

# SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

March 17, 2024

## WORDS OF WELCOME

### INTROIT: #237 v.v. 1 & 2 *"In the Garden"* (Public Domain)

1. I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses,  
And the voice I hear falling on my ear the Son of God discloses.

*Refrain:*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own;  
And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.*

2. He speaks, and the sound of His voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing,  
And the melody that He gave to me within my heart is ringing.

### INVOCATION: ΑΩ\*

*L: God of grains and grace, we gather today seeking to hear your voice and to follow in the way of Jesus. The path he chose for his disciples was one of service and it requires of us that we lay down our selfish desires, our selfish ambitions, and serve you with our whole heart.*

**C: May our worship this day inspire our dying and rising with you  
as we seek to love and serve like Jesus.**

### CALL TO WORSHIP: ΑΩ\*

*L: New life rises!*

*But single grains merely remain as they are unless they are released to the ground.*

**A: The grains of the earth that fall will multiply and nourish.**

*L: Come, die to self-centeredness and live a life of service to the Living God.*

**A: And God will raise us up anew. May it be so.**

### HYMN: v.v. 1 & 4 *"I Surrender All"* (Public Domain)

1. All to Jesus I surrender all to Him I freely give  
I will ever love and trust Him in His presence daily live

***Chorus: I surrender all, I surrender all. All to Thee my blessed Savior I surrender all***

4. All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee  
Fill me with Thy love and power let Thy blessing fall on me

### PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION & NEW LIFE: (Based on Psalm 51 MSG)

*L: Generous in love—God, give grace! Huge in mercy—wipe out our bad record.*

*Scrub away our guilt, soak out our sin in your laundry.*

*We know the wrongs we've done and left undone; our sins are staring us down.*

**A: You're the One we've violated, and you've seen it all, seen the full extent of our evil.  
You have all the facts before you; whatever you decide about us is fair.**

**We've been out of step with you for a long time,**

**What you're after is truth from the inside out. Enter us, then; conceive a new, true life.**

*L: Soak us in your laundry so we'll come out clean, scrub us completely clean.  
Tune us in to foot-tapping songs of joy, set these once-broken bones to dancing.  
Give me a clean bill of health.*

**A: God, make a fresh start in us, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of our lives.  
Don't throw me out with the trash, or fail to breathe holiness in us.  
Bring me back from gray exile, put a fresh wind in our sails!  
Give us a job teaching rebels your ways so the lost can find their way home.  
Commute our death sentence, God, our salvation God,  
and we'll sing anthems to your life-giving ways.  
Unbutton our lips, dear God; we'll let loose with your praise.**

*Moment of Silence, In Confession, Listening to God &  
Reflection on God's Forgiveness, Love, Guidance, Redemption, and Restoration of our Lives*

#### **WORDS OF GRACE: Ω\***

*L: Jesus has come into the world not to condemn it, but to set us free by love.  
Friends, trust that you are forgiven, that new life rises, and that Jesus abides with you  
and within you by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of Christ, Amen.*

#### **HYMN OF RESPONSE: #191 v. 3 "Before Your cross, O Jesus"** (Public Domain)

3. Yet humbly, in our striving, we rise to face its test.  
We crave the power to do your will as once you did it best.  
On us let now the healing of your great Spirit fall,  
and make us brave and full of joy to answer to your call.

#### **SCRIPTURE:**

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#### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

##### **A New Covenant**

<sup>31</sup> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

#### **John 12:20-33 - Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus**

<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

## Jesus Speaks about His Death

<sup>27</sup> “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say: ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” <sup>29</sup> The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

## A TIME OF REFLECTION: “Written on Hearts, Not Stone”

Sing: “I Want to be a Christian in My Heart.” When we sing these words, we seem to realize that God’s law, in order to be effective, needs to dwell within us. We need not just to know the word of God but to truly treasure it in our hearts. Why the heart? It is the core of our very being. Think about it. When we are absolutely sure about something, what is it we say? “Deep in my heart I know this to be true.” When something is deep in our hearts it is not easily swayed.

In Jeremiah we are told of a new covenant that God intends to make with the people of Israel and Judah that will be different from the one God gave to their ancestors in that in this new covenant the law will be internalized. It will be written on human hearts.

No longer will humanity need to teach about God or tell each other “Know the Lord!” because all will know God from the least to the greatest. That new covenant internalized covenant can be summarized in two truths spoken by Christ which is to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ and to ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ What we see in these words and the promise of a new covenant are words of hope to a people who have lost their temple and have been removed from their homeland; that though God has disciplined them, God has not abandoned them. God still desires to be in relationship with them, despite their turning from God. The very God we see in this passage who took the Israelites by the hand and led them out of Egypt and was rejected is the very God who chose out of love to be emptied into humanity in Jesus Christ, to share our common lot and redeem us from our sin, so that we might live a new life in Christ.

We remember that on the night he was betrayed Jesus had gathered in a room with his disciples to share the Passover meal and while sharing in that meal Jesus took the loaf of bread, offered God thanks and praise, broke the bread, and said take, eat, this is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way Jesus took the cup after supper and having given thanks gave the cup to his disciples and said drink from it all of you for this is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins; blood that was poured out because Jesus could not be swayed from doing the will of God. Blood that was poured out because once again in God’s reaching out to humanity, humanity once again rejected God in Jesus Christ crying, - “crucify him, crucify him”. And what does humanity hear in that rejection? While hanging from the cross, still being mocked, “If you really are king of the Jews, get yourself down from there” we hear Jesus pray ... “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” God still desires relationship with a lost people not by force but out of choice.

In Matthew Chapter 5 we hear Jesus’ instructions concerning one’s enemies saying “You have heard it said that you should love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

In Jesus Christ we see God’s law written on human hearts, the law of the love of God and the love of neighbor, whether that neighbor be friend or foe, or live near or far away. Jesus didn’t just teach the law; he knew the law at the very core of his being and could not be swayed from it, even in the face of death; a law that breaks down barriers and builds bridges; a law that sees the big picture and not just what’s in it for me; a law that seeks understanding and offers understanding, not by force but with love seeking to build relationships with God, humanity, and all of creation. Maybe that is why the people in John desire to see Jesus. They witnessed something at the very core of his being that was worth getting to know. But in truly seeing Jesus there is both a

joy and a cost. In truly seeing Jesus, just like Nathan confronting David with his sin of adultery and then sending her husband to the front lines so that he would be killed, when we see Jesus, Jesus too exposes our sin but not for the purpose of condemnation but so that we may seek God and desire, like David, for God to transform the very core of our being. and ask like David "Cleanse me ... and I will be clean; wash me, ... blot out all my iniquity .... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. David knew that when he wronged another he sinned against God. David would have understood Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of heaven that what-so-ever you do or don't do to the least of these, you do unto me. David knew he needed God's mercy and willing spirit to help him desire the same things God desires and keep him from wandering from the will of God. Maybe if we opened the core of our being more fully to God, we might be able to see the face of God in another we wouldn't be so quick to seek revenge.

Obviously, we have not realized this new covenant in full yet, or we would not be experiencing the violence and chaos around the world that we are experiencing, nor would we have a need for Sunday school or bible Study to teach about God as we would all know God, but we have seen the in breaking of it in Jesus Christ. I would even say we see the in breaking of the new covenant in this church when we are willing to reach out in order to alleviate the suffering of others, through our blood drives, supporting other organizations in our community and throughout the world that feed the hungry, provide shelter for the homeless and provide programming to break that cycle of poverty through our giving and volunteering not only to the wider church initiatives, but in supporting the efforts within our local community. I see the inbreaking of the new covenant being written on our hearts when we are willing to be educated about injustices and suffering within the community and beyond in order that we might help not only to alleviate the immediate suffering but eradicate the root cause. We seek to build relationships with the neighbors. We have people who understand the importance of breaking down language barriers and when an opportunity to do just that is revealed to them, they take the initiative to do just that. These are just few ways I see this in breaking of God's law written on hearts.

Aristotle once said "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all. Until that day when the new covenant is fully realized maybe we can take a lesson from the psalmist and seek God with all our heart. God of suffering and glory, in Jesus Christ you reveal the way of life through the path of obedience. Inscribe your law in our hearts that in life we may not stray from you, but may be your people and partners in service. Amen.

### **HYMN OF RESPONSE: #198 v.v. 1 & 4 "Lift High the Cross"**

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### **A TIME OF PRAYER - LIFTING UP PRAYER REQUESTS - THE LORD'S PRAYER**

#### **INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:**

*L: As yeast rises to create bread, so do the rising of our gifts multiply the love of God in the life of the world. Let us give of our treasure, and of our very lives whatever it may be, however large or small. Then, trust God will use it for the building of the kingdom of God that is emerging among us.*

#### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION: ΑΩ\***

*L: O God who causes our lives to rise anew,*

**A: we lay down to you the abundance you have given us and allow it to fall  
so that you may multiply it to give life to your world. May it be so.**

#### **SUMM-IT UP:**

### **SENDING HYMN: “Lord, Be Glorified”**

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### **CHARGE & BENEDICTION:**

**An Irish Blessing** - Words: Public Domain

May the road rise up to meet you, the wind be always at your back,  
The sunshine warm upon your face, the rain fall soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

### **POSTLUDE:**

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