

Wesley United Methodist Church

July 14, 2013

"Aha" Moments.

Matthew 3:13-17

There is a wonderful story about a young man who was dating a very attractive girl. One Sunday after church the two went for a picnic. The young man had made arrangements to rent a row boat. His plan was to row to a small island on their favorite lake and enjoy a lunch which he himself had prepared. Since he had been unaccustomed to making lunches, he had forgotten to pack a number of things. His attractive friend said, "It might be nice if we had some salt, ketchup and napkins." Without hesitation the young man got into the boat and rowed back to shore to get the missing items.

This routine occurred twice more that afternoon--he rowed back to shore to retrieve items that she requested. By the end of the extremely warm day, he had perspired so much that his good suit was soaked.

But he realized something that afternoon. He realized there had to be a better way. The young man's name, by the way, was Clarence Evinrude. Later that evening he designed the world's first outboard motor. An industry was born because a young man had fallen head over heels for a young woman who kept making requests of him. I will add that she later became his wife.

Clarence Evinrude had an "Aha" moment that afternoon; a moment of a life changing realization.

Let me tell you another story about little Benny, An African-American boy, who grew up in a single parent home. Benny's mother Sonya had been raised in foster homes. She had a third grade education and was married by the time she was 13. After getting married, Sonya discovered much to her dismay that her husband, a Baptist preacher, was already married and had five children. So much for having a life partner.

Now what was she to do? She now had two little boys, Benny and his younger brother, to raise. This is what she did. Sonya worked at two, sometimes three jobs at a time to provide for her boys. Not too surprisingly, Benny experienced difficulty in school, eventually falling to the bottom of his class. In fact, until he got into Junior High, Benny was convinced he was stupid; his nickname was "Dummy." To complicate things further, Benny developed a violent, uncontrollable temper.

But Sonya did not give up on her son. Determined to turn his life around, she required him to read two books a week and write reports on the books. He didn't realize at the time that his mother herself could barely read. Sonya's disability did not keep her from putting marks on her son's papers. She also limited his T.V. viewing. Soon Benny amazed his instructors and classmates with his improvement. "It was at that moment that I realized I wasn't stupid," he recalled later. Within a year he was at the top of his class.

After this "Aha" moment in Junior High school that he was not stupid, Benny went on to Yale and the University of Michigan Medical School. And at the age of 32, Dr. Benjamin Carson became the youngest surgeon in the nation to hold the position of Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at John Hopkins University. As a surgeon he was chosen to separate several sets of what are known as Siamese twins.

One more quick story. In 1927, at age thirty-two, a young man named Buckminster Fuller was standing on the shores of Lake Michigan. He was intent on committing suicide by throwing himself into the freezing waters of that great lake. His first child had died. He was bankrupt. He was discredited. He was jobless. He had a wife and a newborn daughter, yet he felt hopeless.

But, suddenly he had a realization, an "Aha" moment if you will. He realized that his life belonged not to himself but to others. He chose that moment to embark upon an experiment to discover what a little, penniless, unknown individual might be able to do on behalf of humanity. He thought, if my life belongs not to myself but to others, then what can I do for others? Over the next fifty-four years, he became one of America's best known architects, designers, and inventors.

Imagine! a man who is bankrupt, discredited, jobless, and about to commit suicide, and he has an "Aha" moment: my life doesn't belong to me; it belongs to others.

This is my first Sunday in this pulpit. It is a time of new beginnings, new understandings, new ideas about what it means to follow Christ. We will get to know each other as together we serve our living God. We will experience "Aha" moments, moments when we're, like Clarence Evinrude, design new ways to

reach out to this neighborhood, to this community, and to the world. Or like Dr. Benjamin Carson who, as a child, was stretched and challenged to become genius in the medical field. When we get discouraged, let us remember Buckminster Fuller who had no hope, but just in time realized that he didn't belong to himself. In spite of his disadvantages at the time, he became a brilliant servant to others.

The Scripture from the Gospel of Matthew contains a moment of realization, an "Aha" moment in the life of Jesus. He had gone out to hear the fiery evangelist John the Baptist preach in the wilderness. When the invitation was given for baptism, Jesus stepped forward. We don't know what that baptism represented in Jesus' mind. Obviously it was not a cleansing from sin. Whatever the reason, Jesus stepped down into the water and was baptized of John. At that moment something came over Jesus. While he was praying, "the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

A dramatic moment in the life of Jesus a time of realization, if you will an "Aha" experience. How important those moments are in our lives. Let me ask you about some "Aha" moments that may have occurred in your life.

For example, when was it that you first realized the majesty of God? Was it the beauty and grandeur of creation that first evoked that realization? As we know, behind creation stands a Creator. Was it a happy occasion, a family celebration, the birth of a child, or a grandchild? Was it an accomplishment in your professional career? How about retirement? Was it when you realized that you are God's own child? Whatever the occasion, let's remember that "Aha" moments are gentle reminders that God is working within us.

Wesley United Methodist, Trinity United Methodist, Faith United Methodist, and St. Paul United Methodist Churches have been baptized and sent forth to serve over a century ago by God. As faithful servants the churches reached out to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to this community and beyond. There were, no doubt, "Aha" moments in these individual congregations, tough decisions were made, and then mergers which strengthened the Word of God in this place. We all bring a rich heritage and knowledge as we are all called to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt. 28:19) Remember the past, but let's move on to a future that will be a blessing to God.

I want to believe that me being called to serve Wesley United Methodist Church as your pastor was God's "Aha" moment. Without God's approval and blessing we cannot embark on a journey together. Let us acknowledge our "Aha" moments and forge ahead. Let us continue to be the church of Jesus Christ. Amen.