



Johnsville United Methodist Church

Union Bridge, MD

Our mission is to nurture the members of the congregation in developing a personal relationship with God and to share His word and His love with the larger community.

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION

Lent 5 - March 21, 2021

PRELUDE

“Change My Heart, O God” (Espinosa)

WELCOME

Opening Hymn

“This Is a Day of New Beginnings”

UMH 383

1. This is a day of new beginnings,
time to remember and move on,
time to believe what love is bringing,
laying to rest the pain that's gone.
2. For by the life and death of Jesus,
God's mighty Spirit, now as then,
can make for us a world of difference,
As faith and hope are born again.
3. Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
step from the past and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
seeking new paths, and sure to find.
4. Christ is alive, and goes before us
to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
Our God is making all things new.
5. In faith we'll gather round the table
to taste and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
our God is making all things new.

Call to Worship: (*Jeremiah 31, Psalm 51:10-12*)

Leader: God is here to wash away all defilement; cry out with the psalmist:

People: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me."

Leader: Christ is here to lead us back to the ways of life; call out your petition:

People: "Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."

Leader: The Spirit is here to renew and revive our souls; reach for God with all your strength:

People: "Restore to me the joy of my salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

Opening Prayer (*Jeremiah 31, Psalm 51:10-11*)

Renew us, Lord. Cleanse us from our sin and we will be whiter than snow. Write your law on our hearts and take away our excuses, our feeble protestations that we know not what we do. Help us stand in your presence, as women and men who walk gently upon the earth and speak lovingly with one another. We yearn for the time when guilt will not trouble our sleep, nor will we feel compelled to beg excuses for our misdeeds. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us. Do not cast us away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from us.

Assurance of Pardon (*Jeremiah 31, Psalm 51*)

The One who loves us is faithful, writing the ways of life on our very hearts. Look within and know that you are loved and accepted by our gracious God.

Special Music

"My Life Flows On" (Lowry)

Seth Hench, soloist

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Gracious Loving Lord, the influence of our culture makes your word sound foreign to us. We want to know and understand more of your ways for our lives. Help us to hear the covenant that you have written on our hearts with every beat of our heart. Help us to live your covenant with every breath that we take. Guide us with your Holy Spirit to submit our will to that of your will. Give us courage to be the disciples that you have called us to be, and live into the covenant that you have written on our hearts. We ask that your healing touch be placed on us and those that we love. Lord heal our world that all will do your will, and seek your peace.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Hymn

"We Would See Jesus"

UMH 256

1. We would see Jesus;
lo! his star is shining
above the stable
while the angels sing;
There in a manger
on the hay reclining;
haste, let us lay our gifts
before the King.

2. We would see Jesus,
Mary's son most holy,
light of the village
life from day to day;
shining revealed
through every task most lowly,
the Christ of God,
The life, the truth, the way.

3. We would see Jesus,
on the mountain teaching,
with all the listening
people gathered round;
while birds and flowers
and sky above are preaching
the blessedness
which simple trust has found.

4. We would see Jesus,
in his work of healing,
at eventide
before the sun was set;
divine and human,
in his deep revealing
of God made flesh,
In loving service met.

5. We would see Jesus,
in the early morning,
still as of old
he calleth, "Follow me!"
Let us arise,
all meaner service scorning;
Lord, we are thine,
we give ourselves to thee.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrew Scripture Lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,* says the Lord.

³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 5:5-10

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

'You are my Son,

today I have begotten you';

⁶as he says also in another place,

'You are a priest for ever,

according to the order of Melchizedek.'

7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus* offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;

⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,

¹⁰having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel Lesson: John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.

²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”

³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.

³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.

³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Response to Scriptures:

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

Sermon

“In the Light of His Community”

Rev. Shari McCourt

This is the fifth Sunday in Lent. It is a Sunday of anticipation as Jesus interprets his own death in our lesson from the Gospel of John. We see Jesus’ compassion for his followers, as he tries to help

them understand that he came to fulfill God's promise to God's people. He was born to die and be raised on the third day to initiate God's Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven. Jesus as our brother, Messiah, friend, redeemer, and savior came to show **us** the way, and call us back into the family of God.

Today's story begins with the conclusion of Jesus teaching ministry. People were flocking to Jesus, as they were also making pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. He had just raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany, and was in route to Jerusalem. There were people coming in from all over the place. Some of those who came were Greeks. Jesus' ministry had expanded to include others, the non-Jews. The Gospel of John makes it clear that Jesus' death on a cross was not for His judgement, but for the salvation of everyone. The universal Jesus' death is for all people of all races, ethnic, economic, political, etc., and social class. This is the "Good News" that we are to share! We read in this text in Jesus' words in verse #32, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Jesus sets the ultimate example of obedience to God in this reading. He does not want to die, and claims his, "soul is troubled." As an act of obedience to God, he explains what he has been called to do to his disciples. Jesus tried to explain using a familiar passage. We often hear this at graveside committal services. I have often had people share with me, even though they have heard many times, that they really don't understand why this is used at funerals, and committal services. What does it mean? Verse 24, Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus is sharing that he must die in order to redeem, and give new life to the community of faith. In dying he "bears fruit," which is a metaphor for life. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice for all.

The stumbling block in this passage comes in verse 25, "Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." This verse spells it out clearly that we are not to pledge allegiance to our worldly, self-conceived, identity. What is of this world will perish! This world is temporary! Submitting ourselves, and our lives to Jesus is eternal life. If we are busy worrying about what others think of us, how they revere us, value our knowledge, and accomplishments, then we are loving our lives in this world, and we will perish. If we want new life, then we must give our lives to Jesus, and his faithful service. The promise in verse 26 is 'soul gold!' (This is a Pastor Shari-ism.) "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will be my servant also. Whoever serves me the Father will honor." Jesus asks for our love, dedication, service, and will. The promise that we will be with him, God the Father will honor. There is nothing in this world that can offer eternal life for your soul except Jesus, and it is Jesus who calls us into community with him out of his great love for us. His love is love that we do not deserve but is freely given for our sake, and salvation to be one with Him. That is better than any and all of the shiny gold of this world.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to remain with Him through His death into the glory of his resurrection. I am called to challenge you to read and pray through the Passion of Christ during Holy week. We are called to go through this with him to better understand what He has done for us, and die of our old ways in order to have new life in him. We heard it before, "You can't get to Easter Sunday without going through the cross." Going through the cross with him is how we learn to love as he loves and shares in the gift of his life and love. When we read this text, we can see that Jesus was

NOT a victim! Jesus knew and understood all that was to come, and freely gave of Himself out of love for us. When we read through the passion of Christ, through His pain, suffering, and agony He gives of himself with great love, upon love that is difficult for us to understand.

Today's text from the Gospel of John encourages us to read and pray through these words to help us in restoring our relationship with Jesus. It also presents a challenge for us. When we are not living in a pandemic we would be looking around the church to see who is here, and who is not here today. Those who are not here we would reach out and contact them. This upcoming week, we need to pull out our church directories and send cards, text messages, email, or call. If we each attempt to contact three to five people per week, until we get through the directory, as a faith community we will be attending to the household of faith. It may be best to start with the person listed after yours in the directory, and work your way through the list until you come back to your name and then start all over again.

Jesus gave His life for the community of believers. We can contact three to five people weekly. During these trying times we need to continue to care for one another in love as Jesus loves us. We can even send Easter cards if we wish, to remind one another of what Jesus has done for us. We can share the church website which has a link to the worship service. As we check on one another maybe we will find out that some have not been worshiping with us, and would like to worship. Gathering their information, and sharing it with the office, we can make certain that they are included. Check on your neighbors, and share the good news. Let us live as the beloved community of Jesus love for the world. Amen.

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO GOD

Many thanks for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of the church.

As an act of worship, please consider keeping current in your tithes and offerings. Even though the church building is closed, we still have financial obligations we need to meet. The mailbox will be checked daily. The address is: Johnsville United Methodist Church, 11106 Green Valley Road, Union Bridge, MD 21791

OFFERTORY

DOXOLOGY

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

UMH 95

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Offering Prayer

Nurturing God, just as you led your people out of Egypt and gave them the laws of life, renew your covenant with us and fill us with the joy of your salvation. Bless these, our offerings, in the name of the one who cleanses our hearts and teaches us to live as those who are not afraid to die. Amen.

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| 1. A charge to keep I have,
a God to glorify,
a never-dying soul to save,
and fit it for the sky. | 2. To serve the present age,
my calling to fulfill;
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will! |
| 2. Arm me with jealous care,
as in thy sight to live,
and oh, thy servant, Lord,
prepare a strict account to give! | 4. Help me to watch and pray,
and on thyself rely,
assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall forever die. |

BENEDICTION

As we go forth to serve, may we live as reminders to those we meet of the ever-present mercy of the Lord, the salvation of Jesus, and be restored in the joy of our salvation in Him.

POSTLUDE

"Make Me a Servant" (Willard)