when talking to another Christian? We have the same language - we use the same "churchy" words...but talk long enough and we will soon figure out that we have vastly different understandings of what those words mean. We find ourselves focused or centered in different places.

Take holiness for example. All Christians talk about holiness but some emphasize personal holiness - understanding it to mean the shaping of individual character or devotion. In our Wesleyan tradition, we have always held that personal holiness must also have communal expression. Or as our founder, John Wesley, said: there is no holiness but social holiness. It is not that one group of Christians believes in holiness and one does not. It's that we sometimes center it differently. And when the center shifts, everything else shifts with it.

That can be unsettling. It can leave us wondering why our church approaches social justice issues one way and another church takes a completely different approach. It isn't about being right or wrong, it is about where our center is. I think this exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus shows this to be true. Nicodemus is a Pharisee - a man formed by centuries of scriptural interpretation, tradition, and careful study of the law. His faith was ordered. Defined. Grounded. He feels certain in his understanding of the Messiah they have long awaited - and then Jesus shows up.

Jesus shows up, standing in the same Jewish tradition, teaching in the same synagogues, living the same cultural truth. They should have held all things in common - Jesus and Nicodemus - Jesus and any Pharisee. And they did! They held the same truths - they were speaking the same language - but they had very different centers.

Nicodemus has real questions. He needs some certainty in who Jesus is and what Jesus means for him, for Israel, for the world. But so much of being a Pharisee seems to center around certainty that maybe he is ashamed to have questions. Maybe he has never been taught to imagine possibilities, only to relay facts. So, he sneaks out under cover of darkness to ask his questions quietly. Yet Jesus is never one to answer a question directly. Where Nicodemus seeks clarity, Jesus invites curiosity and imagination. Nicodemus wants factual evidence that Jesus is the savior they have waited on. But Jesus starts talking in birth imagery basically saying, "Imagine a life you could do over. Imagine a way to start again, born of the Spirit. Imagine! But Nicodemus can't. Not yet. He just gets confused. Why? Because he and Jesus are looking at faith through different lenses...from different centers... they are speaking a different language.

Let's take, for example, our Ten Commandments. The Pharisees held the Ten Commandments in highest regard of the law. They were so adamant in its adherence that they created over 600 other laws just to make sure those ten were followed. I think their center is similar to the push by some states to get the Ten Commandments posted in public places, like courthouses and classrooms - we want clearly defined laws to structure obedience. We want certainty and what better way to achieve it than a top ten list. Jesus, like the Pharisees, believed in these laws with the highest regard. He didn't change the ten commandments, but Jesus will eventually be asked, "What is the greatest of the commandments," and his answer shifts the center: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus shifts the center. He doesn't start with "Thou shalt not," Jesus starts with love. When the commandments become more about enforcing obedience than embodying love, we lose sight of their center.

I think Jesus is trying to re-center Nicodemus as well. He is moving him from seeking certainty to being boldly curious - why? Because bold curiosity opens us to mystery, imagination, and deeper understanding. Bold curiosity keeps us looking for the center. It means we don't accept easy answers for complex problems. It means we are willing to sit with complexity instead of rushing to conclusions.

For Nicodemus truth was about certainty.

For Jesus, truth is found not in the how...but in the why:

[16](#) "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

[17](#) "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Again, Jesus re-centers the question. He wants Nicodemus to understand it isn't the signs and miracles that prove he is the Messiah - it is the love. It is the love of God and the love of neighbor. It is the love that pushes him to the edges of the crowd to heal and restore and renew. It is love that will save the world...it is love that will refuse to condemn it but will give it every chance to repent and be born again.

It is love that should keep us boldly curious - embracing the mystery of God and of each other.

We need that bold curiosity because it is easy in our world to slip into condemnation rather than compassion. We are too often more like Nicodemus - wanting to walk in certainty - rather than stepping into the mystery of getting to know someone who looks different than us, or speaks differently, or believes differently.

So often, when faced with complex issues like immigration, or gender identity, or the bombing of another nation - we are quick to declare what Jesus would say about the issue. But truth be told, if Jesus walked in this morning and we could ask him about the current immigration laws, or transgender policies or the bombing of Iran - I doubt Jesus would give us clarity - my guess, based on our Gospels - is that he would answer with a story - a story that would invite us to be boldly curious about a migrant that was beaten and left to die in a ditch...or a marginalized neighbor that was in need of knowing their worth...or vineyard owner with an errant idea of justice and wealth.

I think Jesus would invite us to imagine the power of love...possibility born from above - from a God who loves us AND loves our neighbors.

Maybe, if we can be boldly curious about such a love, we can find the center Jesus keeps pointing us toward...the place where we are all held together in the hands of a loving God. Lord, in your mercy - hear our prayer.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

If love is the center Jesus keeps pointing us toward, then we must confess the ways we drift from it. Let us bring before God the places where certainty has replaced compassion and fear has crowded out curiosity. I will lead us first in prayers for one another, and then we will join in our prayer of confession: Let us pray

Holy God:

For those who seek understanding and feel misunderstood...
for those who ask honest questions and are met with silence or suspicion...
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For those who live with doubt or uncertainty...
for those who wrestle in the dark, longing for light...
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For those who feel ashamed of their questions...
for those who fear they do not belong...
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For your Church —
that we may be patient with mystery,
gentle with one another,
and rooted in your love...
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Let us pray as a people willing to confess
the ways we have missed the mark and erred in sin

Loving God,
you meet us in the night as surely as in the day.
Yet we confess that we have hidden parts of ourselves from you.

We have pretended certainty when we were unsure.
We have judged the questions of others.
We have clung to pride instead of seeking understanding.

Forgive us for the ways we have missed your heart.
Root us more deeply in your love.
Free us from shame,
and lead us into the light of Christ. Amen.