



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

April 6, 2022

From Pastor Tom

(Following is a meditation, entitled “The Bound Hands of Jesus,” Pastor Tom gave at this morning’s weekly Lenten Service, held at the Hillsboro United Methodist Church and sponsored by the Hillsboro Area Ministers Alliance.)

Have you ever had your hands put in handcuffs? (Of course you haven’t! These handcuffs by the way are on loan from Jessie Hiebert, the very gracious Hillsboro Chief of Police.)

Nowadays, anytime an alleged criminal is arrested, their hands are put in handcuffs. Usually, it’s behind their back. This pretty much immobilizes them—or at least, it prevents them from doing almost anything. (I at least can scratch my nose.) Typically, once an officer has placed someone’s hands in handcuffs, they lead them to their squad car and haul them off to jail. Bye-bye criminal!

In Jesus’ day, police didn’t have handcuffs. But they did have rope, and that was the next best thing. [Picture] To be clear, Scripture never actually says that the hands of Jesus were ever bound. What it says is this (I’m reading from the Gospel of John, 18:12. This took place in the Garden of Gethsemane): “So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.” John doesn’t say that they bound his hands. But an imaginative picture such as this one can’t be that far off. (I found this picture on the internet; it is entitled “Christ’s Hands Bound.”)

What happened to Jesus, once he was bound? According to the Gospel of John, he was first taken to an official named Annas. Who happened to be the father-in-law of the High Priest, Caiaphas. John says that Annas himself interrogated Jesus, specifically about his teaching. Jesus replied, “I have spoken openly to the world . . . Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.” This led to one of the police officers standing beside Jesus striking on in the face. (The first ever “slap heard around the world?”)

Apparently Annas didn’t know what to do with Jesus. So John says that “Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.” [18:24] Interestingly, John doesn’t say anything about what happened at Caiaphas’ house. We can assume that Jesus was probably interrogated some more, maybe slapped in the face some more, or worse. But from there, Jesus was taken to Pilate’s headquarters. [18:28]

John says the Judean police didn’t want to go inside because it was the Passover. They didn’t want to “defile” themselves. (How ironic is that?) So Pilate came outside and talked with them. After which he “summoned” Jesus and had him brought inside his headquarters. Where he began to interrogate him. “Are you the King of the Jews?” [This is John 18:33.] Jesus said to him, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me? . . . My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Judeans. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”

Pilate went back out and said to the Jews “I find no case against him. [18:38] But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews? . . . They shouted in reply, Not this man, but Barabbas! [And John adds] Barabbas was a bandit.” In other words, he was a *bona fide* criminal.

John says that Pilate then had Jesus taken (with bound hands, of course) and had him flogged. A most painful punishment, surely. The soldiers also then wove a crown out of thorns and put it on his head, and mocked him, saying “Hail, King of the Jews!” And once again, they struck him on the face. [19:1-3] When Jesus was brought back to Pilate (with bound hands), Pilate tried again to release him. But the chief priests and police shouted “Crucify him! Crucify him!” [19:6] John says that Pilate became afraid. He said to the crowds “Shall I crucify your King?” “We have no king but the emperor” was their reply. Then John says that Pilate “handed him over [with bound hands, of course] to be crucified. [19:16]

The rest of chapter 19 tells the story of Jesus’ crucifixion. You’ve heard it before, and will likely hear it again in the coming days as Easter approaches. It’s a dark story; a horrific story, an unimaginable story. Jesus wasn’t a criminal, was he??!! He was the Prince of Peace! He was the Son of God! But they bound his hands. And then they crucified him.

But I want to jump to John 21, his final chapter. It tells the story of how a certain stranger appeared to seven of his disciples (including Simon Peter, who now knowing what else to do, had gone fishing) on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The man had built a charcoal fire, and he prepared breakfast for them. A breakfast of bread and fish.

John says [21:15] that when they had finished breakfast, this man pulled Simon Peter aside, and they had a private conversation. “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” To which Peter replied, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” To which Jesus replied (for that’s indeed who the man was), “Feed my lambs.” Three times this happened. Was this Jesus’ way of forgiving Peter for denying him three times? Was this his way of restoring Peter to his life-altering call to be Jesus’ disciple? The Rock? The prince of the church?

And then Jesus said this [21:18]: “Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go. Follow me.”

Are we ready to follow Jesus? Wherever he goes? Are we willing to stretch out our hands, and allow them to be bound, like Jesus’ hands were bound? Are we willing to surrender control of our lives? Are we willing to be taken places where we do not wish to go—or at the very least, where we had not planned to go? Into service of some kind? Into a new task or role or assignment at church? Are we willing to be taken halfway around the world, to a distant country, with a mission agency? Or simply next door, to the home of a neighbor with whom we disagree? Are we ready to bear witness to the teachings of Jesus—we who stand by, and have heard his words, and know what we said? Are we ready to be taken all the way to the cross?

Jesus has shown us how. And, he has shown us what ultimately lies beyond the cross. Thanks be to God!

Now, would someone please get me out of these handcuffs so I can lead the final song?!

[Lead “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”]

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

- ☞ Vision Council met on Monday evening and welcomes your involvement in the following ways:
 1. Your prayer support as we continue to seek God's direction for FMC.
 2. From your perspective, what are FMC'S strengths and uniqueness's we have to offer to one another and others in the community around us?
 3. Share your thoughts, suggestions and affirmations regarding FMC's purpose and ministry with Nadine, MTL - Ministry Team Leader of Vision at stillfriesen@gmail.comThank you for participating in seeking God's direction for God's church.

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **THIS WEEK!!!** Don't miss the MCC Sale at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson with activities both Friday and Saturday. If you have question on details, call the church office from 9 – 12:30, Tuesday – Friday.
- ☞ **This coming Sunday:** Our offering will go to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.
- ☞ **Western District Women in Mission** invites all women to a virtual "Meet-up" on Tuesday, April 26th, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita will share about their Knit4Peace project. Then Sarah Augustine will discuss her personal life journey and book she authored called *The Land is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* (Herald Press, 2021). Email westerndistrictwomen@gmail.com by Monday, April 25 and you will be sent the Zoom link.
- ☞ **Everence® April webinar: Social Security and retirement income**
Everence® will hold an informative Social Security and retirement income webinar on Tuesday, April 12, starting at 6:30 p.m. Specifics will include, Social Security strategies, including when to begin taking benefits, risks that can impact your retirement savings plus strategies to help your income last throughout retirement. There will also be plenty of time for questions.
Information will be presented by staff from the Everence offices in Central Kansas. To register contact Everence at 316-283-3800, 877-467-7294 or central.kansas@everence.com.
- ☞ Save the Date - Saturday, April 30 there will be a **book sale** outside the WDC Offices in North Newton, KS with donations and old library books looking for new homes.
- ☞ Tabor College:
Friday, April 22 – Switchgrass String Quartet – From Mozart to Modern, 7:00 pm
- ☞ Bethel college:
Thurs., April 7 – Closing reception for Susan and David Harmon and "Painterly Aesthetics: An Expressive Duet," 6-8 p.m., Regier Gallery in Luyken Fine Arts Center at Bethel College.

Sun., April 10 – Women's Chorus concert, 4 p.m., Administration Building chapel (may be different from some previously printed calendars)

Mon., April 11 – Bethel College presents *Suffering Church*, an original play by Karen Robu, D.Min., director of theater at Bethel and associate minister at Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita, 7

p.m., Krehbiel Auditorium in Luyken Fine Arts Center. The play contains mature subject matter and is not intended for young audiences. This performance is supported by the Greer Endowment at Bethel College.

Weds., April 13 – Bethel College faculty jazz recital: Joel Boettger, saxophone, 7 p.m., with William Flynn, guitar, Steve Hatfield, drums, and Chris Shaw, upright bass; *Administration Building chapel*

Other Announcements

☛ **Summer Camp and Retreat information** is up on the bulletin board in the hall for both Camp Mennoscah and Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp.

Verse of the Week: I John 3:16

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”