

**Sermon Topic:** “REMEMBER” by Ps Lorna Khoo

**Sermon Text:** *“Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm...” Deuteronomy 5:15*

## I. Introduction

- The act of remembering is important. The word ‘remember’ is mentioned in the Bible 230 times.
- Do we remember why we are Methodists: born into a Methodist family, came to Christ in a Methodist church, live near Methodist church or Methodist school or married a Methodist spouse?
- Just as Singapore society is enriched by different ethnicities and cultures, the church is similarly enriched by different denominations.. If we deny what makes us distinctive and unique as Methodists, the Church would be poorer for it.

**Question: Why are you a Methodist? Why do you believe God lead you to a Methodist Church?**

## II. Remember our Methodist Roots: Our History

- Two Key Figures: Brothers John & Charles Wesley:
- Born to Anglican parents and grew up in the Anglican Church.
- John became the leader of a group in Oxford that Charles founded. The group took Communion frequently, studied scripture and devotional books, fasted and served the poor and prisoners. Their peers laughed at them and called them, amongst other things, “Methodists”.
- Both brothers travelled to America to become Missionaries. The boat journey encountered a terrible storm that terrified them. However, they witnessed the Moravian Christians (including children) who were very calm and unfazed by the storm. This impressed the brothers who sought to find out more about their faith.
- On 24 May 1738, John went unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street. His heart felt ‘strangely warmed’ upon hearing Luther’s preface to the Book of Romans. It dawned on John that he was accepted by God, and assured of salvation from Christ, who had saved him from the law of sin and death.
- This sparked a radical change in him:
  - o preached this good news to people in the streets, mines, marketplace.
  - o gathered converts into small groups.
  - o published journals & pamphlets and made them cheap and accessible.
  - o trained male and female lay preachers from the masses.
  - o Charles wrote many hymns that shaped & formed Methodists in their spiritual lives.

- The early Methodists fought alcoholism and ministered to prisoners and the condemned. John also encouraged William Wilberforce to fight slavery.
- Many early Methodists faced persecution due to social activism, and the mistaken assumption on them as Roman Catholics.
- Yet, the Methodists continued in their social good works to the poor with schools and clinics.
- The Methodists Church is currently Singapore's largest protestant denomination.

**Question: Hearing our history, what do you believe God has entrusted us to share with other Christians and to contribute to society?**

*God raised the people called Methodists, "to reform the nation, particularly the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land." – John Wesley*

### III. Growth in Holiness

#### **A. Vertical Dimension**

- Through structured habits such as prayer, searching the Scriptures, fasting/abstinence, Christian conferences relating to/learning from other Christians and Holy Communion.
- The unique use of order, structure, and SOPs is important. Yet we have to be careful not to be over-reliant on techniques of organising Church. Despite "methods", we need to let go and let God surprise us!
- The Methodists are the people open to God's surprises.

John Wesley's 3 surprises on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1738:

- a. Encountered God at an unexpected place: reluctant prayer meeting at Aldersgate Street.
- b. Through an unlikely resource: heard reading of Martin Luther's Preface to the book of Romans (a rather dry treatise).
- c. He was touched in an unfamiliar way: cerebral John Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed".

Charles Wesley's surprises:

- a. He was healed through prayer of a young convert in the home of a poor and unlearned mechanic.

God uses anyone, a lay person and pops up when one least expects Him to- through a dream, a divine nudge, and a word of knowledge to bring His divine encounter! We need to let God surprise us! Some refuse to be open to God's surprises as they want to remain in control, or are too cautious and cynical for fear being deceived or disappointed. However, they miss out on God's grace and joy and a fresh encounter with Him!

**Question: Am I willing to let go of control and let God surprise me with a fresh encounter? Why or why not?**

### B. Horizontal Dimension

- John Wesley: "There is no holiness but social holiness".
- The Methodists were concerned with issues of social conscience, social justice and social concerns. We have a direct commitment to serving the poor.

*I'm not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without its power – John Wesley*

- Existing as a dead sect? What would bring about such a catastrophe?

*Consequently, the Methodists increase in goods. Hence they proportionally increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away...continue to walk by faith and to show forth their faith by their works; otherwise, I pray God to root out the memorial of them from the earth – John Wesley*

- John Wesley believed that prosperity and comfort can cause Methodists and the Methodist Church to become complacent and dull. But we may argue that we are not that rich. John defines it this way:

*I count him a rich man who has food and clothes for himself and his family, without running into debt and something over – John Wesley*

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Methodists have always been on the cutting edge, breaking new grounds of social concerns. Methodists started various forms of mission work in Singapore – through the prison ministry, Samaritans of Singapore and the schools they founded.

**Question: For the inheritance handed down to us, what are we doing for the next generation, the poor or the elderly? How do we treat cleaners, the homeless or migrant workers today? Have we become a church of bureaucracy, concerned with maintenance? How can we be on the cutting edge again?**

*Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of God upon the earth – John Wesley*



May we have the  of Aldersgate!