

WORSHIP ON THE LORD'S DAY

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
JUNE 21, 2020



HAGAR & ISHMAEL

LYONS-MUIR CHURCH
...transforming community

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ORDER OF WORSHIP

Call to Worship

Deuteronomy 6: 4-5

Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God,

The LORD is One.

We will love the LORD our God

with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might!

Let us pray:

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desire known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Opening Song

“I Am”

LMC Praise Band

There's no space that His love can't reach
There's no place that we can't find peace
There's no end to Amazing Grace

Love like this, oh my God to find!
I am overwhelmed what a joy divine!
Love like this sets our hearts on fire!

Take me in with your arms spread wide
Take me in like an orphan child
Never let go, never leave my side

[Chorus]

This is my resurrection song
This is my Hallelujah come
This is why to You I run

I am...Holding on to You
In the middle of the storm
I am holding on... I am!

[Chorus]

Songwriters: Ed Cash & David Crowder

Greeting & Announcements

- Noisy Sunday: gifts go to Zion Food Pantry -- place your gift in the steel bucket in the entryway.
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8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. 10 So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." 11 The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. 13 As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." 14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. 18 Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

20 God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. 21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

The Word of the LORD.
Thanks be to God.

Homily**"In the End"**

Recently, as anyone might expect, church leaders have been making public statements in response to the tragic events which have unfolded in our country over the past 3 months. One set of leaders in the United Methodist Church is the Council of General Secretaries for our denominational Boards and Agencies. These include:

- the general board of church and society
- the general board of global ministries
- the general board of higher education and ministry
- discipleship ministries
- the general commission on religion and race
- the United Methodist publishing house... and several others

On Tuesday, June 16th, the heads of these global agencies issued a joint statement about racism in our country and in our church, the beginning of which I will read to you now:

Along with leaders across the church, the General Secretaries of the boards and agencies of The United Methodist Church mark this moment as a time to recommit to urgent action to dismantle racism in the United States and in the church. The recent and callous killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery – while the nation is already reeling from the disproportionate death rates of African Americans and Native Americans from COVID-19 – have rightly sparked anger, lament, protest, and calls for action and reflection. We write to express our own anger, pain, and determination to make change in our own spheres of influence, and to support the church in the urgent and ongoing work to eliminate racism.¹

Here are some words and phrases that jump out at me in this statement:

- George
- Breonna
- Ahmaud
- mark this moment
- disproportionate death rates
- urgent action
- anger
- pain
- determination to make change

Now, I don't know for sure what any of you feel as I read these names or this statement. I don't know which news sources you follow; and I don't know what you feel as you watch and read and listen. I haven't had a chance to speak with many of you individually, nor have we been able to gather as a congregation for an open discussion. So in my ignorance of how your feeling, I'm not going to make assumptions, or pass judgment, or say one way of feeling is right and another wrong. But what I can do.. and will do... is to take the risk of telling you truthfully how *I* feel, and what I think the scriptures offer us today in the way of both challenge and hope.

I confess that I'm experiencing anger. I'm angry that most White Americans either refuse or have a hard time believing that Americans who are Black and Brown are discriminated against in every facet of daily life and legitimately afraid for their lives when they leave their homes.

I confess that I'm experiencing grief. I'm heartbroken that it takes a global tragedy for the United Methodist Church, and other Christian denominations, to finally take a more forceful stand on the side of those who are wrongfully oppressed. I'm heartbroken that we haven't noticed yet the full significance of the fact that the Roman Cross on which Jesus was hung is exactly like the lynching

¹ <https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/general-secretaries-table-statement-on-racism-1057>

tree of White Supremacy. I'm heartbroken that the brutality of the world has not yet converted us to the path of Christ's love.

I confess that I'm experiencing fear. I'm afraid that as I tell the truth about how I feel, the people who can't understand or won't listen or disagree with me will begin to hate me, or back-stab me, or... worst... write me off and forget about me. I'm also afraid that if I don't tell the truth about how I really feel, I won't be able to live with myself or proclaim the Good News of God's justice: the Gospel concerning HIS Son.

I confess that I'm experiencing disbelief. I can't believe that we as a people... as a nation... refuse to unite as one and take seriously the recommendations of doctors whose whole lives have been spent getting ready for this moment. I can't believe that the death of 115,000 Americans is something that anyone would turn into a political issue.

So... take a moment.... think about what you would say to me if you were going to tell me how you feel.

Now... bring all of that emotion to the reading of the scriptures.

I want you to notice two things in the scripture today. First, it is Sarah's jealous lust for power and wealth that ruins the lives around her. Second, God overcomes the result of Sarah's prejudice not by ruining her life, but by raising up the ones she has oppressed. Here is both challenge and hope.

To the first point then: Sarah's jealousy and greed. By the time Abraham is 102 years old, the LORD has blessed him with great wealth and possession, and no one in his household lacks a thing. Nevertheless, Sarah imagines a competition between the two boys Ishmael and Isaac. Perhaps because Ishmael is the elder son, she imagines that he will take precedence when Abraham divides his household. But all of this anxiety and animosity are only in Sarah's imagination. Abraham clearly loves both of his sons, and could easily make Isaac the head of his household without forcing Hagar and Ishmael into abject poverty. At this moment in Abraham's life, there was plenty to go around. But Sarah wants it all for her son, and does not want to concede a farthing to the child of her slave. So a family is torn apart by the superiority complex, greed, jealousy, and fear of a person who has imagined that the wealth of one boy requires the poverty of the other.

In this we find the challenge of the scriptures: Hoarding wealth and power is the problem with humanity - period. And in our country, then... which demographic has hoarded power and wealth? In our country, which demographic has been the slave? My brothers and sister in Christ, if we find ourselves in the story today, it can only be because we identify with the sinful lust of Sarah for power and wealth and position.

How does this make you feel?

What do you feel as Abraham weeps as a partner and son that he loves are torn from his life...

What do you feel as you imagine the moment when two little boys are ripped apart in the middle of their play...

What do you feel as you imagine a young boy crying tears of desperate thirst under a scrub tree...

What do you feel as you imagine a mother weeping tears of agony as she waits helplessly for the death of her child...

What do you feel as you realize that White Americans have done this kind of thing to Native and Black Americans for the last 400 years, right up to the present moment?

What might you feel if you admitted that even if you're not personally prejudiced, all White people have benefitted from the racist economic and political systems that abuse and oppress People of Color?

Finally.... what do you feel when you reflect on the scriptures and realize that God is willing and able to turn all of this around?

And so to the second point: God overcomes the result of Sarah's prejudice not by ruining her life, but by raising up the ones she has oppressed. The injustice of the Hagar story is absolutely galling. But God takes the results of Sarah's jealousy and greed and uses all that grief to give life to another great people. The God of Abraham is the God of all people, and God hears the tears of all His children, coming to His beloved with compassion and hope in the midst of their grief and pain. Notice very carefully that God's special covenant with Abraham doesn't prevent God from loving others equally. To be sure, Ishmael and Isaac are different, and will serve different parts of the Divine plan... but both are loved *equally* in their difference. Let us learn from this that personal and communal agency and wealth are not evil in and of themselves, it's just that self-determination and flourishing life remain the birth right of every person and people. In the economy of God's justice and mercy, no one is permitted to be secure and rich in ways that cause others to be insecure and poor.

This realization should give us pause and help us believe in our time that White folks don't have to become poor and vulnerable for folks of Color to be freed from poverty and danger. There's more than enough to go around. Enough wealth... Enough land... Enough healthcare... Enough food... Enough seats in Congress... We just have to get over the idea that some people are rich and powerful because God loves them more. Can you get over that idea? The idea that White America controls vast power and wealth because God preferred us over others? There are pastors who still preach this heresy today! And this idea is imbedded in the Puritan psychology of White American Exceptionalism. So let me ask you again: can you get over the idea that if some people are rich and powerful at the expense of others, it's because God loves them more and wants it this way?

Whatever you may answer to this question, I need to leave you today with the strong notion that God's equal and unconditional love for all people - including you and me - is the commulative message of the whole scripture. This is what it means for God to be Father - which we would do

well to remember on this Father's Day. And this Divine Love for everyone isn't going away, no matter how much humanity ignores it or opposes it. I will never stop loving my child Elliott, even if the unthinkable happens and he someday stops loving me.

This divine and unconditional love, revealed in the story of Hagar and Ishmael, is the same love which became incarnate in Jesus Christ. And God's love for every person will triumph in the end, when the Lord comes to judge the nations. God is guiding the history of time and space toward the flourishing of all Creation, and no Evil or human sinfulness can finally stand in God's way. For when Death itself is destroyed by the power of the Living Word, the Almighty God must finally be all in all. This is both a challenge and a relief. A challenge because God's love calls us to account for the ways we have forsaken the call of Christ personify this New Creation as he did. A relief because God's love tells us that our long obedience will be done in the strength of God's Word and Holy Spirit and not our own.

I wasn't sure how you felt about all these things before I started preaching, and I still don't know. But I hope that, no matter what you feel, you trust that I'll listen to you as your pastor if you want and choose to tell me. And I hope you know how much I love you, and how much I believe in the sincerity of your faith and your desire to serve the Lord. And I hope that you'll walk with me as we try to understand how to participate together with Christ in his ministry of reconciliation. May the Spirit of Life and Truth give us grace for the living of these days. Amen.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Christ's Invitation, Our Confession

All Standing.

Christ our Lord invites to his Table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin, and who seek to live in love and charity as he has loved us. Therefore, let us make our fervent and humble confession before God and one another:

All begin in silent prayer.

Merciful God... we speak aloud the truth that we have sinned in our thoughts, words, and deeds by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry, and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us: that we may delight in your will and walk in your way, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Jesus said, "Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Dear sisters and brothers, do not doubt but believe: all who call upon the Name of the LORD, who turn to HIM in spirit and in truth, will perceive and possess the blessings of forgiveness and

reconciliation. Therefore I say to you that in Jesus Christ, you are a new creation: heirs of salvation according to the promise.

**Praise God, from whom all life is born;
Praise God, who first pronounced the dawn;
Praise God, the Unbegotten One:
Creator, Spirit, and the Son!**

The Great Thanksgiving

May the everlasting peace of the LORD be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the LORD.

Let us give thanks to the LORD our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. Therefore with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your Name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy LORD, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!
Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the LORD.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Please be seated.

Holy are you, O God, and blessed is your Incarnate Word: Jesus, the Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people from their sins. Thus he revealed your reign of righteousness, becoming poor, and captive, and oppressed:

he was rejected by the people of his home because he favored them not above others;
he was chastised and ridiculed for eating and drinking with sinners and outcasts;
he was condemned for healing and feeding those in need on the Sabbath;
he had no place to lay his head;
he called out the injustice and falsehood of a religion that is polished on the outside,

but foul and full of malice on the inside;
he gave life to the dead, healing to the sick, and forgiveness to the sinner,
and for this they blasphemed the Holy Spirit and sought his life, to take it away;
he came to his own,
and his own gave him over to the Cross:

Yet through his Resurrection, most merciful Creator, you claimed him from Death and Nothingness, hid the eternal life of the Creation in his, and poured out your Spirit upon all who loved him: to be free from Sin and to proclaim his eternal life as a means of repentance and grace for all peoples.

Now in the strength of that New Covenant, being born of water and the Spirit, we call fully to mind the means which Christ gave to fulfill the great promise of his Ascension, to be with us always to the end of the age:

That on the night in which he was betrayed to his death,
Jesus took bread,
gave thanks to you,
broke the bread,
gave it to his disciples and said,
“Take, eat; this is my Body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

And that, likewise, after the Supper was finished,
Jesus took the Cup,
gave thanks to you,
gave it to his disciples, and said,
“Drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of the new covenant in my Blood poured out for you, and for any who will receive it, for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Now, therefore, we beg you, O God:
let no difficulty prevent us from the celebration of your saving love;
cleansing our hearts, that no striving be thought to dear
to enter into Holy Communion with him;
strengthen us, that no inconvenience, or jealousy, or greed redirect our thoughts
from the living of our faith:

Christ was lynched and died upon the Cross.

Christ was raised from the dead by the Spirit of Life.

Christ ascended to confront Evil in the heavenly places.

Christ calls his Body, the Church to confront Evil in time and space.

Christ will come to judge the living and the dead!

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the Body and Blood of Christ, that we might be for the world the Body of Christ redeemed by his Blood. By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever. **Amen!**

By the gift and power of the Spirit, the bread that each of us holds is a sharing in the Body of Christ: Feed on his grace in your heart with thanksgiving.

All take the bread together.

And by that same gift and power, the cup to which each of us clings is a sharing in the Blood of Christ: May he wash away all our sins and keep us unto everlasting life.

All take the cup together.

*All join in a time of silent meditation on the Presence of God.
From this Silence are begotten the prayers of the righteous:*

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

We pray for those in special need at this time, lifting them to the Lord in spoken and unspoken prayers:
All are invited to name those in need of prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of the sheep... you gather the lambs in your arms and carry them in your bosom: We commend to your loving care all who are sick, or dying, or in any kind of trouble. Relieve their pain, quiet their hearts and minds, and – if it be your will – and raise them up to a life of service in your love. And to those who tend their needs, give courage and hope. Hear us, we pray, O Lord. for the sake of your Holy Name. Amen.

We pray for our nation, our leaders, the wounds of slavery which continue to ruin our life together, and the hope of reconciliation:
All join in silent prayer.

O God, you made human kind in your own image... and came to redeem us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family and the peoples of these United States; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in the bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish

your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may see and understand that all are one in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1182-1226)

Lord, make us instruments of your peace:
where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we
are born to eternal life. Amen.

Closing Song

“What a Friend”
LMC Praise Band

Everybody has trials and temptations
Everybody knows heart break, isolation
But we can lay our burdens down

What a friend we have in Jesus
East to west my sins are gone
I see grace on every horizon
And forever and ever His heart is my home

[Chorus]

No more betrayal, for He is faithful
He fills me up and my cup runneth over
No more betrayal, for He is faithful
How He has proven it over and over

[Chorus]

Everybody has fears, everybody got worries
Everybody knows sorrow, devastation
But we can lay our burdens down

Songwriters: Matt Maher, Adam Palmer,
Matthew Hein & Abbie Parker

Closing Prayer & Benediction

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the Cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the experience and joy of your grace; that God may be all in all. Amen.

May the LORD bless you and keep you.
May the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
May the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Amen.