

TCC Takeout

An Order of Service for Worship at Home

God's Extravagant Welcome:

“No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, YOU are welcome here!”

June 28, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Pentecost



INTROIT [Ye Servants of God](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

God calls into our midst those who are beloved in all their diversity.

We welcome them.

God calls into our midst all those who are vulnerable, in need of healing, shelter and care.

We welcome them.

God calls into our midst all those with a word of challenge that proclaims God's kin-dom for all.

We welcome them.

Let us worship God, who calls us to be “prophets of welcome.”

Alleluia!

OPENING HYMN [Take My Life And Let It Be](#)

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.
Always, only, for my King.

Take my silver and my gold
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my moments and my days
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my will and make it thine
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thy love
It shall be my royal throne.
It shall be my royal throne.

Take my heart it is thine own
It shall be my royal throne.
It shall be my royal throne.

GATHERING PRAYER

Holy One, who calls us into community,
and invites us to welcome your prophets and messengers,
let us experience your welcome to us,
gathered in various places but joined in this moment.
Show us that we are beloved
and honored in your presence and in this community.
Show us how to put our resources at the service of all,
and help us know that the cup of water given in your name
nourishes the one who gives and the one who receives.
Satisfy our thirst to know your presence here and now. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI ([Audio Version](#))

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.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

- 1 I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, for ever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
- 2 I declare that your steadfast love is established for ever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
- 3 You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to my servant David:
- 4 "I will establish your descendants for ever,
and build your throne for all generations." '
- Selah
- 15 Happy are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance;
- 16 they exult in your name all day long,
and extol your righteousness.
- 17 For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favour our horn is exalted.
- 18 For our shield belongs to the Lord,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Matthew 10:40-42 'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'

REFLECTION

Each week, when school is in session, the NMH Interfaith Council gathers for a meal and sharing. The week we returned from winter break I asked students what their favorite holiday or end of year traditions were. One student from Central Europe described his family's Christmas meal in which a chair at the table is deliberately left empty in case a stranger were to knock on the door seeking food. The student smiled and said, 'yes, my mother always does this.'

"Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me."

When I was a teenager I enjoyed reading the magazine Guideposts. It is filled with inspirational stories of hope that I found uplifting. One that I think about even now was the story of a young girl of five or six who encountered an elderly homeless man one cold blustery morning. She was walking with her mother through the busy streets when she saw the man on the corner shivering without proper shoes or coat. The little girl dropped hold of her mother's hand and stopped in front of the homeless man. Without a word, she took the red scarf from around her neck and, ever so gently, put it on the old man. The two looked at each other and the young girl smiled. "I hope this keeps you warm," she said.

"Whoever gives even a cup of [water] to one of these."

A medical missionary woman was traveling the back-roads of the mountainous country where she had been called to serve, a country half-way around the world from her home in rural America. She was told to enter women's homes and tend to the health concerns of the women who would never venture out to visit a doctor. Her mode of transportation was an old World War II jeep, but on that day, her first day of itinerancy, the well worn vehicle she had acquired broke down deep in the hills far from any village. She found herself alone unsure of what to do next. As she waited, a small man in a monk's robe approached. Without asking any questions, he quietly extended his hand to offer her a cup of tea, and then led her in silence to the Buddhist monastery a mile or so down the dirt road. She was the one who had come to offer help, but instead found herself in the position of receiving.

"Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me."

As Jesus commissions the twelve disciples and sends them out to share the Good News, he says to them "[w]hoever welcomes you, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." These three verses from Matthew chapter 10 may seem short in length, but they are powerful in meaning, and speak to us of the importance of hospitality.

A dictionary definition of hospitality is "the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers". In this way, hospitality does not differentiate between those we know or like and those we do not know or prefer. Hospitality is not judgemental and it is generous, which means it goes above and beyond what is expected. What a wonderful word and approach to how we can be with one another.

Let's look carefully at these 3 short verses in Matthew. These words about welcome or hospitality are in fact the last of the instructions that Jesus gives to his disciples. Psychologists tell us that the first and last things we hear are the ones we remember best, so perhaps Jesus is saving this important message about hospitality to the end so that his disciples do not forget! Perhaps Jesus is saying to the disciples the way they can focus on spreading the Good News of a Loving God is through their generous and abundant kindness to all. Perhaps, seeing the nervous expressions of the faces of the disciples, Jesus is reassuring them that while yes, words and theology are important, and yes, donating time and resources to the work of the Lord is important, a sincere welcome of another human being is, in fact, the fundamental way to welcome God into our lives. I hear Jesus saying in these verses that that's what it takes to spread the Gospel; a non-discriminating open, welcome, and generous living with others.

But *how* are we to show hospitality? What must we do to be hospitable? Jesus says in verse 42 that even a cup of cold water will suffice. Or maybe just an empty chair, or a red scarf, or a cup of tea is all that is needed. Hospitality does not have to be a big act. In God's economy we know that size is not understood in the same way as we understand it. Generosity is a way of being more than it is about volume or quantity.

And finally, *whom* do we welcome? Of course, everyone. But it is significant that Jesus highlights three categories of people; the prophet, the righteous one, and the little ones. These three categories of people are not always the people who are first acknowledged in our society. Prophets who are known to say things that are critical of the current system, righteous people who are sometimes thought of as inflexible because of their stubborn insistence on values and principals, and little ones who are often not even seen, are all people who get pushed to the sidelines by those who may find them inconvenient. Jesus says welcome *those* people that others may try to ignore.

But actually there's one more category of people to welcome. In verse 40, Jesus says 'whoever welcomes *you*, welcomes me.' Over the years, I know I have glossed over these words without really paying them close attention. Jesus does not say, 'who you should welcome is...' but rather, 'whoever welcomes *you*.' I've always thought of these 3 verses in Matthew as encouraging me to think about how I can *give* hospitality to others; and that's just what we have thought about in this sermon so far. Probably I have thought about hospitality in this way because of my position in society; I have relative wealth, privilege, and power as do most of those around me that I grew up with and went to church with. So, these words of Jesus have always been for me about how I, or our Christian community, should welcome those we perceive as our less fortunate neighbors.

But last week I was reading a meditation by Diane Roth in The Christian Century journal and she suggested a different take on these verses that I want to share with you as an additional way to think about Jesus' words. Roth points out that Jesus says these words to the disciples as they are about to embark on their mission, and in doing so he is saying something important about what it means to be a disciple. Jesus is reminding the disciples that they, as travelers and wanderers from place to place, will not often be the ones in the position to offer hospitality. Rather they will be the outsiders or those on the margins of society without the power to extend hospitality to others.

Perhaps Jesus is subtly instructing his disciples that a Gospel bearer is one who is on the periphery. God's ways are this radical, it seems. We need only to look around our world to know that unfortunately it is not mainstream to be generous beyond the cost-benefit equation of our modern economies, that it is not mainstream to love and care for people who are different from us, and it is not mainstream to put others before self. Of course, we wish this were not the case, but we know what our newspapers or social media tell us about human behavior. When we do hear of unexpected kindnesses they are just that; the exceptions. To be God-like or Christ-like is to be marginal, maybe the exception, but with the resolute hope that our marginal status will draw people out of the centers in society that are dominated by greed, privilege and power. Yes, to be a disciples means we should find ourselves at odds with such mainstream ways. Yes, to be Christ's disciple is to be counter-cultural.

So friends, the question given us today is this: "where are we?" Are we in that place where we're willing to proclaim with our lives Christ's Good News, even if it makes us look like odd-balls? In our scientific modern age, are we in that place that insists with hope that change, transformation, and yes, even new life is possible? The question for us today is whether we hear Jesus addressing us, too, as he did the disciples two millennia ago, when he says "whoever welcomes you." Where are we, truly, and where do we *want* to be?

Blessings to you this day that you might know God's generous abundant hospitality as you strive to share the Good News of God's welcome in your homes, your workplaces, and in your community.

Amen.

HYMN OF REFLECTION [Jesu Jesu](#)

JOYS AND CONCERNS

As you take this moment to be in prayer, you may refer to the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast.

God hears all of our prayers, both those we give words to and say aloud, and those that remain silent in our hearts.

Prayer is always available to us.

PASTORAL PRAYER

God of abundant welcome, we come before you in prayer grateful for the mystery of your presence among us and humbled by your love and mercy. We are undeserving, yet we are your children and held by you in the palm of your hand. God, we praise you and worship you this day.

God, we come before you with our prayers. Hear our prayers of joy and hear our prayers of concern and sorrow, both those spoken aloud and those kept silent in our hearts. Grant us the assurance that all of our prayers are heard by you. So, Loving Lord, we pray you will bring healing and wholeness to those who are ailing in body or soul and to those who are captive to unhealthy habits. We pray you will comfort those who are grieving the loss of loved ones, and we pray you will strengthen us that we might know how to care for each other in times of need. Help us to welcome each other into our hearts, but also give us the graciousness to accept the hospitality of others and the courage to seek out our neighbors in marginal places.

And give us joy that we can share with our neighbors, grant us forgiveness that we, too, can forgive others, and embrace us in your love that we might incarnate your love for all to see and know. In this way, permit us to be Gospel bearers. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us join together in the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to say ~

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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE ([Audio version](#))

Hear Our Prayer, O God,
Hear our prayer, O God,
Incline Thine ear to us,
And Grant us your peace.

PASTORAL BENEDICTION

Whoever welcomes you welcomes me,
Quench our thirst for love,
Satisfy our need to be known,
Assure us that we are indeed prophets of welcome.
Let us go to proclaim this peace in God's name.

CHORAL BENEDICTION [Amazing Grace](#)

Go in peace to serve God and your neighbor in love.