

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

May 22, 2022

WORDS OF WELCOME

INTROIT: HYMN # 73 v.v. 1 & 2 “Enter, Rejoice and Come In”

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CALL TO WORSHIP: *

L: As we gather for worship, let the Creator be home among us
In our hearts and minds, may we truly welcome God.

C: God’s love is our nourishment so may God’s love shape our every thought

L: God’s truth is liberating so as we worship the Creator may that liberating truth infiltrate our lives
And be made evident in our actions which lead to God’s justice.

**C: God’s words give wisdom, as we worship may those words of wisdom infiltrate our lives
so that the words we speak will be words of life; speaking hope into a hurting world.**

L: May God’s Spirit lead us

C: May God’s peace dwell within us

All: Amen.

HYMN OF INVITATION: # 73 v.v. 3 - 5 “Enter, Rejoice and Come In”

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PRAYER OF REFLECTION AND GROWTH: *

L: God of love and majesty,

All: We have not yet learned to love as you love

At times, we have spoken praise in our mouths when our hearts were far from you

At times, the gifts you gave for our peace we have weaponized

Yet, even in our failings Your love has never failed us

Even when we turned you away You still choose to make your home among us

L: In good times and in times of trouble we need you God
our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

**All: Creation needs you; Our families need you; Our streets need you; Our cities need you
The soil needs you; Our souls need you; Heal us - Forgive us - Make us whole again**

*Moment of Silent Confession
& Reflection on God’s Forgiveness, Restoration and Redemption*

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S GRACE: *

L: Beloved of God, hear the good news. God’s faithfulness is sure.

God’s love will not fail us. In accordance with God’s lovingkindness, you are forgiven.

Embrace that gift of forgiveness and be set free to rise up to new life in Christ

for by the power of the Holy Spirit, God has made a home with in our very lives.

HYMN OF RESPONSE: Hymn #778 “Doxology”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures here below;

Praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

SCRIPTURE:

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Psalm 67 (NRSVUE)

The Nations Called to Praise God

L: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*

C: that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

L: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

C: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,

for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah

L: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

C: The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

All: May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

John 14:23-29 (NRSVUE)

²³ Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate,^[a] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur you may believe.

A TIME OF REFLECTION:

God’s Blessing – the Foundation of Mission
Psalm 67 John 14:23-29

I want to share with you a couple of bits of trivia that relate to our Psalm today. Did you know “*The oldest scraps of Bible archeologists have ever found are little scrolls of thinly hammered out silver, with Numbers 6:24-26 scratched onto the surface: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.” The larger one is a mere three and a half inches by one inch and both of them, found on the outskirts of ancient Jerusalem, are dated to the eighth or seventh century BCE.*” Did you also know that the Hebrew preposition in verse 2, “*shine upon us,*” literally means “*shine with us.*””

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/sixth-sunday-of-easter-3/commentary-on-psalm-67-5>

In other words we are seeking to shine together with God. When we shine it shines a light for others to see and to be blessed by.

The writer of Psalm 67 was obviously aware of the Priestly blessing from Number 6:24-26. Following that asking for blessing in Psalm 67 with the words “*that your way be known on earth, your saving power among all nations*” it is clear

that the purpose of seeking God’s blessing is not self-centered but mission oriented; and the only way we can really shine in carrying out God’s mission is by doing it together with God. God’s blessings are never just about an individual or single group but that those blessings may overflow from their lives and bless others. God’s blessings are not about choosing favorites but about selecting channels through whom God will bless all nations. Abraham, the Israelites, Mary, the disciples all were chosen as vessels through whom God’s mission would be carried out in this world and upon and through whom God’s blessings would flow.

The blessing of peace that Jesus offers to the disciples in our Gospel lesson for today is not so they can sit around in a sense of calm tranquility when all around them is chaos, but that they might have the courage and

strength to live out the love of God even in the face of some very real dangers yet still being able to experience an inner peace while living out the love of God.

I want to share with you a true story of how God's blessings lead to mission and how those who love God keep God's word. Have any of you ever seen the movie or read the book *Have a Little Faith* by Mitch Albom. If you haven't, it is well worth your time.

It starts out with Mitch, who is a sports writer, having a book signing and who does he encounter, but his old Rabbi, Albert Lewis who asks him to do his eulogy. Mitch had not been attending services for a long time but begrudgingly, agreed to take the assignment and began meeting with the Rabbi to get material for the eventual eulogy which didn't come about until 8 years later. Through the process of gathering that material, he found himself reconnecting to his faith and wanting to live it out. "Those who love God, will keep God's word and God will make a home with them." He realized he had been greatly blessed and felt a desire to find a worthy cause with whom to share those blessings. Mitch's wife is Christian and oddly enough he eventually found himself drawn to I Am My Brother's Keeper Church to which he referred to it as the Hole in the Roof Church as it literally had a hole in the roof and very little money to keep the building open Yet was a place of worship for those who were marginalized and from which a homeless shelter and food ministry was being carried out.

The pastor of the church, Henry Covington, was a former drug dealer and addict, convicted felon for a murder which he did not commit and thief, just to name a few things. He did not hide his past from Mitch when Mitch told him he was looking for a worthy cause to support. Hearing all of this, Mitch's question to him was, when does one become disqualified from being a member of the clergy? Henry invited Mitch to come to his services on Sunday to get to know the ministry better before making a decision about helping the church.

Henry's conversion came one night when he was sure he would be killed and he spent the night praying that if God would let him live through the night that he would give his life to God. In the morning he was still alive and he gave his life to God. It was not an easy road cleaning up his life but he did.

Many in his congregation were homeless, drug addicts etc. but he was the right person to lead them as he didn't judge them, he allowed God's love for them to shine through him to them, and in that many lives were changed. He would get food donations and distribute them. He allowed those who were struggling to help out even as they took some of the food for themselves. He even offered a drug addicted man to live in his home for a year when the abandoned building he had been living in had been destroyed. The man eventually shared with Mitch what Henry had done for him and that through all that Henry had done for him he changed his life and was passing those blessings on to others. Without Henry the man was sure he would have been dead. He was by no means rich financially, but he could certainly share God's love with others and could help at the church and its ministries in various ways.

At one point Mitch saw Henry talking with some drug dealers and questioned whether he was dealing again but upon looking deeper and asking the tough questions found out that Henry was not dealing again, but ministering to the drug dealers and planting seeds for a better way of life. Henry had made a half million dollars in one year when he was dealing, and sure that money would come in handy to be able to fund various missions, but it would also be money that came from destroying other people's lives. He knew this was not God's way to provide for others. Even though Henry himself was living in poverty he shared from what he did have with those in need. He even stayed at the church overnight and watched over those who came into the church for shelter overnight.

Money issues got so bad they eventually had the heat and electricity turned off, yet they still gathered for worship, provided food and a place to sleep and praised and thanked God for what they did have. Mitch began to notice these people who had so little never looked down, they only looked up.

Mitch shared with his Rabbi how he wanted to help but wasn't sure if they deserved the help especially with the pastor's background to which his Rabbi asked, is he still doing these things or is it in his past? Mitch asked the Rabbi if he really thought people could change to which Rabbi Lewis responded, "If I didn't, I am in the wrong business." The Rabbi had no problem with Mitch helping a Christian organization as he understood we are all children of God and that the blessings we have are meant to flow out to all that the world that God's ways may be known upon the earth, that God's saving power be known among all peoples.

Getting beyond Henry’s past and witnessing the ministry and lives touched by I Am My Brother’s Keeper Church, Mitch wrote an article in the paper about the Hole in the Roof Church Deserves Better. Donations began flowing in, electricity and gas got turned back on, Christmas gifts and warm clothing poured in and a year later they were able to patch the hole in the roof.

It was faith and the love of God that motivated Rabbi Albert Lewis, Pastor Henry Covington, and Sports Writer Mitch Albom to keep God’s word and share God’s love. God’s blessings equipped them for carrying on God’s mission in the world. Though Mitch had drifted away from his faith, God was able to use his conversations and experiences with both the Rabbi and Pastor to encounter the living God once again and in that, to love God and in experiencing God’s blessings found a way to share them with others and to use his gifts to bring attention to a need that others too could too might share their blessing that the world might know God’s ways, and the saving power of God. May we do likewise.

Jesus told the disciples “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” God, we do love you, help us to always keep our lives open to you so that you can make a home within our lives and so I pray God, be gracious to us and bless us and make your face to shine with us, so that your way may be known upon earth, and your saving power among all nations. Amen!

HYMN OF RESPONSE: #581 v.v. 2 & 3 “Lead Us from Death to Life”

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**A TIME OF PRAYER –
LIFTING UP PRAYER REQUESTS –
THE LORD’S PRAYER:**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY: ☺*

L: Our God does not give as the world gives; In the chaos, God is our peace
In our fear, God is our confidence; In our weakness, God is our strength,
Where we see scarcity, God shows us abundance. Let us offer our gifts to God as the Spirit guides

HYMN REQUEST:

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: ☺*

L: Loving God, Holy Vessel of Kindness-

All: May these gifts be used to build the Beloved Community through our hands of service, wise use of these resources in the power and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Jesus, our Messiah. Amen.

SUMM-IT UP:

- Strengthen the Church Offering – this week and next
- Hospice Tree of Life memorial service Tuesday, May 24, in Washington Park at 7:30 pm.
- Pastor’s Vacation May 23rd-May 29th May 30th – Memorial Day – Office Closed
- Pastor’s Office Hours will be Tuesday May 31st along with Church Council at 4:00
- Next Sunday – Lay led Hymn Sing Worship Service

SENDING HYMN: HYMN #249 v.v. 1 & 2 “Peace I Leave with You, My Friends”

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BENEDICTION & CHARGE: *

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine with us,
that God’s way may be known upon earth,
the Redeemer’s saving power among all nations.”

May the love of God go with us. May God’s love saturate our memories.

May God’s love overwhelm us.

God is love. As we carry God’s love within us,
may we carry God’s love to the world around us.

Go forth in the love of God, our creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Amen.

POSTLUDE: SHINE JESUS SHINE

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