

Living Table United Church of Christ
March 22, 2020 • Fourth Sunday in Lent

Prelude

Gathering Song

“Put On Love”

1. Holy beloved friends of God, may peace be yours this day.
May faith shine bright, may hope fill the night all along your way.

Refrain: Put on love, it binds all things together.

Put on love in perfect unity.

Put on love; wear it for each other; for each other, put on love.

2. Fill your cup with kindness. Let patience overflow
Like a stream of gentle ever-living water everywhere you go.

Refrain

3. Let compassion be your guide. Then walk together side by side
on an earth forgiven, ever forgiving, faithful to the end.

Refrain

Silent Reflection

Call to Worship

“See, I Am Near”

1. See, I am near, says the Lord. See, I make all things new. O. O.

Gathering Prayer

Holy One, you have seen your people through crisis before. You have witnessed humanity’s defeats and triumphs through the centuries. Be with us now. As we gather in new ways to worship you and strengthen community, move in and among us. Calm our fears. Strengthen us with your grace. Hear our words of prayer and praise, and renew in us courage and faith that we may face the coming days with loving-kindness. Amen.

Welcome & Announcements

Acknowledging Our Need for God

One: Jesus told his disciples to avoid a public display with their prayers.

All: It must have been hard for them to go without affirmation for their faith-filled words. We might be like them. We might be tempted to use different words when we know others might be listening.

One: On our inclination to use words or actions simply to impress others,

All: God, have mercy.

One: Jesus also told his disciples to avoid empty praise and be concise when praying.

All: They probably wanted to use many words and skip over the deep longings of their hearts. We might be like them. It is often easier to speak half-hearted words of praise than to find the words for our deepest concerns.

One: On our frequent failure to be still and let the needed words come to us,

All: God, have mercy.

One: Jesus also pointed out to his disciples to pray for their needs and the needs of their neighbors – for basic needs, for forgiveness, for keeping evil at a distance.

All: The disciples likely found it hard to balance prayers for themselves with prayers for their neighbors. Praying for their needs and their neighbors, as well as for forgiveness, and keeping to what is good, was often a struggle for them. We might be like them. It is hard for us to find words for prayer. We tell ourselves that we don't know how to pray or what to pray. Instead of focusing on what is needful, we sometimes avoid prayer altogether.

One: On our reluctance to trust in the power of prayer in all its forms,

All: God, have mercy.

Moment of Silent Reflection

Words of Promise

One: The way of Christ is the way of Love.

All: We are God's beloved.

God's love persists through all things, even when we forget.

One: The way of Christ is the way of forgiveness.

All: We are loved. We are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

Sung Response

"It Is Well" (Refrain)

Refrain: It is well (it is well) with my soul (with my soul), It is well, it is well with my soul.

We Share the Peace

Song of Centering

"Stepping In"

Refrain: There is a prayer like a wide river, it never ends, does not begin.

Around the world it's always flowing, and I am stepping in,
we are stepping in.

Refrain

1. We are praying with those in distant places,
different languages and faces every hour of the day.
And we are praying with enemies and strangers, in gratitude, in danger,
calling God's ten thousand names.

Refrain

2. We are praying with those who've gone before us,
that great ancestral chorus we are joining as we sing.
And we are praying with heroines and heroes,
Moses, Mary and Romero, yes, and Martin Luther King.

Refrain

Children's Sermon

Thoughts of the People

“The Lord’s Prayer,” Rachael Keefe

a model of prayer meant to be a guide
has become the mark of Christians everywhere
across denomination, sect, and culture
these words are part of worship—
public and private

we may be bold to say them
especially when we aren’t listening
we are asking for more than we know

fortunately for us
God pays more attention
and has yet to answer this prayer in full
the Kindom has not yet arrived on earth
when we encounter trial and evil

we are not left alone
nor are we held to the measure of forgiveness
we are forgiven even when we hold grudges

maybe we should be more mindful
of the lesson Jesus intended
to offer a prayer that honors God
and asks honestly for what is needed
recognizing our limitations
knowing God has none

then we should pray with intention
to the One who hears our prayers
and answers them

Matthew 6:5-15

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Abba who is in secret; and your Abba who sees in secret will reward you.

“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Abba knows what you need before you ask.

“Pray then in this way:

Our Abba in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Abba will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Abba forgive your trespasses.

Message

Sermon on the Mount: Who Can Pray
Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe

Litany of Reflection

One: We are God's people.

All: God is a God of life and love.

One: We offer God gratitude and praise.

All: We are asked to be authentic in our words of prayer and praise.

One: We recognize that God is God and we are not.

All: We know that God's ways are better than ours and we seek to bring the Realm of God into the world.

One: When we pray for our neighbors and ourselves, simple and true words are best.

All: We will pray for our neighbors and for ourselves, asking for basic needs to be met and for forgiveness to be given and received.

One: Our prayers are important in this time of crisis, and in all times and places.

All: We will pray with the thoughts and words that come to mind, for ourselves and for all our neighbors.

One: We will remember that God is good, and only the ways of love are the ways of God.

All: We will pray that God's goodness and love fill the world.

Prayers of the People

Holy One, we open our hearts and lives to you; receive our prayers.

Silent Prayer

Prayer of Jesus

Translation from Aramaic by Neil Douglas-Klotz

O Birther! Father- Mother of the Cosmos,
Focus your light within us – make it useful.
Create your reign of unity now-
through our fiery hearts and willing hands.
Help us love beyond our ideals
and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.
Animate the earth within us: we then

feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.
Untangle the knots within
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.
Don't let surface things delude us,
But free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.
Out of you, the astonishing fire,
Returning light and sound to the cosmos.
Amen.

Offering

Offertory

Presentation of Gifts

"That We May Be Filled"

Not as we ought but as we are able, we offer our thanks as we come to your table.
Through Word and Spirit bless us; through bread and wine refresh us
that we may be filled, that we may be filled with love.

The Great Thanksgiving

One: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to God.

One: Let us give our thanks to the Holy One.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

One: It is a right, good, and a joyful thing always and everywhere to give you our thanks, to you, O God, who created all that is and all that ever shall be. (...) we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Song of Praise

"Sanctus (Psallite Mass)"

Holy, holy, holy. Holy, holy, holy. Hosanna, hosanna in the highest!

We Remember

One: God who meets us in the wilderness, in the desert, in the places we fear to go, we remember your abiding presence. (...) saying, "Take and eat. This is my body broken for you."

All: As we eat this bread, we remember God's covenant of love and renew our promise to see Christ in ourselves and in all our neighbors.

One: When all had eaten, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to his disciples saying, "Take and drink for this is the cup of the new covenant poured out for you."

All: As we fill this cup, we remember God's covenant of love and renew our promise to live lives of loving-kindness.

One: Let us pray:

All: Holy Spirit, come! Make all things new. Bless this bread which you have given and human hands have made. Let it become for us the bread of life. Bless also this cup,

fruit of the vine and work of human hands. Let it become for us the cup of liberation.

Bless us also who eat and drink, that in this sharing we may know the living Christ who is with us now and to the end of the age. Nourish us by these gifts to be willing servants of your world until your realm comes and every creature beholds it. Amen.

Communion Invitation

“Ubi Caritas”

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

Communion Song

“To Be Loved this Way”

If it's true you love me as I am, and not as I think I should be,
then I'm free to face the parts of me I'm tempted to deny.

God you know all my laughter and all of my tears,
you know where I've been and you know why I'm here,
and you know it heals my deepest wounds to be loved this way.

If it's true you love us as we are, and not as we think we should be,
then we're free to trust the Mystery and love beyond all fear.

God you know all our laughter and all of our tears,
you know where we've been and you know why we're here,
and you know it heals our deepest wounds to be loved this way.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of all people and places, thank you that we can come together for worship and come to your table in new and creative ways. We give you thanks for the nourishment of this community and of your table. Strengthen us for the days to come and keep us mindful that we are your body even when we are scattered. In gratitude for you love and your grace, we pray. Amen.

Sending Forth

Psalm 5

Refrain: Lead me, O God, in your righteousness.

Give ear to my words, O God;
give heed to my sighing.

Listen to the sound of my cry,
my Sovereign and my God, for to you I pray.

O God, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you. (Refrain)

The boastful will not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.

You destroy those who speak lies;
God abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.

But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your hold temple in awe of you.

Lead me, O God, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me. (Refrain)

Benediction

Postlude