

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!”

July 5, 2020

Fifth Sunday of Pentecost



CALL TO WORSHIP

(Matthew 11:16-19)

Jesus says, Come to me—Everyone! When I play a joyful tune,

we'll dance!

When I sing a lament,

we'll weep!

When I chant for justice,

we'll sing along!

Amen!

OPENING HYMN [Be Thou My Vision](#) (Alternate version: [Be Thou My Vision](#))

GATHERING PRAYER

Come to us, Holy One,
And immerse us in the beauty of life with you!
Come to us, Holy One,
And enliven our community with the intensity of your love
Come to us, Holy One,
And embolden our community with the urgency
of your justice
in the name of the One who calls us to play and to work in community,
Jesus, our beloved. 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

Genesis 24:34-67 ³⁴So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. ³⁶And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. ³⁷My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; ³⁸but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.' ³⁹I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.' ⁴⁰But he said to me, 'The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and make your way successful. You shall get a wife for my son from my kindred, from my father's house. ⁴¹Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; even if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.' ⁴²"I came today to the spring, and said, 'O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! ⁴³I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink," ⁴⁴and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also" —let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son.' ⁴⁵"Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' ⁴⁶She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the

camels. ⁴⁷Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸Then I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. ⁴⁹Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left." ⁵⁰Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you anything bad or good. ⁵¹Look, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken." ⁵²When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord. ⁵³And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments.

⁵⁴Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they rose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." ⁵⁵Her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." ⁵⁶But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the Lord has made my journey successful; let me go that I may go to my master." ⁵⁷They said, "We will call the girl, and ask her." ⁵⁸And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." ⁵⁹So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes." ⁶¹Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

⁶²Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. ⁶³Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. ⁶⁴And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, ⁶⁵and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Matthew 11:25-30 ²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to

reveal him. ²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

REFLECTION

Forewarning: this is not your typical sermon! Rather, it is a reflection of my journey with the lectionary passages for this week. I hope you, too, will feel God's freedom to engage the text, to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you, and then to share with one another.

Being a Christian seems to involve two kinds of movement. One is an inward movement toward Jesus and God. It is the movement that happens deep inside our souls in response to Jesus' invitation, “come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” We have all been weary at times. We have all carried heavy burdens and we have all had moments of fatigue. Perhaps our weariness comes from concern for this country and our desire for wise leadership. Perhaps we are tired because of our efforts to speak out for what is right and fair. Perhaps we are exhausted from caring for others and from our worry about the well-being of our loved ones and our futures together. In all such moments, Jesus says, “come to me.” When we respond, we move closer to Jesus, and we move closer to God. This does not mean that it is only through pain that we can know God. But it does mean that in difficult times, Jesus is with us; we are never alone. This is the gift of a religious life.

A second kind of movement that is part of Christian living is a movement toward others. It is telling others our stories of being comforted and made whole when we have gone to Jesus and God with our heavy burdens. It is the outward movement to share, through words and actions, our experiences of God's grace, because we want all people to know that God's love is for every person. We want all people to know that God's wondrous love is universal and abundant. To be a Christian means that we share our stories, not because we are proud or satisfied with our accomplishments. No, we share our stories because when we have been weak, God has been our strength. We share our stories because God is great.

Our scripture passages for this Sunday suggest these two types of movement. In the Matthew passage Jesus invites us to move toward him and to know the peace and rest he gives. In the Genesis passage, we are given the story of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage. While marriage in our modern times can be exciting, we know that this has not always been the case. Throughout history, marriage has often been an unwelcomed burden for the bride, and preparing for a good marriage has been a heavy homework for parents across cultures. It has tired people out (!) and has often made them weary. I am

sure that Abraham also felt this burden to provide for his son by securing his marriage. And the Genesis passage tells us this story not because Abraham, or Isaac, or the servant were heroic. No, the story is told because the protagonists want others to know that *God* is great and faithful despite their hardships, and that *God* has acted in the trying moments of their lives. This story is important because it is an authentic expression of the human need for God in the midst of difficulty, and because it glorifies God for others to see. This story and our hearing of it underscore both the movement inward toward God in search of respite, and the movement outward of the faithful toward others that God's goodness might be known through their life stories.

Yes, stories are an integral part of the religious life. They hold truth even beyond the words that compose them, and they carry wisdom and the power to transform. But how shall we approach stories so that we can remain open to their riches and not be distracted by their expressions? Let me be more pointed and clear; how can we hear the stories of the Old Testament, many of which reveal an oppressive, sometimes violent, patriarchal and classist system? The answers to these questions, in fact, must be personal; they are faith statements. The answers, in fact, may be the result of laying this heavy burden at Jesus' feet.

Whenever I have thought about the story of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage, I have first felt sadness. I have felt sadness for Rebekah who leaves her family and home at a moment's notice. Overnight her life changes, and she cannot be sure if what lies before her will bring happiness or suffering. She is leaving all that she has ever known to be wed to a man she has never seen. And I have felt sadness for Rebekah's mother, who is not even mentioned in this passage and who is losing her daughter. In this story I have always felt the inequities of gender roles, and have wondered what could be the redemptive message in this story for me, a woman in the 21st century and a mother of three daughters? And so I have wrestled with this text and have tried to value it as a story told by a particular person (not Rebekah) at a particular time, many centuries removed from me. Instead of hearing stories as prescribing what my life should be now, I have tried to see them as describing how God has been experienced in certain circumstances.

This story starts by proclaiming that the Lord has greatly blessed Abraham. It starts with gratitude for God's goodness even though surely it must have seemed a great hardship to Abraham to find a suitable wife for his son while living so far from his natal people. Secondly, with the many details provided about how Abraham's servant is to know the woman that Isaac will marry, the social and cultural importance of good relationships and a good marriage at this time is underscored. In other words, the storyteller is

showing that God acts in a place that is of great significance to human beings, that God is present in the parts of life that really matter to people.

Thirdly, this story highlights Rebekah's response to Abraham's servant when he meets her at a spring of water. Verse 46 says that Rebekah quickly let down her [water] jar from her shoulder, and said, '[drink], and I will also water your camels.' Rebekah's generous hospitality is the first quality Abraham's servant tells about her, and what is noted first surely is significant. This story, then, values hospitality as a goodness and strength to be emulated. As we talked about last week, hospitality is non-discriminating and Rebekah's actions clearly show this. Abraham's servant who speaks to her is a stranger, but she is quick to give him water.

Fourthly, in this story, all of the characters exhibit faith. Surely Abraham's servant has faith such that he embarks on such an uncertain journey. But so do Bethuel, Rebekah's father, and Laban, her brother, for they acknowledge in verse 50 that what has transpired is from the Lord. This is a community of the faithful who are willing to see that God is acting in their lives. The storyteller wants the reader to know this. A community of faith is open to God working in its midst.

Finally, toward the end of this story, Rebekah does have a say in this marriage, after all. In verse 50, we learn that Rebekah's family asked her "Will you go with this man?" She said, 'I will.'" Rebekah's consent is part of this story as it is told to us. It's a seemingly small detail that might have been ignored, but it was deemed important enough to be included. Whether the woman's consent was part of the cultural tradition or unusual, including Rebekah's consent in this story highlights her agency as a child of God. Everytime, then, that this story is told, the listeners are to know that all people, regardless of gender, have a voice which is to be respected.

Though our lived realities are far different from Isaac and Rebekah's, and though we do not want the fact of patriarchy to dominate our lives as it likely did Isaac and Rebekah's, there are truths we can glean from this story that remind us of God in our lives: the importance of gratitude for God's blessings even in the midst of difficulties; the knowledge that God is present in areas of life that matter to us; the goodness of hospitality; the faith to see God acting in our lives; and, the honoring of each person's voice. When I can see that the storyteller wishes for me to know these things, then their outward movement of story sharing helps me to move inward and closer to God.

Today's two scripture passages are an odd pair, actually; one about going to Jesus with our burdens and the other about Isaac and Rebekah's marriage. But fundamentally, this

pairing points to a truth of the Christian life; we go to Jesus, and then we go to others to share how Jesus and God have touched our lives. If we read the stories of the scriptures and the stories of the many faithful throughout history and have learned more about God in some way, then we, too, are compelled to tell our stories of God in our lives. In fact, I think that is the point of the Bible stories; that we might learn of God in the lives of others that we too will want to share our own stories.

If we will say that Christianity is an historical religion, we are saying that God acts now as God did millennia ago for Isaac and Rebekah. Our stories, too, are part of God's unfolding history, and we will never know, except through faith, how our movement outward to share our story will inspire our neighbor's movement inward to answer Jesus' invitation, "come to me." We tell our stories, just as the Israelites told theirs, not because of our greatness, but because of God's greatness. We share our stories with humility to boldly reveal God's glory.

Do you have a story to tell today?

Amen.

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION [Create In Me](#)

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 mystery and God of love, speak to us in our moments of prayer. Strengthen us in our fatigue, and invite us again to lay our burdens down before you. God, forgive our weaknesses as we try to love our neighbors, and give us the courage to share our stories of your love with others. You are our Good Shepherd and we know you have, and shall always act with mercy and justice in history.

God, we pray today for the many joys you have given us.

We pray also for the sorrows in our lives that ask for your comfort and strength.

We pray for those who are sick and need healing, and we pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones.

We pray for those who are lonely and need companionship.

We pray for those who do not have home and need shelter and belonging for rest.

We pray for those who are worried and need assurance.

We pray for those who care for others, that they may have strength and patience.

We pray for those in leadership positions that they may have compassion and wisdom.

And on this Sunday, in particular, we pray for this country that we might be able to
confess where we have fallen short, and that we might have the creativity and
boldness to put our ideals into practice.

We pray for all of us who care for our earth that we can contribute to healing rather than
destruction.

We pray for your whole creation that we may all know we are one in you, you the source
of goodness, righteousness, justice, and peace.

God, we humbly open our hearts to you that we may be changed by your Holy Spirit this
day and evermore. As we move inward and closer to you, may we move outward to our
neighbors in joy and thanksgiving for You, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer.
In Jesus' 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

Go forth in peace to live into Jesus' most joyful command: Come to me!
And may we follow him into a rest that bears fruit
in justice, love and peace
for each of us, and all of us.
Amen.

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