

Eastminster Presbyterian Church  
SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY  
16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

September 20, 2020-11:00 a.m.

## GATHERING AROUND GOD'S WORD

### GREETING

**Almighty and merciful God, your Son Jesus Christ has taught us that what we do for those in need we also do for him. As he became the servant of all, help us to be a servant to others. For he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

Hear these words of invitation from our Lord: Welcome to the joyful, may you be able to share that joy. Welcome to the tired and weary, may you find rest. Welcome to the lonely, may you find community. Welcome to the sick, may you find healing. Welcome to those who mourn, may you find comfort. Welcome to friends, neighbors and guests, may you find safety. Welcome to all, for the God who delights in all creation, the Lord who offers us salvation; and the Spirit who unites our hearts is with us!

A word of thanksgiving for all who continue to make virtual worship a reality, as we continue to pray for that time when we can meet together again. Last week our hearts were warmed with words of worship from the Kelleher family. Elizabeth, Ian and Vivian, thank you for making our worship experience more joyful. This week, we say thank you to Vicki Cook as she offers her gifts of worship leadership for us. Fred continues to work technological wonders in a world where, not only is the virus disrupting life, so too is the internet and computers. Thank you Fred for your perseverance. Chandra and Tony, thank you for providing the means of worshiping through email, mail, Facebook and our website. If people want to worship, they certainly have choices.

In our prayers today, keep:

the Whitley family as they celebrated Mary's life this past week and as they move forward, grieving, but most certainly, hoping.

Janet Muller as she recovers from a back and neck procedure; may she find relief from pain.

Will Nixon, as he and Gail, and the medical team continues to determine all of the issues Will is facing and discern the next steps in his care.

Harry Karlen who was admitted to Baylor early Wednesday morning. On Monday, the 21<sup>st</sup>, he will have surgery for stomach-related issues, and treatment for pancreatitis.

Darlene West as she prepares for a heart catherization on Thursday, September 24. Three arteries, including the LAD are blocked. Stents will be used for the surgery unless the blockage is 70% or greater. In that case, bypass surgery will be scheduled for a later date.

As always, our hearts remain wrap around prayers for all of God's people experiencing suffering, whether that be from this virus, other illnesses, from the destructive force of nature, from violence, greed, hatred and any human effort that seeks to destroy the goodness our God has placed within us all. We keep our leaders, our city, our country, our world in prayer, asking that God wake us up to the need to be on our knees in thanksgiving for what we do have, not what we don't. And we pray for Christ's church universal, and for Eastminster. May what we do, however small or large in these times of craziness, be done out of faithfulness to our faithful Lord and with the love of the Lord.

## PSALM OF PRAISE (Psalm 105)

Let us sing about the holiness of God's name, and tell of God's wonderful works. With grateful hearts, we rejoice in the great deeds of God. The people of old knew God's presence in cloud and fire, but we celebrate the presence of God -with -us in Jesus Christ. With grateful hearts, we sing and tell of these great deeds of God.

VOLUNTARY

*Wachet Auf (Awake)*  
*Melody Davis*

J.S. Bach

\*OPENING HYMN 41 *O Worship the King*

## CALL TO CONFESSION

We often believe that we must earn our way into God's heart. But God's grace is given to each of us, for all of us, freely, unconditionally, and always. Let us open our lives to this mercy as we pray saying

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Merciful God, the story of the landowner and the workers turns our ideas about fairness upside down. Forgive us when we measure the behavior of others against that of ourselves rather than measuring our behavior against yours. Your divine generosity astounds us and calls into question our values and our selfishness. Open our eyes to see beyond our own needs, and unclench our hands to share what we have with those in need. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

## ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

This is the good news: there is no ranking in God's kingdom. God graces everyone with the same gifts: mercy, restoration, and new life. God has kept the covenant; we have been forgiven, we have been made new people. Thanks be to God. Amen.

RESPONSE 582 "Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me"

## PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy Spirit, through your everlasting Word teach us how to live according to God's will and way. Hear our prayer. Amen.

### EPISTLE READING (*Pew Bible, page 62*)

Philippians 1: 21-30

*In the 1 chapter of Philippians, Paul is writing from prison, and without knowing what comes next, he boldly declares that to live is Christ, to die is gain. In other words, no matter what his future holds, he is going to continue to proclaim the good news of God's love in Christ. Because of his faith, neither prison nor death frighten him. From his cell he continues to encourage the Philippians in their ministry and mission. Listen as Paul shares his faith statement.*

<sup>21</sup> For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; <sup>24</sup> but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup> Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup> so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

<sup>27</sup> Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. <sup>29</sup> For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— <sup>30</sup> since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

ANTHEM

*My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness*  
*Sanctuary Choir*

Heather Sorenson

NEW TESTAMENT READING (*Pew Bible, page 21*)

Matthew 20: 1-16

*Hear the story of the vineyard workers as we might hear it in our day from Matthew's gospel, the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter, verses 1-16. For the kingdom of heaven is like....*

On the surface, this is like a story we might hear on any corner in Dallas. A man has a business, in this case, a vineyard, and inclement weather necessitates that the grapes be harvested right now, today or they'll just rot on the vines. Out at the crack of dawn, he finds some willing workers and quotes a wage for their labor. In spite of their best efforts, these early-rising pickers can't pick fast enough, so the vineyard owner, at all hours of the day...at 9 and noon and 3 and even near the close of a typical work day...he keeps hiring workers. Of course, these day laborers aren't quite the go-getters as those who woke at the crack of dawn eager to work for a good day's wage. So, while this 9 o'clock work and noon and beyond are taking place, those original workers have been at it for 12 hours already. With so much work left, the owner is willing to hire a few guys who can only work for an hour or so, and well, to them, they could put up with an hour of anything.

Most of us, I dare say, question their work ethic or lack of, and are honestly already put out with the laborers...even as many times as we've heard this parable. And about here in the story is where Jesus takes an annoying story to those with high work standards and just blows the top off it. He tells us the last ones hired are the first ones paid. And, the gut-busting, early-rising, hard-working folk...well, they have to stand in line and wait while the short-timers take their money and run. Talk about adding a one, two punch to the story. Everyone gets the same pay! And that's when the anger monster reared its ugly head. Any fair-minded person would have assumed that, payment would have been by the hour, watching these others start the harvest process at all hours of the day. You work all day, you expect a good day's pay. Someone else works part of a day, you expect they will earn a part-day wage. That's fair. Period.

As the money is being distributed, the complaining starts. Can you believe this? How dare that vineyard owner. There's nothing fair about this.

With an ear to the ground, the owner hears the grumbling and speaks up: There's no cheating going on here. You were paid the amount you contracted for at the rise of the sun. Even with all your long hours, you gained, not lost. And, after all, it is my money and if a generous heart is what I chose, so be it! This is the Word of the Lord!

\*HYMN 724 *O Jesus I Have Promised*

SERMON

*The Fairest in All the Land*

Sherry Holloman

### RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

from *We Believe*

**We believe and know that Jesus is the Holy One of God. We believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world. We believe that he is in the Father and the Father is in him. We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we have life in his name. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, so often we see others as more fortunate than ourselves, as getting more for what they do, as more beloved. Teach us in your time how your love is much more than just fair. Teach us how it is a special caring for each and every one of us, tailored just for our own size and shape, no matter what riches others may have, or how many prizes, or how full of fame. Your love comes first and is so much better than all that and completely unearned. We thank you for that. We thank you for providing for us, for calling us to labor in your

vineyard, for the bread from heaven that feeds us today and for the promise of how you will spread your table for us in the promised land and will forever provide bread without price and wine without cost.

Thank you, gracious God, for always giving us much, much more than we can earn or ever deserve. Contrasted with our often calculated way of doing business with one another, your love towards us seems reckless, extravagant, and unbelievable gracious. Forgive us when we consider all of this our right rather than as your gift. Forgive us too when we have resented the love you show towards others who have not served you as long as us. Forgive us when we have been angry because you have brought joy to others whom we think greater sinners than we. Forgive us when we have measured our worth rather than rejoiced in your mercy.

You call us to work in your vineyard, to reach out to others in your name and bring your healing word, your gentle touch, your embracing love to them. Help us to be good workers, ones that seek the lost in the market places and village squares; ones who are unafraid to see in a stranger the image of Christ, and in a sinner a brother or sister for whom he died and rose again. Empower us as individuals and as a church to be the kind of ambassadors who know and do your will, so that in meeting us people meet you.

Lord, hear our prayers for our family and our friends, for our church, our community, and our world.

All these things we pray in the name of Christ Jesus, the joy of heaven to earth come down; he who is our life and our hope, our daily bread, and our rock and our refuge, saying...**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

#### OFFERTORY SENTENCE

May our gifts be evidence of our desire to follow Jesus, and a turning away from all that hinders our discipleship. Let us receive God's tithes and our offerings

#### PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

#### OFFERTORY

*Just A Closer Walk  
The River*

\*RESPONSE 605 *Praise to God the Father*

#### \*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

God, as we toil in the fields, we too grumble as others seem to have more than they have earned. Help us understand the tremendous generosity that we have enjoyed through your blessings, and guide us in learning how we can share that generosity in a hurting world. Amen.

### **GOING INTO THE WORLD WITH GOD'S WORD**

#### \* INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP AND BENEDICTION

Accepting the mercy of God means consciously changing our way of thinking. It requires us to realize that the One who is the Creator has love for all. May we allow ourselves to be renewed and let mercy flow through us into others.

May we be renewed by God's mercy, transformed by Jesus' love and made agents of mercy as channels through which our Triune God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish. Amen

\*CLOSING HYMN 450 *Be Thou My Vision*