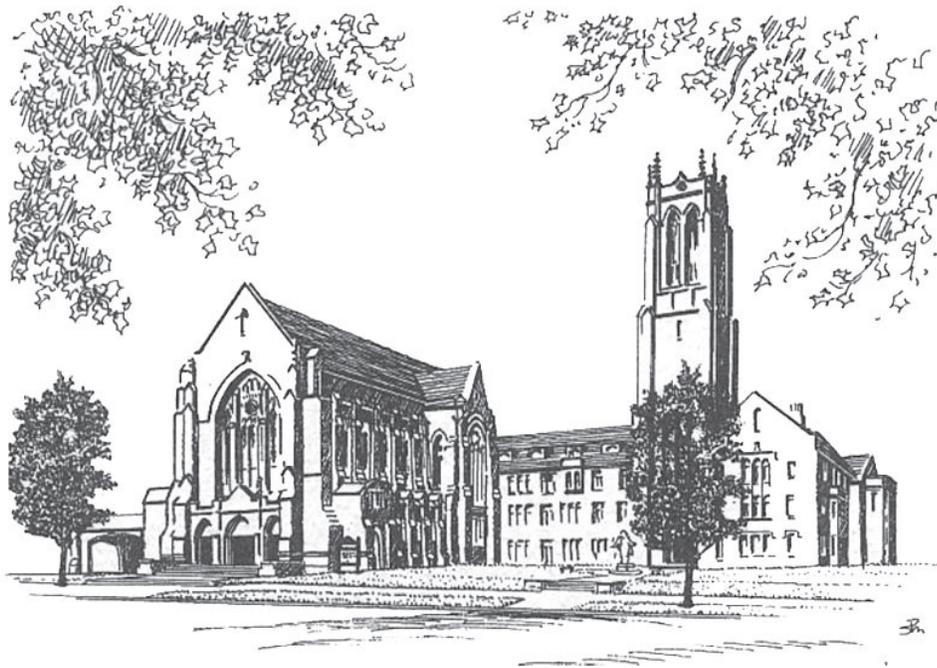


**YOUTH WITNESS**  
by  
Celise Foster  
February 19, 2017  
*Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany*  
8:30 am



**ST. PAUL'S**

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

5501 Main Street

Houston, Texas 77004-6917

713-528-0527

[www.stpaulshouston.org](http://www.stpaulshouston.org)

**Texts: Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18 • Psalm 119:33-40 • 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23 • Matthew 5:38-48**

### **Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18**

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God.

You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord. You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord. You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

### **Psalm 119:33-40**

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I will observe it to the end.

Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

Turn my heart to your decrees, and not to selfish gain.

Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; give me life in your ways.

Confirm to your servant your promise, which is for those who fear you.  
Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good.  
See, I have longed for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life.

## **1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23**

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it.

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

## **Matthew 5:38-48**

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who perse-

cute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

“Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

“And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?

“Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

### **Youth Witness**

by Celise Foster

Good Morning,

My name is Celise Foster, and I stand before you with a heart of thanksgiving as I share my witness address with you. The word of God calls us to Worship, Praise, and to Witness. I wish to share a scripture that has been an anchor for me, a scripture that has provided encouragement and peace.

The scripture is Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

My spiritual transformation occurred four years ago while a sixth-grade student in a World Cultural Studies class. We were given a mandatory assignment for the annual National History Day Fair. One other student and I decided on an exhibit about the Freedom Riders; however, my group partner felt it was too difficult and required more time than she was willing or able to invest. It was a disappointing and hurtful experience which, honestly, did evoke fear when I thought about having to do it alone.

It was then that I met with my teacher, (whom I hold in highest esteem) to tell her the outcome of the group project. Surprisingly I was met with more disappointment as my teacher said to me, “Celise, you could never do that, it is too much work, and you don’t have enough time to produce a good documentary.”

My heart sank, and I thought, “God, why is this happening to me? Talking to my mother and my grandmother about the situation, they encouraged me to pray and to stay focused. My mother also reminded me of my favorite scripture: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

They challenged me to devise a plan, an outline of what I needed to make this a successful documentary. With God’s help, we managed to drive to Marshall, Texas, and I had the privilege of interviewing the The Melvin B. Tolson/Denzel Washington Forensics Society, also known as the Great Debaters of Wiley College, that day.

Fast forward, my documentary was completed, and it made all the way to district; not state, but I was ecstatic and thankful, nonetheless. The next year, I was invited by Wiley College, a private United Methodist College, to present my documentary during the Wiley College and Harvard University Debate. What an honor! Later, I was asked by the college to consider allowing them to archive my documentary in their Library of Archived History.

I share this with you not to boast or to brag, but rather, it is a reminder that my spiritual transformation as a witness to God’s love and power is that who, what, when, where, why, and how are adverbs that belong to God. I’ve learned to lay them at the altar. Mark 11:24 speaks to this: “I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

God has shown me that I can, you can, we all can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Blessings to all.