

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

September 18, 2022

WORDS OF WELCOME

INTROIT: #207 v.v. 1 & 2 “*Just As I Am*” (Public Domain)

1. Just as I am, without one plea but that your blood was shed for me,
And that you called Inviting me, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
2. Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt
Fighting and fears within without O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

CALL TO WORSHIP: *

L: Divine Creator and Parent, you feel what we feel.

C: Our joys and our pains are yours too.

L: Divine Healer, you delight in our wholeness.

C: You are the balm for our heavy-laden hearts and souls.

L: Giver of life, you are able to renew us

C: We open ourselves to you, have your way within us.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION: *

L: Divine Nurturer, Wonderful Counselor, we are thankful that we can come to you any time.

You have made it possible for us to come, as we are - however we are.

We rejoice in knowing that you walk with us whether the road is rough or smooth.

You are steadfast.

*All: Help us to nurture our relationship with you, ourselves, and each other
so th at we may be a balm when none can be found. Amen.*

GATHERING HYMN: #553 v.v. 1 - 2 “*There Is a Balm in Gilead*” (Public Domain)

***Refrain: There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole,
there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.***

1. Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. Refrain
2. Don't ever feel discouraged, for Jesus is your friend;
Who, if you ask for knowledge, will never fail to lend. Refrain

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE: *

L: Source of Wholeness and Life,

All: we confess that sometimes our goals don't align with yours, and we get lost. At times, we have pursued power, knowledge, and wealth instead of you, who are the source of all. We know that you are the balm we need, and we turn ourselves towards you. You are steadfast in your love and justice. Help us to be the same, help us to be a balm to others as you are to us. Amen.

*Moment of Silent Confession, Listening to God &
Reflection on God's Forgiveness. Redemption, and Restoration of our Lives*

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE:

L: The Divine One is steadfast in love, justice, and righteousness.

Through the gift of God's forgiveness, grace and mercy, we are set free from our past and are now called and empowered to do the same.

In a chaotic world, we can know peace, and in a chaotic world, we can be at peace.

All: May God's grace be a balm for us, and may we be a balm to and for others.

SCRIPTURE:

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Psalm 113 - God the Helper of the Needy

L: Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord.

C: Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore.

L: From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

C: The Lord is high above all nations and his glory above the heavens.

L: Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high,
who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?

*C: He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.*

L: He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children.

All: Praise the Lord!

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Instructions concerning Prayer

2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is right and acceptable before God our Savior, ⁴ who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶ who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), a teacher of the gentiles in faith and truth.

TIME OF REFLECTION: *“Prayers for Everybody”*

"Pray for You" is a country song released in November of 2009. The song begins with the church organ music playing in the background of lyrics that spoke of not attending church in quite some time and listening to the preacher proclaim that you can't go around hating those who do you wrong. Yah, sure you get angry but it is not up to us to condemn, we are to let God do the work of the Almighty One, we just need to pray for them.

The song continues on with the gentleman taking the preachers advice, in his own misguided way, and starts praying for the one who hurt him for all kinds of bad stuff to happen her like her brakes failing while going down a hill; you get the idea. Comments on YouTube applaud this as a "great revenge song." And I would have to say I agree, it is a great revenge song and in all honesty that is how we all would like to pray for others at times. Clearly from the comments posted on YouTube many people see this as funny, not everything in life has to be politically correct. Others clearly use this as an expression of their true feelings. This type of expression or prayer is not new to society. Even in the psalms like in Psalm 69, though the writer acknowledges one's own wrong doing we can hear the writer pray things like Let their eyes be darkened so they cannot see. Let your burning anger overtake them. Let them be blotted out of the book of living with these words soon to follow let your salvation, O God, protect me. Clearly the author does not want the same mercy and grace he seeks for himself to be afforded to his enemy. These prayers not only seek revenge, but are very exclusionary as to whom God's salvation shall be given. In this type of prayer there may be a sense of joy

temporarily, but the bitterness remains and continues to affect our own lives much more so than those the prayer is directed toward and often times blinds us to possible solutions. This is a very different message than what we hear in our letter to Timothy today.

There is nothing vengeful or exclusionary in our epistle lesson for today. It is a message of extravagant welcome. It leaves no doubt that God desires salvation for all people. It also leaves no doubt that there is only one God, that this one God is the God of all people, and it is God's desire for all God's people to live together in peace no matter what their beliefs. And above all believers are to pray for all people, especially those in leadership.

This is not the first time in scripture those who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been asked to pray for the good and welfare of others. In Matthew 5:43-44 Jesus says: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Have you ever tried praying for your enemy? Soren Kierkegaard of the 19th century says: "Prayer does not change God, but it changes the one who prays." It is hard to earnestly pray for someone and not begin to see them and yourself in a different light. It is also hard to pray for them and not see God's presence and action in that situation. It can be a time of profound growth in your faith, both in understanding it and learning to live it. Psalm 25 gives us some great words to pray for our enemies and ourselves when we change the word "Me" to "Us". It says "To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. ² O my God, in you I trust. ⁴ Make **us** to know your ways, O LORD; teach **us** your paths. ⁵ Lead **us** in your truth, and teach **us**, for you are the God of **our** salvation. This salvation is not just about our eternal life, but about living differently here and now as we open ourselves through prayer to being taught and led by God.

Another place in scripture where we find God's command to pray for others is when the Israelites were living in exile this is the command God gave them through the prophet Jeremiah, "And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. (Jer 29:7 NKJ) But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jer 29:7 NRS) The Hebrew word used here can actually be translated completeness, soundness, welfare, and peace. No matter how you translate it, there is no completeness, soundness, or peace where the welfare of all is not sought.

The same message, though given in different words, is lifted up in Timothy. Eugene Peterson in the message puts it this way, "The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live." When we are talking first it is not meant to be the first in a list of things but rather it could be phrased "Most importantly," or "Above all". Kathryn Matthews once said, "If we pray in all things and in all times, perhaps it won't be so hard to get along with one another, and with our rulers and kings, as we make our way toward the truth." As we pray for others it does not mean that we abandon our beliefs or blindly submit to the rulers of the day, but rather that we might join sincere and perhaps challenging efforts which seek truth and welfare of all even joining forces with those who may have different beliefs. DACU, Dubuque, Area Congregations United is a great example of this. This is an interfaith organization that works together with people of various beliefs and seeks the welfare of all while not abandoning core beliefs or forcing others to accept one's core beliefs. It allows for one to live out the Gospel in a way that lures rather than compels recognizing that the one true God is the God of all creation and all people and that it is God and not us that will bring about salvation.

In the words of Lizette Merchan Pinilla Let us pray: Look at us, oh God, and reflect yourself in our happiness, our needs, our challenges, and our joys – to make us a trustworthy reflection of your existence within us, God. Look at us and mediate yourself through us, to serve as Christ's example on Earth in each one of our needs and our celebrations, to make us in the likeness of your own reflection. We are here, present before you, as witnesses to our mutual commitment: that in which you and we help one another.

Immanuel, the invitation is set before us – as natives or foreigners, lay persons or clergy, students or nonstudents, hurt or healed, believers or doubters – to be the living and breathing faith that champions justice for all, and the dignity of all, both here and abroad. Help us to be the living and breathing faith that you ask us

to be – the one who is yet to be shared or the one who has already discovered the originality and compassion of your existence on Earth. May this be so – through our living and breathing faith and testimony to life. Amen.
(http://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_september_18_2016)

HYMN REQUEST:

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

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY: *

L: God’s love is steadfast and abundant.

We are blessed to give from hearts of love that others might experience abundance.

All: May the gifts we bring be used to supply whatever balm is needed, wherever it is needed.

May these resources be used to facilitate the wholeness of all. Amen.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: *

L: Steadfast One, Giver of All Good Gifts, receive our gifts in the gladness we give them.

All: Thank you that we have an abundance of resources to share so that every need can be met. May we always give from wide open hearts, and may what we give, be used to bring a balm of justice. Amen.

SUMM-IT UP:

SENDING HYMN: “*Go Now in Peace*”

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BENEDICTION & CHARGE: *

L: As you enter into everyday life again,

let the balm you received be the balm that you gladly share with others.

Go forth in the wholeness of God’s steadfast love.

And, as you do that

May God bless and keep you, may God’s face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May God look upon you kindly and grant you the peace God alone can give. Amen

POSTLUDE:

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