

"In 4/4 Time"

Ordering Sermon from Bishop Lanette Plambeck

June 7, 2026

Beloved of God,

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice.

Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

Don't be anxious about anything, and the peace of God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4)

If there is anything excellent, and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

This text, for the people of God, calls us into a way of being.

It has a particular rhythm to it. You can almost hear it.

Rejoice. Be gentle.

Don't be anxious.

Think on these things.

This scripture is like a cadence, like a song. It's not simply meant to be read, but it's meant to be lived in four/four time. And maybe that four-four time-ness of this scripture is why I keep hearing other songs of our faith underneath this text.

Four/four time.

We, as United Methodists, we sing in four/four time.

We sing our theology.

We sing our identity.

We sing our connection.

We sing our baptismal and covenant vows.

And one song has really risen to the top for me this season, "I Surrender All."

Now, there is a reason that that hymn has lasted over the years. I think part of it is because this hymn tells a truth about the Christian life. Whether we are in a ministry of prayers, presence, gifts, service, or witness as laity, or we have ordination vows that guide our ministry, we know that call and response, this four-four time, is about our life formed in Christ.

It is about seasons, rhythms, release, surrender.

Not just part of who we are, but the fullness, the wholeness of who we are.

And we don't surrender to the things of this world.

We surrender all of who we are to Jesus.

I surrender.

Do you surrender all?

The man who wrote this hymn, Judson Van DeVenter, was an artist. He was a teacher. He was doing well with his vocational and lived life. He was a man with gifts and opportunities and a vocational future that made sense, until it didn't. Because underneath all the outward way of living in this world, there was another voice speaking into him, the persistent voice of God.

And for years, he wrestled between the life he could build, and the life God was asking him to surrender into until finally, he yielded fully to God's call on his life. And from his surrender came the hymn, "All to Jesus, I Surrender."

And we sing it now, not only as a recall to his testimony, but also a call into our lived testimony, because the call story matters. And we resonate with his story because we bring our stories, our lived lives, the fullness, the wholeness, the "all-ness" of who we are into a bigger story, a collective story that is even beyond the United Methodist story. It is the kingdom of God's story.

All to Jesus, I surrender.

I— do we, surrender all?

And what exactly does that all mean, anyway? You see, it doesn't mean only our polished parts. Our "all-ness" isn't only about our strengths, our certainty, the things that we see as useful.

All means our whole life.

The bold parts and the hesitant parts.

The joyful parts and the grieving parts.

The courageous parts and the fearful parts.

The beginning of who we are and the ending of who we are and everything in between.

Our "all-ness." The all of who we are is what is invited in, and then we are asked to surrender it. Now, our surrender, we know this movement as people of God in the Wesleyan tradition. Our surrender begins even before we recognize that God is calling us into the all-ness of who we are, the fullness of who we are, into activity and a life of ministry.

And there is something that happens in our baptism, where we see a moment of claiming as God's investment of "all-ness" into who we are. And in our baptism, there is a surrender of our faithful response. And our baptism isn't like a proclamation that God is controlling. It is about God being in control.

And it's not the control of power or position or privilege. There is a surrender, an all-ness, a controlling that is bound in a relationship between grace and trust.

In that four/four time rhythm, that rhythm of call and response, that cadence of grace that is in our lives, it reminds us that there is an invitation and a response, a surrender and a movement that is part of who we are and how we are in our lives of ministries. And we, as Wesleyans, have always understood that through the four/four time, the call of grace in our lives, that this movement, this rhythm, is a way that we can express ourselves in ministry.

Now, whether you are at the front end of your ministry, whether you have now neared retirement, or whether you are here as we remember those who have gone on to church triumphant, we know there is a narrative of grace and four-four time in our faith as Wesleyans.

Now, Charles and John and, dare I say, *Susanna*, would tell us that we are grounded in a four/four rhythm. And part of that rhythm for Wesleyans, the first four of our faith, is that we all need saving, all can be saved, all can know they are saved, and all can be saved to the utmost.

When we talk about this four/four rhythm of all needing saving, all can be saved, all can know they are saved, and all can be saved to the utmost, when we talk about this in our faith, we recognize that there is something that has happened in the world where we have fallen out of right relationship with God, with our neighbor, with ourselves, and even with creation.

So, this saving is about healing and wholeness and right relationship. And our Wesleyan faith that reminds us, again, that all need saving, all can be saved, all can know they are saved, and all can be saved to the utmost, that all of us are seeking healing and wholeness and belonging.

And that promise means that there is hope, because there is no person beyond redemption, there is no life beyond the reach of God, and there is no person so caught in isolation and loneliness that they cannot discover connection in our relationship with one another and with God.

All are in need of saving, and all can know that we are saved to the utmost. It is a promise, a movement about repair, redemption, reconciliation, remembrance, and surrender.

And today, we honor people who trusted that grace, that movement of grace over the decades. Retirees who kept showing up, kept praying, kept preaching, kept surrendering. Not always perfectly, but close. And faithfully. And we remember those now who have gathered among the church triumphant. Lives fully surrendered into the hands of God.

This glorifying grace, this goodness of grace, this non-ending grace. Lives fulfilled.

And those on the front end of your ordination or your ministry. So that movement of *all are in need of saving*, all can be saved, all can know that they are saved, and all can be saved to the utmost, these are tied to the other four/four movements of our faith.

Now, I've said it over the last years and I will say it again, that there are four "Greats" that tell us what we are called to do in ministry.

1. There is the Great Commandment. We know what that is, right? The love of God and the love of neighbor.
2. There is the Great Commission. "Go and make disciples, and know that I am with you until the end of the age," Jesus says.
3. The Great Requirement, to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.
4. And the Great Proclamation, good news to the poor, freedom to the captive.

This four/four movement continues to be lived out in our faith. That four/four movement alongside of the four greats is what surrender looks like in public.

Our surrender looks like embodied witness. And here in Dakotas, Minnesota, this witness matters. It matters in small towns who are wondering whether they still matter. It matters in our tribal communities who are carrying both resistance and grief. This grace of the greats matter in the cities aching for hope. These four greats matter in congregations trying to remain faithful in anxious times.

This is our call, this grace that we bear witness to. So, we know these things, that all are in need of saving, all can be saved, all can know that they are saved, and all can be saved to the utmost.

And those four greats— the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, the Great Requirement, the Great Proclamation, and alongside of these in the four/four time that we live out our faith in this Wesleyan tradition call in the four movements of grace.

1. The prevenient grace of God, the grace of God that is before us, grace awakening us before we even know how to respond to it.
2. Justifying grace, grace for us, grace meeting us with mercy.

3. Sanctifying grace, grace within us, grace shaping us over time, teaching us how to live and to love.
4. And glorifying grace, that is the grace that is beyond us, grace bringing all things to completion.

And we know this in our Wesleyan tradition, that grace is not about a moment. Grace is a movement.

In the Christian life, the way that we live out our faith as laity and as clergy is about learning how to surrender to that movement again, and again, and again.

So, we have these movements of grace, and I've given you the first three of the four movements.

You're probably thinking, "I didn't know today was going to be a teaching sermon." I hope that it's a remembering sermon, that we're remembering what we are called into and what we have surrendered to. And the four movements of the Spirit is really sort of the exclamation point of this four-by-four song that we are singing.

That we can now respond to the brokenness in the world, even when the brokenness troubles us, even when fear might paralyze us, even when the questions of the world seem like there is no real answer.

That the four movements of the Spirit assure us that even if we don't know how to respond, we know why we respond.

We respond because we have faith in Christ, and that the Spirit confirms in us an understanding that indeed there is a conviction or an understanding of faith in Christ. The movement of the Spirit tells us we can have personal assurance. That's the still, small voice or the quickening, that best of all, God is with us. This movement of the Spirit can call us into self-examination, and then it is expressed in outward transformation.

And this movement of the Spirit, this four-by-four movement of the Spirit, calls us to stay grounded, assures us that we can keep steady in unsteady times, can call us into self-examination to be honest with ourselves about our lived lives and the conditions that we are living in.

And the transformation, the faith fire, that movement allows us to see fruit in others and see fruit in ourselves. So, there is this rhythm that we have been called into, the cadence of the church in Philippians 4 that Paul alludes to.

And Paul gives this cadence, this call to the church, that understanding the four/four faith that we are living in our understanding, in our proclamation, in our embodiment of this four/four faith, we then can rejoice. We then can be gentle. We can be non-anxious. And we can think about the important things, thinking to act.

Paul doesn't call us into a randomness with his words.

He calls us into a resistance.

He calls us into what it means for the people of God to move together as if in a perfect dance in this world.

Now, when I was in the army, it was cadence that kept us moving.

Left, left, left, right, left.

And as Wesleyans, when we sing our theology, when we sing our faith, when we sing courage into each other, when we sing hope into each other, when we sing truth into each other, we live in that cadence of four/four faith.

And here in Dakotas, Minnesota, we have lived through seasons where we've had to sing our resistance.

We've had to sing through grief.

We've had to sing through division.

We've had to sing through fear.

And perhaps that is what Paul was doing when he called us in through Philippians 4.

You see, in that moment, he was in prison, and yet though that was his physical circumstance, he could still call the church, the followers of Christ, into a movement of faith that can rejoice, be gentle, be non-anxious, and be a thinking, thoughtful, acting faith.

And maybe that is what the writer of "I Surrender All" was thinking about when he was, I don't know— surrendering to the still, small voice that nagged at him for over five years.

Because that voice of God that continues to call the church has spoken to those that are being commissioned or recognized or ordained this day. You know that voice, retirees, that spoke into you, that resulted in your yes to the movement of faith and vocation in your lives. And we saw that sacredness in the lives that we remember, who are now alongside of that great cloud of witnesses.

Surrendering. It is not about perfection in the world's way of understanding, but it is about a simple 'yes.' Yes, God, I can give you all of who I am, and my hopes and my dreams. I can give you the *all* of who I am.

Take me, use me, place me, inspire me, encourage me, send me for the sake of your goodness and grace, for the sake of the Christ movement in this world.

And may we all find our rhythm of dance as we continue in this four/four time.

Hallelujah, and
Amen.