

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE WORDS OF WELCOME

INTROIT: *“Majesty”*

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Majesty, worship His majesty unto Jesus be all glory, honor and praise
Majesty, kingdom authority flow from His throne unto His own His anthem raise.
So exalt lift up on high the name of Jesus. Magnify come glorify Christ Jesus the King.
Majesty, worship His majesty. Jesus who died now glorified King of all kings.

CALL TO WORSHIP: $\text{A}\Omega$ (Inspired by Psalm 104)

L: Today we gather to worship, with all our hopes, weariness, joys, and concerns swirling within us. We gather to worship One who both ascends above our condition and descends to meet us in the midst of them.

**C: Bless the Holy One, O my soul. O Creator, my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty.**

L: We are humbled and grateful that the Majestic God knows our names and seeks our presence.

**C: Bless the Holy One, O my soul. O Creator, my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty.**

L: We raise our spirits as one body, strengthening, fortifying, and encouraging one another as we honor The Holy One's glorious and precious name.

**C: Bless the Holy One, O my soul. O Creator, my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty.**

INVOCATION: $\text{A}\Omega$

Magnificent God, you are worthy of our praise, reverence, and honor. You come to us, and you come for us. Your embrace saves us from the condemnation of this world. Your tangible example leads us on a path to disrupt the sinful systems of oppression that keep your creation from life abundantly. Your presence assures us that your covenant is everlasting and true. With thanksgiving and awe, we worship you. Amen.

SINGING THE FAITH: *“Let All Things Now Living”*

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1 Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
To God the Creator triumphantly raise.
Who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us
Who still guides us on to the end of our days
God's banners are o'er us His light goes before us
A pillar of fire Shining forth in the night
Till shadows have vanished, and darkness is banished
As forward we travel from light into light

2 His law He enforces, the stars in their courses,
The sun in His orbit obediently shine;
The hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
The deeps of the ocean proclaim Him divine
We too should be voicing our love and rejoicing;
With glad adoration a song let us raise.
Till all things now living unite in thanksgiving:
To God in the highest Hosanna and praise!

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE ΑΩ*

L: Liberating God,

break us free from all the ways this world enslaves and ensnares your people.

A: May our hearts be infused with your compassion.

May our works be filled with your generosity.

May our lives be testaments that new life in freedom, in love, and in you are possible.

Transform us by your Spirit each day to be the part of you the world needs from us.

L: We trust in your mercy and grace to make room and empower us to make it so. Amen.

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

WORDS OF GRACE: ΑΩ*

L: Beloved, even now, the Holy One supplies the means to rewrite our stories.

*God will strengthen us in our weakness, direct us in our uncertainty,
and encourage us in our weariness.*

*God has formed us, redeems us, sustains us,
and will continue to guide us walk with us through it all.*

SCRIPTURE:

PSALM 91 IN SONG: "On Eagle's Wings"

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1 You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord, who abide in His shadow for life,
say to the Lord: "My refuge, my rock in whom I trust!"

Refrain:

***And He will raise you up on eagles' wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of His hand.***

2 The snare of the fowler will never capture you, and famine will bring you no fear:
under His wings your refuge, His faithfulness your shield. (R)

3 You need not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day;
though thousands fall about you, near you it shall not come. (R)

4 For to His angels He's given a command to guard you in all of your ways;
upon their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. (R)

Mark 10:35-45 - The Request of James and John

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³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Appoint us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” ³⁹ They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to appoint, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; instead, whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.”

A TIME OF REFLECTION: *“Empowered to Serve”*

When I got married to Neil he introduced a new family tradition to me. It was the tradition of Birthday week. Anytime within a week of your birthday you can declare “Birthday Week” by pounding your fist on the table and proclaiming “I declare my Birthday Week.” This gives you the power to do almost anything you want to do. That power is mostly centered on having others serve you and getting out of chores. I remember one year my younger son came into our bedroom at midnight of the day his birthday began and proudly shouted, “I declare my birthday week” to which my husband declared a foul for abusing the powers of birthday week. This coming Wednesday is Neil’s birthday and though he has not yet declared “Birthday Week” by pounding his fist on the table and saying “I declare my Birthday Week” I could be in for trouble. Who knows what he will ask me to do? I may have made a poor decision in taking this coming week as vacation week. Though birthday week power is self-centered and is often used to have others serve you, it is all done in the spirit of fun.

In today’s scriptures, when James and John were seeking a place of prestige and power it was out of self-interest and not just for fun. They still hadn’t understood what Jesus was teaching them that with power comes responsibility. To be in a position of power requires one to serve those whom one oversees.

Jesus asked them if they could be baptized with Jesus’ baptism and they confidently replied yes. Jesus agreed, that “yes” they could be baptized with the same baptism because Jesus’ baptism was a baptism of the Holy Spirit and “yes” they could and would be baptized with the Holy Spirit just as that baptism is available to us still today. When we embrace that baptism, we are given a servant heart.

When the other ten get drift of this conversation, they become upset with James and John. Like James and John, their experience with power has been that of prestige and dominance where all too often, that authority is used and abused to boss others for the betterment of self, rather than the concept of dominion where one uses the power entrusted to one to care for, tend and build up those who are under one’s care. Jesus, however, tells them all: “I came not to be served, but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many.” This is a very different kind of leadership than what they are used to experiencing. Jesus is going to redeem the world not through force and power, but through sacrificial servant leadership.

I believe we understand God's redeeming work through Jesus much too narrow if we limit it to Christ's death on the cross and then God raising him from the dead. Jesus' whole life was part of God's redeeming work of salvation. Jesus did not say I came to die as ransom for many; what Jesus said is that I came to serve and give my life a ransom for many. There are more ways to offer one's life than just dying.

In researching this passage, I looked up the meaning of the Greek word *lutron* for its meaning and found it to be a noun that can be translated not only with the word ransom but it can also be translated "price of release." Various definitions that I found in the dictionary were as follows:

1. Money demanded for the return of a person.
2. Payment for the release of a person – the act of paying money
3. The act of freeing from captivity or punishment

The serving and the giving of his life go hand in hand in the work of redemption. Jesus not only gave the ultimate sacrifice of his life as he freely surrendered his life into the hands of the authorities who would condemn him, ridicule and torture him and put him to death by nailing him to cross, but the whole of Jesus life was given in service to humanity and God in order to reveal the kingdom of God, offering salvation, redeeming and setting humanity from the powers of sin and death.

Throughout Jesus' life, Jesus served and gave his life, as he studied, prayed, and looked to God for guidance. Jesus served and gave of his life, as he taught individuals, small groups and multitudes, healed the sick in body, mind and spirit, and empowered others to do the same. Jesus served and gave of his life, as he confronted people who used unfair practices for their own benefit while creating poverty and hardship for others, teaching that power is not to be used to oppress and suppress, rather it comes with responsibility to care for the widow, the poor, the sick, the stranger, the outcast and so on. Jesus also served and gave of his life, as he offered grace and forgiveness while challenging the one forgiven to live life differently and to offer that same grace and forgiveness to others. Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection were all incorporated in the "price of release" and are all a part of God's redeeming work in this world.

Even after hearing for a third time the projected fate of Jesus, James and John still had their minds set on the popular understanding of greatness, so they asked for a position of prestige. If you notice, Jesus did not condemn their ambition. Ambition is a good thing; it helps us get things accomplished. It is how we use that ambition that can become sinful. What Jesus did with that ambition of theirs, was to redirect it from self to that of following in his footsteps of being a servant leader. Though they said they could drink the cup Jesus drank and be baptized with the same baptism Jesus received, it would take the actual living with Jesus through his suffering and crucifixion to grasp the concept of greatness through servant leadership. As history shows, grasp it they did as they continued the work of Christ with the remainder of their earthly journey.

Today we are having a congregational meeting. Being a church is not just about numbers; it is not just about keeping the doors of the church open so that our families can continue to be baptized, confirmed, married and buried here. It is however, about, with the help of God, serving alongside of one another, equipping, encouraging and building up allowing the realm of God to be revealed through what we say and do. In doing this, the prior goals will also be achieved.

In 1968 Alan Paton wrote: "*I have no higher vision of the Church than as the Servant of the World, not withdrawn but participating, not embattled but battling, not condemning but healing the wounds of the hurt and the lost and the lonely, not preoccupied with its survival or its observances or its Articles, but with the needs of mankind.*" As we move forward with faith may we keep this in mind because I think if Jesus made a personal appearance, this is where Jesus would be directing our ambitions. With the help of God, may we use the power, gifts and resources, entrusted to us by God to seek the lost. As we serve God, one another and creation, may we continue to be vessels through

whom God's redeeming work in this world is done by working together in ways that give, build, and transform life, both for us and to whomever and wherever God calls us to serve. May we be open to see and accept the ways God asks us to serve. Please join me in singing "Make Me a Servant" as a prayer opening our lives to God's redeeming work, in and through us.

HYMN OF RESPONSE: "Make Me a Servant"

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***Make me a servant humble and meek
Lord let me lift up those who are weak
And may the prayer of my heart always be
Make me a servant make me a servant
Make me a servant today***

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

CALL FOR OFFERING: ΑΩ*

L: The invitation to give is a gift not a debt. We share our resources because we were created to be mutually dependent upon one another. When we give generously, we demonstrate our faith in God's generosity, provision, and abundance. Therefore, let us give with thanksgiving, joy, and love for God and our neighbor as the Spirit guides.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: ΑΩ*

L: Good and Generous God,

A: receive these gifts as an offering of our love and lives. Bless and guide their use so that they may they be used to benefit your people and to honor your holy name. Amen.

SUMM-IT UP:

SENDING HYMN: "Here I Am, Lord"

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1 I the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

***Chorus: Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.***

2 I the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? (Chorus)

3 I the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide, till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? (Chorus)

CHARGE & BENEDICTION: ΑΩ*

Go in the freedom of new life in Christ.

Go in the liberty that transcends the ways of the world.

Go in the hope, power, and peace of the good news.

Carry all of this with you wherever God leads you and wherever you go.

As you do that, may God bless and keep you.

May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

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

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POSTLUDE:

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: