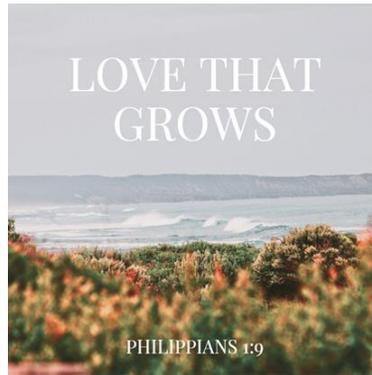


# First Baptist Church of Fitchburg

1400 John Fitch Highway Fitchburg, MA 01420 Phone # 978-345-5622

*October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*

Guest Paster: Rev. Philip D. Goff    Musician: Marylin Carter    Song Leader: Diane Hope



## **Welcome and Announcements:**

Good morning Congregation.

You are most welcome to share your concerns and celebrations with me or your deacons, who will forward them to myself directly if desired. My email is [meredithhchristian@gmail.com](mailto:meredithhchristian@gmail.com) and phone is (774) 276-0505.

## **Call to Worship:** (Led by Mark Bigelow)

**Leader:** We have come to worship God. Let us come with humility.

**People:** We offer all that we are, knowing that we need God's Spirit to be what we ought to be.

**Leader:** We have come to worship God. Let us come with expectation.

**People:** In the Divine Presence there is light for our darkness and purpose in our striving. Praise be to God.

## **Invocation:**

You have promised that You will be with Your people to the end, and that where two or more are gathered in Your name, You will be there to bless them. So we gather in faith, knowing that You are with us and will hear our prayers so we ask You to inspire us and challenge us for useful service in Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Gloria Patri:**

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be  
world without end. Amen, Amen.*

**Hymn:** "Take Time to Be Holy" # 483 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmi6DAeeL3k>

**First Reading:** Exodus 32: 1-14 (Read by Linda Gosselin)

The Golden Calf

**32** When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods<sup>[a]</sup> who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

<sup>2</sup> Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.” <sup>3</sup> So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup> He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, “These are your gods,<sup>[b]</sup> Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

<sup>5</sup> When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD.” <sup>6</sup> So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. <sup>8</sup> They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’

<sup>9</sup> “I have seen these people,” the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. <sup>10</sup> Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”

<sup>11</sup> But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. “LORD,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup> Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. <sup>13</sup> Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.’” <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

### **Celebrations and Concerns followed by a moment of Silent Prayer:**

Prayers for the Kacmarcik family on the passing of John.

### **Pastoral Prayer:**

Oh Lord, on this beautiful autumn day, this sacred day, we lift up to You our joys and celebrations; we lift up to You our worries and concerns.

As we are so humbled and grateful for the Spirit’s presence in our lives, may that Spirit also be present for those we lift up to You in prayer: those facing natural disasters in the fire zones of the west and those dealing with the hurricane in the Gulf. We lift up to you our friends who are ill and those who have been confronted by grief as they say an earthly farewell to loved ones and friends, particularly the family of John **Kacmerik**, a friend of our Pastor.

As our beloved country begins a national election, oh Lord as people begin to vote, we pray this this time will be a peaceful one and that animosity will be put aside. Oh Lord, speak to every citizen’s heart that we as a people may be at peace with one-and-other regardless of the differences that divide us.

Be, we pray, with our first responders and medical personnel as they minister to the sick, particularly those suffering from the dreaded virus. May they go about their critical work safely and remain healthy; may they be blessed with the knowledge that they are very much doing the work that is so pleasing in your sight.

And may that same Spirit, inspire and protect your missionaries around our world who, often working in very dangerous places, still go about the work of sharing the Good News while teaching or providing medical care

And finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves. In an uncertain world, where there is much to fear and so many crosses to carry, remind us we live not alone but always in Your presence; remind us we carry no cross by ourselves because You share every burden with us. And as we live each day, may we be blessed with no greater blessing than the knowledge we live each day in faithful service to Your Son as we live the Gospel message sharing the light of Christ with our world.

This, Lord, we pray in His name, Amen.

***Our Father**, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

**Children's Message: (by Debi Cross)**

## Yes You Can!

"I just can't do it!" Have you ever said that? Of course, you have, we have all said that at one time or another. Maybe you said it when the soccer coach asked you to take the penalty shot that would win the game, or when your piano teacher asked you to play a difficult piece on a recital. Maybe it was when the teacher called on you to give a book report in front of the whole class.

Jacob was a good student. Oh, he wasn't the smartest kid in class, but he worked hard and made pretty good grades. His worst subject was arithmetic. Addition and subtraction didn't give him any trouble, but when it came to long division, he just didn't get it. One day as he sat struggling with his assignment, he finally threw down his pencil and cried out in frustration, "I just can't do it!" His teacher, Mrs. Davis, smiled at Jacob and said, "Can't never could do anything. Here, let me help you." Mrs. Davis went over to Jacob's desk and showed him step by step what he had to do to solve the problem. With his teacher's help, suddenly long division didn't seem so hard after all.

Our Bible lesson today is about a man named Jeremiah. One day, God spoke to Jeremiah and said, "Before you were even born, I chose you to be my prophet to all the nations."

Jeremiah answered, "I can't! I'm not a good speaker, and besides, I'm too young."

"Don't say 'I can't'" the LORD answered Jeremiah. "If I tell you to go and speak to someone, then go! And when I tell you what to say, don't leave out a word!" Then the LORD reached out his hand, and touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "I am giving you the words to say, and I am sending you with authority to speak to the nations for me."

There will be times in your life when God will come to you, as he did to Jeremiah, and ask you to do something special for him. He may call you to be a preacher, a missionary, or a Sunday School teacher. Whatever it is that God calls you to do in this life, remember what he said to Jeremiah, "Don't say, 'I can't!'" If God calls you to do something, he will reach out his hand and touch your life to give you the ability to do it.

**Prayer:**

Dear Father, there may be some things in this life that we cannot do. But we know that if you ask us to do something, you will give us the ability to do it if we will just trust in you. Amen.

**Blessing of the Tithes, Offerings and Gifts:**

(Tithes, offerings, and gifts are greatly appreciated as a means to continue to care for our facilities, the needs of each other, and our local and worldwide community. We thank you for your pledges at this time and ask that you **Please Pray over your gifts** and mail them to the church at 1400 John Fitch Hwy, Fitchburg MA 01420).

**Doxology:**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

*Praise Him all creatures here below*

*Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts*

*Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost.*

**Sermon Text:** Philippians 4: 1-9

Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

<sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Final Exhortations

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

**“O Jesus, I Have Promised - What”**

Today’s Scripture readings are filled with human emotion, both the dark and light sides of how we express our humanity.

Our first reading finds Moses, having just spent days in the presence of God, descending the mountain with the tablets of the Ten Commandments in his hands, finding his people building the infamous golden calf.

Once again, most certainly not for the first time, his people doubt Moses. They have been set free from bondage in Egypt but they keep themselves enslaved in their hearts and souls. They are 'free' and it would seem their freedom causes them terror and doubt. There is little evidence that more than three thousand years later, humanity's nature has changed in the slightest. Fear is still far easier to embrace than freedom.

In a rage, Moses destroys the very tablets the Lord has just given him. But before he does that, in one of the truly epic scenes in all the Scripture, he debates with God who has it in mind to destroy the chosen people. It's not unlike the debate Abraham has the Lord in Genesis 18 about finding fifty righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah but Abraham is able to get the Lord to agree to the number 10. Sadly, as we all know, Abraham couldn't find even ten.

If you think this is quite amazing, sometime this week read Hosea 11 where God's people have, as my Scottish friends would say, gotten 'his knickers in a twist' as God's rage is about to boil over and we find our God debating with himself! It is truly one of the most amazing passages to be found in either Testament. And as our God relented with Abraham then Moses, so too, in Hosea 11, his lighter, kinder, loving side prevails.

When we turn to our reading written by Paul, the conversation is so radically different. It isn't about the law; Paul isn't writing about anything you must 'do'. Rather, for Paul, it is all about what you must 'be'.

Paul is calling his people to be 'gentle' in such a way that it is 'evident to all'. He is calling those who would follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior 'not to be anxious about anything.'

They should pray and be thankful for all God's blessings and open themselves to the peace of God.

He tells them they need to focus their minds on what is right, pure and lovely and put their faith into practice.

It is true that May and I don't get out the way we use to because of the virus. But even when we did, and this is still true today as much as we can observe, there seems to be a shortfall within our communities of gentleness and peace. Folks seem to be anxious about almost everything. Who would have thought that just a few months ago, we were all anxious about toilet paper!

Is there a more powerful message for our world than Paul's closing thought in this passage from his letter to the Philippians, 'Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.'

There are moments when it is very much a challenge not to be like those who feared Moses would not be returning and their future, their very lives were at risk. If we are filled with that fear, how easy the temptation to abandon our faith in Jesus Christ even as those folks abandoned their trust in Moses.

All the more reason to keep this beautiful poetic passage from Philippians nearby as a reminder, ours is the peace that passes all understanding; ours is the peace that will see us through the crises our world sends our way.

So, this week, may we live every day with the endurance, perseverance and discipline we need to remain faithful to our friend and savior Jesus. And his peace will see us safely through those days till we meet again, here, in this sacred place.

In closing, I just want to say a few words about our closing hymn. John Ernest Bode wrote this hymn for his children! He was the rector of an English church when his daughter and two sons reached confirmation age. He wrote so many hymns, they fill two volumes though this is the only one that has achieved fame. I hope you take the words home with you. This wonderful hymn says in three verses all that I've required fifteen minutes to say.

Let us pray: Oh Lord, we have indeed promised to serve you to the end but Lord there are terrible moments when doing so is such a challenge. When those moments come, grant us we pray, the grace, the peace to endure, the focus to remain true and in doing so, please you and our friend Jesus in whose name we pray, amen.

**Hymn:** "O Jesus, I Have Promised" # 458 (Click on link) [https://youtu.be/\\_a9i6cIYcMU](https://youtu.be/_a9i6cIYcMU)

**Benediction:**

*May the Lord bless and keep you all*

Works Cited: