

Good Morning, this morning we are going to continue on from last weeks message. We left off where we were beginning to look at John Wesley and his thoughts about the Bible as being Gods Word. But before we get into Wesley's thoughts for us this morning I would like to bring us back to last week's message where I talked about the lack of faith found in three famous scientists of our day. You see even with all their genius level thinking about the universe and how it worked they were still missing the most important understanding of God's role in creating the universe. Here is a story that just might show what was missing in the scientist's thinking about God in their lives. ***"One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him. The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and mind your own business?" God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this? Let's say we have a man-making contest." To which the scientist replied, "Okay, we can handle that!" "But," God added, "we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam." The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt. God looked at him and said, "No, no, no. You go get your own dirt."*** You know it appears from this story that it must be very hard for scientists or other people who cannot go beyond this physical world to come to know God. How did they miss finding God in their lives? Could it be that of all the books they read and studied from they missed one? Could it be that the book they missed was the Bible? Because if they were to have read and studied the bible there would have been a good chance that they might have heard God's voice speaking to them. But maybe their view of the universe never led them to the Bible. What a shame for someone to live life without out God in it. So if some of us find our thinking to be a little similar to that of our three modern scientist I have a suggestion for you. And that suggestion is to follow the passion of John Wesley and how his reading the Bible played such an important role of finding and listening to God's word in his life and ministry. Last week I read some of Wesley's statements about his relationship with the bible and how he found God's word coming from it. I would like to re-read some of them again to us this morning; ***O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end,***

***to find the way to heaven.*** John Wesley not only considered the Bible as God's word but he made sure to include lots of scripture in the writing of his sermons. In fact the title of one of his sermons is "The Scripture Way of Salvation". It was said that Wesley was "***a man of one book***", meaning that he found from the Bible what was needed for him to be knowledgeable of God's plan for all of mankind to find salvation. John Wesley looked to the Bible as having all the instructions for him to follow so he could experience his faith in Jesus as his Lord and Savior. John Wesley left for us not only the example of his passion for the Bible but a way we could learn to develop that very same passion in our lives too. Wesley suggests for us to simply read the bible. As we read the bible we will come to know God who reveals Himself in the text of Scripture. The importance of knowing God's word in our mind and hearts is shown when Jesus responded to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29 where He told them "***You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God***". But there is even a more powerful example of how Jesus felt about the importance of Scripture being the "Word of God" and its power to guide and protect us. We find in Matthew the story of the Temptation of Jesus. Remember when the Devil asked Jesus to command the stones to become loaves of bread. Do you remember what Jesus told devil? Jesus told the devil, "***It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'***" Or how about when the devil told Jesus to throw himself down from the top of the temple. Here we find again Jesus telling the devil, "***Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'***" And then there was the last temptation from the devil where he told Jesus that he could have all the kingdoms of the world if he would fall down and worship him. And again Jesus answered with a reference to Scripture when He told the devil, "***Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'***" In each temptation response, Jesus referred to what was written in Scripture as the reason to deny what the devil was tempting Him with. In this excerpt from Matthew we found Jesus saying, "it is written; Again it is written; and For it is written. So we can see from this example how important it is for us to read and understand God's word as it is written in the Bible. In the Book of Joshua 1:8 from the Old Testament we find Joshua saying "***Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.***" So it would appear that reading and understanding Scripture as it is presented to us in the Bible is nothing new as it has been around for several thousand of years. So speaking of being around for several thousands of

years would you believe that archeologists have recently discovered in an Egyptian tomb a mummy that was not wrapped in white linen but wrapped in a type of cloth that would only be recognized by us lumberjack types. Can you guess what material I may be referring to? Yep you guessed it, Flannel. And since today is our second annual Flannel Shirt Sunday I thought this story would enlighten us as to the power of a flannel shirt; ***After her husband passed away, leaving their children devastated, one Canadian woman found a way to keep his spirit alive — she made pillows out of his clothes. Using her late spouse’s flannel shirts, the unnamed mother created memorial pillows, before attaching heartfelt notes “from Dad” to them. She then gave one to each of her two children as gifts on Christmas Day. Written on brown paper by the woman’s sister-in-law and sewn onto the pillow with a piece of string, one of the notes reads: This is a shirt I used to wear. And when you hold it I’ll be there. Love Dad xoxo.*** There is another story about the power of a flannel shirt and that story is a bit closer to home. You see a couple of years ago Jan made a quilt for our son Don and our daughter Jill and among the fabric she used was one of my flannel shirts. You see in our first story the memory of a dad’s flannel shirt gave comfort to his family after his passing but in our second story the power of a flannel shirt is sort of turned around in that I feel the comfort. Just knowing that one of my flannel shirts is within Don’s and Jill’s quilt gives me a warm sense of always being with my kids. It’s hard to not be around your kids after they grow up and leave home but for me the power of a flannel shirt helps to ease that feeling of sadness. So here we have two examples of the power of a flannel shirt. But there is also another example of how a flannel shirt can provide comfort to someone who is struggling. In an article I just read that was authored by the name “Homeless Guy” I found some interesting information about the winter needs of a homeless person. “Homeless Guy” had this to say about giving winter clothes to a homeless person, ***“Now that winter is upon us, warm clothes are obviously in need. But know that expensive looking clothing can be a burden to the homeless who are still living on the streets or in a shelter. Expensive items are often stolen, and are difficult to keep nice. A thick flannel shirt from a discount store may be a better purchase than one from a popular catalog. Besides, you could probably get three shirts at Wal-mart for the price of one from J Crew.”*** So after reading this advice I would like to offer an opportunity for us, as the Weaver Methodist Church, to continue to use the power of a flannel shirt and provide a donation of flannel shirts to a warming shelter in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Now this warming shelter is special to me because during a ride along as a police chaplain I was blessed to see

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this warming center in action on a very cold night. There was a call from dispatch for us to go to the shelter, in the basement of a small church, to help with a confrontation between two occupants. You see one occupant had been asked to leave the shelter because of his argumentative words with another occupant. When we arrived the officer visited with the volunteer supervisors to see if they needed any additional help with the situation. They told us that everything was fine now and thanks for coming. This was my first time visiting the shelter and I was struck by the trust that these two volunteer women must have had in their faith in Jesus because it was just the two of them in charge of the shelter for the night. There was also another thing that I noticed and it was the simplicity of the sleeping arrangements as there were no beds. Instead there were recliners that each occupant used to rest through the night and keep warm. I left the shelter that night with a feeling that Jesus was watching over the shelter and seeing to the success of the shelter to take care of those in need of a warm place to stay for the night. Since my visit I have good news to tell us about the shelter. The shelter was recently relocated to a larger facility and can now accommodate up to 30 homeless people instead of the 19 it used to provide for. The new facility was remodeled to include showers and laundry facilities. So what I would like to offer is an opportunity for us to help with the shelter's mission and provide some flannel shirts for those who use the shelter. I would like to ask that each of us go home and look into our closets and find one or more flannel shirts to donate. If you do not have any flannel shirts there is the possibility of purchasing one at a store. So today as we sit here wearing our flannel shirts let us think about the power they have to provide comfort to those who may be grieving the loss of someone, or missing someone or needing to be warm. Isn't it amazing how the Holy Spirit can find unique ways, like through the gift of a flannel shirt, to bring God's love to those in need? Amen.