

The First Congregational Church in Worcester

Sunday, March 16, 2025

10:00A.M.

Second Sunday in Lent

*The service of worship begins with the music of the prelude.
Through its power and brilliance, may you feel the majesty and glory of God; in its quietness, God's peace.*

Prelude

Moonlight Sonata, Movement I ~ Beethoven

Ringing of the Chimes

***Call to Worship**

Put away your hesitation to come before God;
quiet your fears and anxieties, for God welcomes us.

**God is our light and our salvation;
whom shall we fear?**

Look to the heavens for inspiration and assurance;
look around you, for God's presence is everywhere.

**God is the stronghold of our lives;
of whom shall we be afraid?**

Let us watch and wait with our Creator;
let us trust in the one who gives life and hope.

**Teach us your ways, O God,
and lead us on a level path.**

***Opening Hymn #157**

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time;
all the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me, hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
never shall the cross forsake me. Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming light and love upon my way,
from the cross the radiance streaming adds more luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, by the cross are sanctified;
peace is there that knows no measure, joys that through all time abide.

In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time;
all the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.

***Invocation**

In this place, our hearts take courage. Your goodness is all around us. The trials and cares of life are stilled before you. Show us your face, O God; let your love be known to us. We need this hour to remember who we are, to let you gather us under your wings. We need this time to feel close to one another, to recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters. We need reminders of the humanity and glory of Jesus Christ that empower our discipleship. Hear our cries and help us. Amen.

Call to Transformation

God has drawn the church into covenant, calling us to be a faithful people who walk in the ways of Christ. Yet how often do we explore what that means or examine our behavior against the example of Jesus? A time of confession gives us the opportunity to reclaim and grow in our relationship with God.

Prayer of Transformation

God of all people, we confess that we would like to claim your majesty and power for our exclusive benefit. We relish the good things of life and are reluctant to share with those who seem less deserving. We resist the prophets who point out our greed, even when we feel we are being generous. We resent persons in positions of authority over us who seem not to have our best interests at heart. We are angry about ones whose evil deeds seem to go unpunished. O God, how can we receive your mercy when we are so reluctant to pass it on? Help us to center our lives in your love more than on our own desires. Amen.

Prayer of Grace

God does not cast us off or forsake us but is with us in our suffering and adversity. Even when we live as enemies of the cross, the God of Jesus Christ does not give up on us. Surely there is shelter for us in the midst of our troubles and forgiveness when we have gone our own way. Lift up your eyes to behold God's promises. Praise God with songs and shouts of joy.

Sharing of Announcements, Celebrations and Concerns

Prayer of the Day

O God, help us to turn to you for comfort when we are afraid. We pray as Jesus taught us, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matt. 6:9-13, NIV). Amen.

Prayer Response

O Lord, Hear My Prayer

O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer,
When I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer.
O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and listen to me.

Hebrew Scripture Reading

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms 27

New Testament Reading

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Gospel Reading

Luke 13:1-35

Sermon Title

"The Courage to Continue"

Rev. Noelle Dattilo

*Hymn #83

If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee

If thou but suffer God to guide thee, and hope in God through all thy ways,
God will give strength, whate'er betide thee, and bear thee through the evil days.
Who trusts in God's unchanging love builds on the rock that naught can move.

Only be still, and wait God's leisure in cheerful hope, with heart content
to take whate'er thy Maker's pleasure and all-discerning love hath sent;
we know our inmost wants are known, for we are called to be God's own.

Sing, pray, and keep God's ways unswerving; so do thine own part faithfully,
and trust God's word; though undeserving, thou yet shalt find it true for thee.
God never yet forsook at need the soul that trusted God indeed.

Invitation to Generosity

All who find a home in the house of God are invited to extend its sheltering and serving ministry to the world. We are challenged to do this in person but also by sharing the wealth God entrusts to us. What sacrifices do we offer in the name of Jesus Christ, who risked everything for us?

Offertory

Marche Petite ~ Young

***Doxology**

Beecher

**Blest by Thee with gifts and graces, may we heed Thy churches call;
Gladly in all times and places give to Thee who giv'est all.
Thou hast brought us, and no longer can we claim to be our own.
Ever free and ever stronger, we shall serve Thee, Lord alone.**

***Prayer of Dedication**

In the confidence that you will multiply our best efforts, we bring our offerings for the work of your church in the world. Holy God, it is a joy to present our sacrifices, for we are as blessed in our giving as we have been in receiving abundant goodness from your hand. Keep us from seeking to build permanent structures that might block spontaneous responses to your love. Amen.

***Sending Hymn #218**

O Jesus, I Have Promised

O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;
be Thou forever near me, my Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle if Thou art by my side,
nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my Guide.

O let me feel Thee near me, the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me, around me and within;
but, Jesus, draw Thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised to all who follow Thee
that where Thou art in glory there shall Thy servant be;
and, Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend!

***Commission & Blessing**

Be strong and let your hearts take courage.
The God of our salvation has met us here.

Our hearts will not fear, for God is our shelter.

Our spirits are confident, for God is our shield.

God's blessings for each of us outnumber the stars.

The commonwealth of heaven is our dwelling place.

We will lift up our heads with shouts of joy

May our witness win others to God's realm.

Go on your way with Christ as your companion.

Seek opportunities for witness and service.

We find our example and inspiration in Jesus.

In the valleys of every day, we will show God's care.

Amen. Amen.

***Benediction Response**

New Britain

Depart in peace to do God's will, walk ever in the light;
For Christ is with you ever more, to guide your day and night.

Ring of the Chimes

***Postlude**

Throned Upon the Awful Tree ~ Leatherman

*** - Please stand in body or spirit**

All are welcome to join us at Coffee Hour in the parlor immediately following the service.

Please extend a warm welcome to **Rev. Noelle Dattilo**, who is officiating at our service today.