

## **Sermon Sidebar- June 2, 2019**

**from The Book Of Discipline** - A section entitled, Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules:

### **Article I - God**

We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men (and women), to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

### **Article II - Jesus Christ**

We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all [people] will be judged.

### **Article III - The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads [people] through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.

## **How Doctrines Help Us**

As we recently discussed in confirmation class, doctrines are beliefs about God and his world, that help us navigate through the body of ideas and opinions that surround us. The United Methodist belief or doctrine about God, is not the same thing AS God. But it is helpful. Knowing the doctrine about Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus. The doctrine about the Holy Spirit is not the same thing as experiencing the Spirit. Nevertheless, the doctrines help us stay tethered to the Word of God as revealed in Scripture, and they help take us where we want to be - namely, in a healthy relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

In this sense, a doctrine is much like a map. It represents the knowledge and experience of thousands who have gone before us, and with the help of the map, we can reach our destination. C.S. Lewis writes about this in Mere Christianity:

“If a man once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something real to something less real... The map is admittedly only colored paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based upon what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary. As long as you are content with walks on the beach your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map.”

Likewise, a lot of Christians are content with their own ideas and experiences about God and don't study much what the Methodist Church actually believes and teaches. But if you want to grow in your relationship with God, the doctrines and teachings and history of our United Methodist Church are extremely helpful. There is a lot of wisdom and grace, beauty and love here! We don't get everything right, all the time. But our doctrines are sound and based on the Bible. Have you ever read them? If you'd like to borrow a Book of Discipline, we have several copies in the Church library, or ask in the office. It's pretty good reading...