

Trinitarian Congregational Church
TakeOut
September 27, 2020

Announcements

Prelude “My Lord, What a Morning” Lynne Walker
[Video - <https://youtu.be/U0rPm0Mhnq4>]

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, let us remember God’s presence with us.
Let us praise God’s great and wonderful name.
People: We celebrate our Creator, who is good and upright and just.
Our Redeemer teaches us and guides us in the holy way.
Leader: The authority of Christ challenges our lives.
The charge of God’s anointed one calls us to repent.
People: We acknowledge Christ’s claims and our misgivings.
We seek to grow as faithful people of God.
Leader: Let your minds be shaped by the mind of Christ.
Let your service follow the patterns Jesus taught.
Leader: We gather with honesty and openness before the living God.
We will honor God in our worship and service.

Gathering Prayer

Holy God, we marvel that you have called us to be your people. You have granted to us your word and your Spirit that we may live as your children. Through Christ you meet us with authority and humility, that we might be transformed by his life. We long to be true disciples yet our words are not always matched by our actions. In this hour help us to listen that we may hear your truth, to humble ourselves that we may obey your will, and to care that we may serve your world. We ask this in the name of Christ. Amen

Gloria Patri [Video - <https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>]

Scripture

Philippians 2:1-13

2 ¹If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself and
became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.
⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Matthew 21:23-32

²³ When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴ Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Special Music “I Need Thee Every Hour,” Lynne W and Chris H
[Video - <https://youtu.be/rCX88xL8yuM>]

Sermon

Question Authority Matthew 21:23-32

2020 has been a stormy year, if ever there was one. Oh, there have been the hurricanes in the south and the fires in the west. But there are also political and social storms galore, from the elections to selecting a new supreme court justice, from protests to voter suppression. Oh, and don't forget Covid 19.

And in the midst of it all news agencies, pundits and political leaders have questioned the leadership of our country. For me, it has all been a reminder of the adage I learned as a teenager - "Question Authority!" I questioned authority back then, and I still question authority. But my authority has also been questioned, many times. And in both cases it has not been comfortable.

Question Authority- that seems the theme of the day whether it is happening in the first century or the 21st century. And as much as I would like to talk about the authority, as we confront the issues of our world, I can't, because this story is not about us - it's about Christ; it's about Jesus's authority being questioned by those who held the authority, the religious leaders of Israel.

First we need to remember just when this challenge occurred. It took place not long after Jesus entered Jerusalem to the acclaim of the crowds shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David". Then he headed straight for the Temple. And one of the first things he did was some house-cleaning. He uprooted the money-changers and scattered their animals because the priorities of God's people were really a mess. Then he went about straightening out other things, healing the blind and the lame, proclaiming the gospel and teaching about true godliness. It was this "messaging" around in the Temple that drew those religious leaders to him to ask their question "By what authority are you doing these things?"

Now, to be honest here, my first impulse, and probably yours, is to stand in this story as one of Jesus' disciples, excited and longing to hear Jesus blast his opponents. And maybe, even a little, if we dare to admit it, maybe we are even trying on his sandals to see how they fit. When those religious authorities came marching up, I was on Jesus' side of the question. But then something strange happened. As I was studying and researching this sermon I was pulled me up short by a commentary. You see, truth be told, it does us no good to see ourselves standing in Jesus' shadow, at least not in the way we want to see it.

Really, we should be on the other side of the question that is floating in the air. We are the ones who are actually asking the question "By what authority...?" We are the "good religious people" of our day. We are the ones who come to church, say our prayers, make our offerings and listen intently to God's word. And as for me? Well, I am the modern day "religious authority," aren't I? So if we are to really hear this scripture we need to come to it as the questioners. We ask the question, not someone else. By what authority is Jesus doing the things he is doing in our lives? What gives him the right to go "messaging about" in the temple of our existence?

And Jesus does mess with us, doesn't he? Oh, we are glad when we receive the blessings of grace, and the benefits of hope. And we are truly thankful for healing and help in all the corners of our lives. But Jesus never stops there. In fact he tells us 'love one another as I have loved

you' and 'if anyone would come after me, take up your cross and follow me.' And that really messes with our plans. Because, even as good religious people', our walk with Christ sometimes involves a bit of "house-cleaning," when the Lord turns our lives upside down, flipping over our own inner tables and cash boxes, and driving out our ill-conceived notions of what it means to be godly. Who wouldn't react to that and say 'hey, what a minute here Jesus, what gives you the right?'

And like the Pharisees who came to Jesus questioning his authority, we find ourselves in a very uncomfortable place, facing a very personal and intense scrutiny. Jesus would not give them, or us, his answer. He wants to hear our answer about authority. First, in asking the Pharisees about the source of John's baptism he asks "do you see, or will you acknowledge God's authority?" Because really, if we will not recognize the truth and power of God in our midst, then there is no need to engage Christ any further. Either his authority was from God, or it was just his ego talking. But there was also a second part to Jesus' response And it boils down to this - what are you going to do with the authority that does confront you? Go ahead, question authority, but be sure you know what you will do when it does answers.

Jesus poses that challenge by telling a parable. It's a story of a man who had a vineyard and two sons. He asks each one to get to work. And they do what most people do, whether they are sons or daughters, husbands or wives, or simply disciples. One balks, flat out refuses, but then turns around and does it anyway. The other enthusiastically says yes, and then does nothing. Those were the two characters in Jesus' parable. And then he asked "which one did what the father wanted". Of course, the answer is the one who actually did the work.

The religious leaders, who had to answer the question, got a painful revelation - not of Jesus, or of God, but of themselves. They had heard God's call, they had said their "yes" to God, but they weren't really doing what God had asked of them - like enacting justice... for all people; like extending mercy and goodness ...by their attitude and their actions, like walking with God... in humility and submissiveness. You know, the difficult stuff.

And when we listen to this story as those who, in one way or another, raise up that same question, we too become aware of our own inner resistance to the true authority in our lives. We recognize those times when we hear God's call and brazenly say 'no way' to God, but then we comply. But we also recognize those times when we say 'oh yes' to God, and then never act.

And maybe when we do see our lives as they are, maybe it can open us up to a bit of humility, and a bit of grace, and a bit of hope. Because after his story of the two sons, Jesus does reply to the Pharisees, and to all who question him. He reminds us that those who can see, who can recognize God's authority and presence, who can believe and trust and repent, are all welcomed into the kingdom of God.

That is the answer to all our questions.

We have it on Good Authority. Amen.

Hymn

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go
[Video - <https://youtu.be/2aZgkK1-vAU>]

Chris Harris

Membership

Introduction

God has given us a great and wonderful gift; through our faith we are united with Christ and his church throughout all time and in all places. This is also God's invitation to us; to live in a faithful covenantal relationship with our Lord and his people. It is with joy that we welcome you today.

Confession of Faith

Rosemary, do you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, and do you seek to live as his disciple, taking for your rule of life his words:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,
with all your minds and with all your strength... and your neighbor as yourself?
If so answer I do, by the grace of God.

The Covenant of Worship and Service

As a member of Christ's universal church, will you be loyal to Christ through The United Church of Christ, and do all in your power to strengthen its ministries?
If so, answer I will, with the help of God.

Will you give yourself unreservedly to Christ's service, and take this community of faith to be your church? With consideration for the well-being of your fellow members, do you promise to walk with them in faithfulness and Christian love? And do you promise that, so far as you are able, you will grow in the Christian faith - attending the services of this church, supporting its organization, sharing in its work and witness, and endeavoring to make it a fruitful body of Christ?
If so, answer I will, with the help of God.

Welcome to the Church

Now let us, the members of Trinitarian Congregational Church, express our welcome to our sister Rosemary and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ.

As members of the body of faith that is the Trinitarian Congregational Church we gladly welcome you to share with us in the common life of the Church of Jesus Christ. We promise to walk with you in Christian love and support, so that together we may grow in the faith, love and service which is the Christian life.

In the name of Jesus Christ and on behalf of the Trinitarian Congregational Church I extend to you the right hand of Christian fellowship, welcoming you into the company of this local church.

Joys and Concerns

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

Prayers of the People

O Lord God, we come before you today in awe and humility. We thank you for the opportunity to acknowledge you as our Savior and Lord, and for the mercy that allows us to repent and grow in the likeness of Christ. And so we come before you today with courage and hope, that we may follow your will.

We pray, Gracious God, for your church and for this congregation. Keep our eyes ever focused on Christ, on his authority and power, his example and guidance. Help us to be honest in our discipleship that we may walk authentically with you and serve you faithfully in the world.

We pray, Mighty God, for all who are called as leaders among us. Grant that they may live true to the authority they have received, and use their power to bring justice and peace among the nations. And grant to all your people the wisdom and strength to accomplish your good will for all peoples.

We pray, Loving God, for all who turn to you this day. May the contrite know your grace, the weak receive your power, and the seeking discover your truth. Grant also your healing to the ill, your comfort to the sorrowful, and your aid to the needy. We especially lift up and thank you for... And empower us, who claim to be Christ's disciples, that we may accomplish your good purposes among all our neighbors, near and far.

We praise you, Glorious God, for all your mercy and goodness and faithfulness to us, through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray... .

Lord's Prayer

Offertory

We are called as children of God, and challenged to live faithfully. In Christ we are summoned to genuine discipleship and humble service. We give in response to God's call, and we now dedicate them to God's great purposes. Let us pray.

We give, Gracious God, because you have given so much to us. Your unending love and faithfulness have challenged us to stretch beyond ourselves, caring for all people as you have cared for us. Use us and our gifts to establish the community you intend, for the glory of Christ. Amen.

Doxology

[Video - <https://youtu.be/5I7PEGUPAXQ>]

Common Commission

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Benediction

Go now into the world

and may you be filled with the knowledge of God's will
in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord,
fully pleasing to God, as you bear fruit in every good work
and as you grow in the knowledge of God. Col 1:9b-10, alt

Go in peace to love and serve our Lord.

Postlude

“Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God”
[Video - <https://youtu.be/SegTFcwZ3TI>]

Lynne Walker