

SPECIAL
SUNDAY

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

SERMON STARTER



The Rev. Claudine Leary (center, holding toddler), co-founded a nonprofit to support education for children and youth in refugee camps in Sub-Saharan Africa. PHOTO: Courtesy of Claudine Leary

Based on Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Today's scripture reading positions Jesus as a pioneer. When we follow him, he shows us the path through hardship and suffering to make our way to something greater. Quoting Psalm 8, the Hebrew text says that God created us for honor and glory. "What are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor" (v. 4-5, NRSVUE). We are made in God's image, and in our United Methodist theology are moving toward perfect reflection of God's love for us.

Today's scripture reminds us that Jesus is the exact imprint of God and the reflection of God's glory. As we say during Advent, "Emmanuel, God with us." Through our discipleship, we are called to be like him. Jesus claims us as siblings and invites us to work together as a community to help cultivate a spirit of glory and honor in one another.

So often, the gifts of God's children are buried under the burden of war and poverty. We might wonder how we can

make a difference—particularly in the lives of people living on another continent.

I think of Claudine Leary. Claudine was one of a few children in her Rwandan village to attend primary school through high school. But the year she entered Rwanda National University, civil war engulfed the country and a time of horrific genocide ensued. Her education was interrupted when she had to flee the country and live in refugee camps for years. *How can anything I do as one person so far away help someone trying to survive genocide in Rwanda?*

As a denomination, we can do so much more than I can do individually or that we can do as a single congregation. Because of resources like a United Methodist scholarship for higher education, Claudine found a path through hardship and suffering to make her way to something greater. Claudine was able to attend college thanks to funding from the World Communion Sunday offering.

Today, the Rev. Claudine Leary serves as the director of development at Methodist

Theological School in Ohio and is involved with a nonprofit she cofounded to resource and advocate for the education of children living in refugee camps in sub-Saharan Africa. After all she has been through, her life reflects the glory of God in her compassion for others. Through her leadership, she shines with Christ's light, sharing his love with the children she serves, and offering them a path through hardship and suffering to make their way to something greater.

Through our World Communion Sunday special offering, we journey with young leaders and strengthen them through education. Each United Methodist scholarship impacts not just the recipient, but all of the people whom the scholar touches through their work. Together we are sustained by God's word that guides us and reflect God's glorious being through our gifts.

On World Communion Sunday, we join ecumenically in acknowledging our unity in Christ as we come around his table. Jesus claims us as brothers and sisters and invites us to journey together to perfect love.



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