Scripture 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8  
Title:  Leaded or Lead-Free

* My privilege to be here today
* I thank Pastor Amy for this opportunity
* We are blessed in this congregation to have such leadership
  + Pastor Amy and her 20 years of experience as ordained Elder in UM church
  + Retired Pastor Doug, and his years of faith and service as ordained Elder
  + Jack Hott, Jenn Fry have each completed several Lay Servant Ministries courses
    - Jenn on track to complete the core of 7 classes and is even now working in Certified Lay Ministry Academy
  + Vickie Robinson is on track to be commissioned as probationary Elder and is in third year of seminary.
  + Then there is Kirby. I don’t think he has taken any of the United Methodist training classes
    - But then, he clearly is a man of faith and has learned thru other means much of that which we teach in our LSM classes
    - We are so fortunate when Kirby is asked to speak here
* I am asked to speak frequently in other churches, so it is ok with me that I am not up here frequently
  + I’ve been asked 2 times now to fill in at church while vacancy was filled
  + Until Jenn completes, I am the lone credentialed Lay Speaker in the northern part of our district
  + So, my phone rings
  + Or tones, or whatever noise it is that new phones do
* Now, I hafta tell ya, it is different when I am out preaching on the road than when I’m here
  + First, they don’t know me, unless repeating or filling in
  + So, they greet me warmly
    - Can I get you some coffee?
  + They treat me with respect because they think I know a lot
    - Well, they don’t know me the way you do, you know better
  + And most of all, they haven’t heard all of my jokes, so they think I’m funny
    - Again, y’all know better
* Today’s scripture is from the Lectionary meaning hundreds of churches across the country are looking at the same scripture as us
* When I read this, I thought of gasoline
* More specifically, leaded gasoline
* Lead
* Leaded gas?
  + **tetraethyl lead TEL**
  + Time Magazine once called leaded gas the 44th worse invention of history
* If you bought gas before 1973, you had a choice of which grade of gasoline, kinda like the octane choices we have today
* Then in 1973, unleaded gasoline was introduced in response to congressional action
  + Leaded or unleaded
* What did leaded gas do?
  + In older engines, gas can ignite at a lower temperature, with resulting lower compression, thus less piston pressure, less engine efficiency, less power
  + Lead additives stop that lower temperature ignition (knock), improving engine performance
  + With the not great quality of releasing lead particles in the exhaust
  + Lead is lethal
  + So, this is bad
* Why did it go away?
  + Congressional action (back in days when Congress took action)
  + Not compatible with catalytic converters
    - Catalytic converters came about in mid 70’s to reduce emissions by more thoroughly consuming particles in engine exhaust
  + Poisonous
* Without lead additive, improperly tuned, or improperly cooled car engines can still knock
* So why talk about this?
* About a month ago, Carol and I went for ride in our friend’s Cessna.
  + He hangers it at Warren County Airport
  + He took us for a local sight-seeing flight
  + While in air flying over area, I asked about aviation fuel
  + Thought, mistakenly, that is was very high octane special fuel
    - No, not special, pretty close to automobile fuel, with one exception
      * Plane fuel has lead added
      * To prevent that pre-ignition knocking that can happen in cars
      * It’s one thing for a car to run poorly,
        + Quite another for a plane
* So, propeller driven airplanes still use lead in fuel
* So why does this scripture bring me to fuel with lead additive?
* Leaded or unleaded
* Lead the toxic metal
  + Or lead, the act of propelling a group
* Called homograph when 2 words have same spelling but different meaning and different pronunciation
* Lead the fuel additive prevents knocking
* Lead the verb, sets direction, pulls us together
* Interesting that top-down view, as from plane is enabled by leaded fuel
* Top down view of any effective organization, like a church, shows an organization that is well-led
* **Reformation Sunday observed today** in churches across the globe
* **500 years**
* View of the Church from the top, before **Oct 31 1517**
* Flawed
* Leader, this time monk Martin Luther, saw the flaws
  + He rejected the idea that Indulgences, or privilege to sin, could be purchased for money
  + Or “buying” promotion from Purgatory to Heaven for grandma
  + Even if some of the proceeds led to construction of St Peter Basilica in the Vatican
  + Think of that, beautiful St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican was financed, at least in part, by the sale of indulgences
    - You are allowed to sin if you contribute
    - We will promote Grandma to heaven if you contribute
  + Have any of you been to the Vatican to see St Peters?
  + Our daughter Leah has been there, when in college
  + Luther didn’t like idea of selling indulgences
  + Luther wrote, among his 95 ideas to his bishop that the Pope had more money than anyone
    - Why didn’t Pope pay for the Basilica rather than to accept “sin fees” to do so
  + Think of that, church had great structure and power
  + People were to regularly confess sins, serve penance as indicated
  + UNLESS, indulgence had been purchased from church
  + Luther had great courage to write 95 thesis, in letter to his bishop
  + Legend, actual or legend is that he nailed the theses to the door of Castle church in Wittenberg, Germany
  + Faced ire of church at that time
  + Was excommunicated by Pope
  + Yet, he saw wrong, faced up to it
  + 500 years ago, next Tuesday
* My tiny version of this made apparent several years ago
* Carol and I vacationed on west coast of Mexico
* Visited beautiful church sanctuaries in Puerto Vallarta, Mazatlan
  + Very much struck by beauty of the gold inlay in the sanctuary ceilings
    - As compared to the poverty of the local people
    - I was struck, Why collect such gold from people who have so little
    - Church can do so much better than that
* 200 years later, John Wesley saw his view of church
  + Pushed himself to live piously
  + Yes, he served, as a servant leader should
  + But he was miserable in his pious living, attempting to earn, by his good works, his salvation
  + Until, May 24, 1738
  + And the tie to Martin Luther is so rich
    - Wesley was unwillingly at a study that night, and as one was reading, probably in English, but perhaps in Latin, Luther’s discourse on Paul’s letter to the Romans, that
    - Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed
  + Wesley realized, with his heart strangely warmed, that his sins were forgiven
  + Remember that he lived and pushed himself to live pious life
    - He was very generous with his limited finances
    - He served the Least of These, as Jesus commanded
    - He prayed, he fasted,
    - All to “earn” salvation
  + Then on the wonderful night, he was made to discover that because of God’s amazing grace, offered thru faith in our Lord Jesus, that he had salvation
  + Salvation that was offered as a gift from God
  + Not earned by people
  + Buy desperately needed
  + And gladly received
* So Wesley believed, preached that belief
* Lived that belief
* And continued to serve the Least of These
* This is leadership
* Servant leadership
* Looked at ecumenical resources regarding Reformation Sunday and first image I saw included picture of our own Bishop Gregory Palmer
* We are blessed to have such leadership, in our annual conference, in our district and here in this church
* Pastor Amy is so well-connected in our annual conference
  + I like to say that there are three pastors in West Ohio that Amy does not know
    - But I haven’t met those pastors
    - We’ve had 3 guest speakers in Certified Lay Ministry Academy and Amy knows 2 of them
* I don’t know the clergy like Amy does, but I do know a few of the laity in our district and conference
* One is Mary Shumard, our conference Lay Leader
* In her address to 2017 Annual Conference, she declared:
  + Clergy, use your laity
  + Laity, respect, follow clergy BUT do NOT depend on clergy to do it all
* Both sides of that equation
  + Lean on, rely on, trust each other
    - But don’t over-burden
* We’ve been blessed here, but some clergy in other places are reluctant to “turn over the reins”
* But there have been times here, we have been overly-reliant, waiting for clergy to take roles that we should be filling
  + I think of Susan Allen driving shuttle bus on Good Friday in 2016
* Amy Haines leading soooo many worship services
  + I know that before I retired, I enjoyed the occasional day off.
  + Ought to wish same for our clergy
* Said this before, because of the age difference between Pastor Amy and me, long after I’m dead, she will be touching the lives of people she serves
  + It is our duty, my duty to nurture her as a renewable resource
    - Not exhausting her
    - But nurturing her
  + So that she can touch lives 25 years from now
  + That is an obligation we owe our Lord God
* I have served as Lay Leader for this congregation for about 15 years
* Don’t know if anyone here asks, but when I’m at Laity events in our district, someone will say something like
  + I’ve been asked to serve as Lay Leader but I don’t know what a Lay Leader does
  + Book of Discipline indicates which teams should include the Lay Leader
    - Also lists traits that the lay Leader should exhibit
    - I’m not gonna list those traits since well, since well maybe I don’t live up to that list of traits
  + But I have long described the three primary tasks of Lay Leader
    - Have Pastor’s back
    - Participant in leadership development of our laity
      * Helping folks move into new roles
    - Be an advocate for training for all of us
  + And with this understanding, I now serve on 3 district teams and 1 West Ohio team. 2 of those assignments are directly related to training our Laity
* Any look at leadership has to include Matt 20: 26 Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant
* This is the key to Christian leadership
* I did sermon years ago on leadership and for that I sought and found many examples of lousy leaders in the business world
* Lots of examples of bad leaders
  + Common bad trait among bad bosses was need to dominate staff
  + Be pushy for sake of being pushy
  + Domineering
  + Centered in insecurity or desire to make themselves “seem smart” bad bosses act like the pointy haired boss in Dilbert
* Yet, the ultimate leader, our Lord Jesus told us that our leaders are servants first
* Servant-leader
* Serve
* As the late basketball coach Pat Summit, she of 8 NCAA women’s basketball championships and 1,098 career wins said of leadership
  + Players don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care
  + Care for others
  + Care for others in your charge
* Jesus lived and taught that
* Be great by serving well
* I am at Otterbein Avalon out here on Bunnell Hill Road on Sunday at 1:30 for worship and Wednesday at 1:00 for game time
* I started this because I saw it as a service opportunity for the seniors in our midst
* We here could serve God and those in need by visiting and serving the seniors at Otterbein
* Only a few folks have ever worked with us in this regard, must faithfully being Jacquie Pickett
* But I have found that my service there is not about me, or for me
  + Yet, I receive more than I give by my time with the residents, mostly for this reason:
  + When I am there, it is easy to spot a day when one of our residents is expecting a visit.
    - On such a day, our resident is dressed a little nicer
    - Might even be wearing makeup
    - And they watch the door, even during worship or BINGO
    - Just waiting for their loved-one to arrive
    - Good for staff and volunteers to see and yet there is some sadness in that our sweet resident almost looks like a puppy dog looking out the window
    - And the loved-one comes, spends time with their senior, returns her to her room
      * Then leaves, not to return for maybe another week or even longer
    - I was struck one day
    - God could manipulate us like a puppet on strings, but we have been given freedom
      * Freedom to worship
      * Or freedom to not worship
      * Freedom to serve
      * Or freedom to not serve
    - Think of how much God wants to be in our lives
    - Scripture tells us that God deeply wants to have a relationship with each one of us
    - And yet, do we treat God like the loved-ones treat their family at Otterbein?
    - Is God, like the senior resident, anxious for time with us
    - Does God look at the door for our approach?
    - Then we finally give God an hour a week, do we then take God back to the room, with a promise
      * I’ll be back in a week
    - Do we relegate God to an hour a week?
    - Servant Leadership is to show others, like our kids and to show God by our action
      * That we want that relationship
      * We want to walk with God, daily
* That is my prayer for you today on Reformation Sunday
* That we be loving and willing followers of Jesus Christ
* Wanting to be with God
* Wanting to transform and reform the world so that all know the love we know in Jesus Christ
* May it be so
* Amen

**Lead or Lead-free**

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