

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 19, 2020

Seventh Sunday of Pentecost



CALL TO WORSHIP

We come to celebrate God's blessings to us.

Surely God is in this place!

We come to open ourselves to God's guidance and love.

Surely God is in this place!

We come to see more clearly God's presence in our lives.

Surely God is in this place!

We come to see God in this community of seekers.

Surely God is in this place!

We come to pray, praise, and offer ourselves to God.

Surely God is in this place! Let us worship!

OPENING HYMN [My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less](#)

GATHERING PRAYER

Holy One, you know us already.
Help us to know you better.
Let us see you all around us.
Fill our worship with your Spirit
so that we may learn to recognize your presence
in all places. **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 28:10-19a Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. ¹²And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; ¹⁴and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. ¹⁵Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' ¹⁶Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!' ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

¹⁸ So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹He called that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Psalm 139:1-12

- ¹ O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
- ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
- ³ You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Romans 8:18-25 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

REFLECTION

I often marvel at architects and interior designers who can look at an empty space devoid of all structure, imagine beauty and comfort there, and then transform that vision into reality. I also marvel at entrepreneurs who see potential where I cannot, but are able to build connections and institutions that generate resources for society. But probably I marvel most at those throughout history who have stubbornly insisted that the difficult realities of the world today do not have to be tomorrow's realities as well. I think of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. who persisted in believing in a dream of a beloved community for all God's children regardless of skin color, despite the discrimination that shaped their lives. I think of Nelson Mandela, victim of Apartheid, who later became the first democratic president of South Africa; he knew that South

Africa would change. I think of Mother Teresa who saw value and potential in those that society had thrown away as useless. I think of Bishop Oscar Romero who spoke out against poverty and social injustices because he believed that a different way was possible. I think of Past President of South Korea, Kim Dae Jung, who, though prior to his presidency was sentenced to death by the military dictatorship of the time for criticizing the government, believed that democracy would eventually flourish in his country. I marvel at these people because they have seen what others claimed was not there, and they have opened our eyes that we, too, might see.

The account of Jacob in Genesis gives us another individual who saw something extraordinary, something others most likely would not have seen, in a quite ordinary situation. Jacob was going from Beer-sheba to Haran as he journeyed to his uncle Laban's home. As evening was approaching, he decided to rest for the night and chose an unspectacular looking stone to lay down his head. To put this in today's context, he got off the highway and booked a room at the closest Super 8; nothing fancy at all, but a place to shower and grab some dinner before heading out in the morning. Jacob was nowhere exotic, nowhere remarkable; he was on the road with but a stone for his pillow. But there is more, because Jacob was willing to see something amazing in that regular road stop he had chosen.

What Jacob saw was sacredness. As Jacob rested, he dreamt of God's angels and of the Lord speaking to him. Jacob heard God's promise to be with him. Though he lay by the side of the road, Jacob chose to embrace the sacredness of the moment, even though it came to him in a very ordinary place. While many of us might shrug off fantastical dreams that don't align with reality, Jacob's reaction was to trust this experience for his life going forward. When he awoke, he shouted, 'Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!' Jacob paid attention to his extraordinary meeting with God, and consecrated the dusty road side stop where it had happened with oil to make it holy. He saw that God, creator of all things and God of his ancestors, was with him in this very place of ordinariness, and it changed him! Jacob had a faith that allowed him to see what others might not.

Is there not a connection between Jacob's stone pillow and Kim Dae Jung's prison cell where Kim also knew a future for the Korean people that others could not imagine? Is there not a connection between Jacob's vision of God at a humble roadside stop and Mother Teresa's ability to see the face of God in the sufferings of the poor that she ministered to? Is there not a connection between Jacob's dream of angels and God's assurance and Martin Luther King's dream of a beloved community? Isn't the

connection an ability to see something that is not apparent with the human eye but only visible with the eye of the Spirit?

A gift of the religious life is the possibility to see beyond what is immediately before us. It is the promise to see the extraordinary even though it does not seem present in our ordinary reality. All of the people I named previously -- Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Bishop Romero, Kim Dae Jung -- were religious in this way because they chose, despite great odds, to see what was not before them. These folks understood today's passage from Romans. They understood that "we hope for what we do not see." And in their hope, their ordinary realities became infused with the amazing presence of God, which, then, transformed them. Jacob was changed, Rosa Parks and King were emboldened, Mandela was strengthened, Mother Teresa became compassionate, Romero and Kim became fearless, all because through their hope they could see the extraordinary presence of God in the ordinary, suffering of everyday life. God was there! To paraphrase Romans chapter 8 verse 24, in hope they were saved and they hoped for what others could not see. Their hope powered them to look differently at life and to consecrate their regular realities with a sacred faith, much like Jacob consecrated the place of his encounter with God with oil. Yes, in hope we are saved. But hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? We hope for what we do not see.

Yet, *how* do we do this? *How* do we hope for what we do not see and allow the extraordinary and sacred to dwell in our ordinary moments? *How* do we do this?

For these questions, I turn to the Psalms, not because they have the answers necessarily, but because they have the honesty of others who have also tried to hope in things unseen and who have also tried to find the sacred in the mundane. Yes, the Psalms give us the longings, the joys, and the failures of those who have sought out God in their regular lives. The Psalms are perhaps like diary entries; some days are glorious, others are desperate, and yet all are real reflections of journeys of faith by real people who knew God. The Psalms give glimpses of what it's like for a human being to be in relationship with God; it means praise, confession, sometimes anger or confusion, acceptance of God's glory and goodness, and above all it means honesty. The Psalms tell us that intimacy with God comes when we lay ourselves fully open. Our very honest ordinariness is where God's extraordinariness visits us. Isn't that what we hear in Psalm 139?

¹ O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

³ You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

I hear the Psalmist say in these verses, 'God, I will let you see all of my ordinary ways; my sitting, my standing, my thoughts. I lay it all before you and there you lay your amazing hand upon me. Such extraordinary knowledge is too wonderful for me!'

But the Psalmist goes on to say,

⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Again, I hear the Psalmist confess, 'God, I have shown you all of who I am and yet you are always with me! No matter where I go, whether to the farthest limits of the sea or to the place I think I am hidden, you are there with me! God you know me, the mere human being that I am, and yet your sacred presence is always with me!'

I wonder if this was also Jacob's feeling; knowing of his unspectacular second-child ordinariness yet convicted of God's amazing sacred presence in his life. I wonder if this was Rosa Parks', King's, Mandela's, Mother Teresa's, Romero's and Kim's assurance, too, that though they may be regular people, God's radical power would sustain them and also transform their societies.

How do we hope for what we do not see and allow the extraordinary and sacred to dwell in our ordinary moments? We do this by cultivating a relationship with God in our ordinary day to day lives. We don't wait until we can go on a quiet retreat, and we don't wait until we've taken care of our obligations, and we don't wait until we've cleaned up the clutter of our hearts and minds. No, we cultivate a relationship with God today, a regular day. We cultivate a relationship that is honest and does not hide our disappointments and failures. We cultivate an intimacy with God on a regular basis, even amid the busy-ness of life, as surely the Psalmists did, and as surely Jacob,

Parks, King, Mandela, Mother Teresa, Romero and Kim did also. And then, we let our heartfelt cries clear our eyes that, with hope, we might see what usually, and regularly we and others cannot see. And what we will see with hope does not have to be on a grand scale; it does not have to be something that will save the world, though this is possible! Perhaps what we will see in friends or family members who now suffer from dementia or other difficult illnesses is their whole value and beauty as people who have indeed changed our own lives. We will be able to see their extraordinariness even though currently it appears hidden to others. Perhaps we will see the vast impact a young person will have in the future though at the moment they suffer from anxiety and uncertainty. Perhaps we will see a racially just world for our future, even though racism is rampant now. With hope in God with whom we have an intimate relationship, we will see beyond, beneath, and above present realities. With hope in God, whose spirit we can never flee from, even when we make our bed in Sheol, we will see the extraordinary inbreaking into our ordinary lives of all God's goodness and power.

How do we hope for what we do not see and allow the extraordinary and sacred to dwell in our ordinary moments? We start today, a regular day, July 19th, by opening ourselves in all honesty to the almighty, all merciful God. And with this God, we shall know that today is made new, and our eyes shall be opened.

Amen.

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION [Surely The Presence Of The Lord In This Place](#)

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 all creation, whose power is almighty yet dwells in our hearts, surely, you are present here with us in this moment of prayer. You have gathered us today to worship and to know the strength of community. We are grateful. Lord, you have given us the gift of hope that we might see above, beyond, and beneath our world's realities to a new tomorrow. You open our hearts that we might yearn for your Kingdom of peace and justice, and you open our souls that we may know the joy and freedom of living in relationship with you. Lord, we are grateful.

God, much is happening in our lives and in our world, and we lay before you all of our joys and all of our concerns. Hear our prayer, O God, that we might know we are never alone and that we might know in your love we have life abundant and everlasting.

Merciful God, we bring before you today our prayers for family and friends that your presence may be real to them.

We pray also for those who are sick, lonely, or frightened that your healing hand may be upon them.

We pray for those who struggle for basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, health care that our society might be more equitable and fair.

And, we pray for those who dare to dream for righteousness and for those who courageously resist the evils of this world. God, let us be these people, and let us know you walk with us on our journey of faith.

We pray with sincerity and gratitude for today is the day You have made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!

In Christ's name, 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

God's spirit is always with you.

Wherever we go, God is there!

If you ascend to heaven,

God is there.

If you settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

God is there.

In all places, God holds you fast.
May you know deeply the presence of God *today*:
Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit.
Go with God. Amen.

CHORAL POSTLUDE [Nearer My God To Thee](#)

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

*Liturgy from ucc.org Worship Ways.