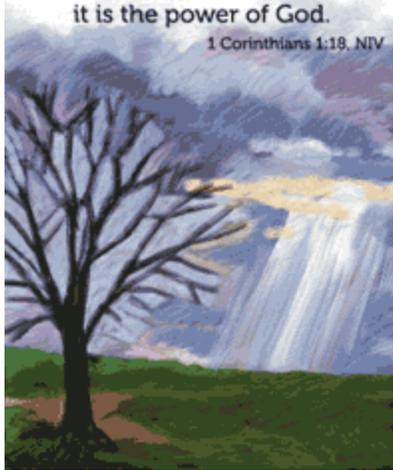


For the message of the cross  
is foolishness to those  
who are perishing,  
but to us who are being saved  
it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18, NIV



# 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 3 - March 7, 2021

PRELUDE

“Lift High the Cross” (Nicholson)

WELCOME

Opening Hymn

“The Old Rugged Cross”

UMH 504

1. On a hill far away  
stood an old rugged cross,  
the emblem of suffering and shame;  
and I love that old cross  
where the dearest and best  
for a world of lost sinners was slain.

Refrain:  
So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
till my trophies at last I lay down;  
I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
and exchange it some day for a crown.

2. O that old rugged cross,  
so despised by the world,  
has a wondrous attraction for me;  
for the dear Lamb of God  
left his glory above  
to bear it to dark Calvary.  
(Refrain)

3. In that old rugged cross,  
stained with blood so divine,  
a wondrous beauty I see,  
for 'twas on that old cross  
Jesus suffered and died,  
To pardon and sanctify me.  
(Refrain)

3. To that old rugged cross I will ever be true,  
its shame and reproach gladly bear;

then he'll call me some day to my home far away,  
where his glory forever I'll share.

(Refrain)

Call to Worship: (Psalm 19, Exodus 20)

Leader: The heavens are telling the glory of God.

**People: The word of God is a living promise!**

Leader: The law of the Lord is perfect.

**People: The word of God is a living promise!**

Leader: The covenant of God shall last forever.

**People: The word of God is a living promise!**

Opening Prayer of Confession (Exodus 20)

**People: God of the Covenant, we thank you for the promises you have made and kept with us through the ages. The strength of your love binds us together in spite of our many shortcomings. You make clear the expectations for your children in the commandments you handed down to your servant Moses. And yet, too often we treat those laws as if they were a menu to pick and choose from as it suits us. Though we hope never to kill another person, we do not think twice about breaking the Sabbath, or wonder how to truly keep it holy. We do not bow down to gold statues, but we do pledge our allegiance to idols: money, work, sports, prestige, ego, politics, even TV shows. God, bring us back into true covenant with you. Through your grace, remind us yet again that your love for us has never wavered.**

*(Prayer continues in silence.)*

Words of Assurance (Psalm 19)

Leader: God's promises are true and unbroken. God's grace is sweet and abundant. God's word is perfect and life giving. Come, enter into the joy of God's forgiving love!

Special Music "Holy is Your Name" (Tune: Irish folk song) Sherry Hohl, soloist

#### PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Gracious Lord, we often set up barriers to your ways, and your love. We often come up with a way of doing things in our spiritual life with you, and don't want to think of doing anything different. We have become so comfortable with our patterns that we do not want to yield to new ways, even when they are best for us. Open us to your ways, O Lord. Heal our places of distrust in You. Heal us from our self-inflicted wounds. Help us to see the light of your love and grace? We thank you for your unfailing love of us all! Amen.

#### 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

"I Will Call Upon the Lord"

TFWS 2002

Part 1 (melody)

I will call upon the Lord

Part 2 (echo)

Part 1

So shall I be saved from my enemies.

Part 2

I will call upon the Lord

So shall I be saved from my enemies.

*Part 1*

who is worthy to be praised.

*Part 2*

who is worthy to be praised.

*All*

I shall call upon the Lord.

*Refrain*

The Lord liveth,  
and blessed be the Rock;  
and let the God  
of my salvation be exalted.

(2 times)

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

<sup>19</sup>For it is written,  
'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.'

<sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

<sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.

<sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

<sup>24</sup>but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

<sup>25</sup>For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Gospel Lesson: John 2:13-22

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

<sup>15</sup>Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

<sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

<sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

<sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

<sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

<sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

<sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Response to Scriptures:

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

Sermon: Sermon: "Turning the Tables of our Devotion" Pastor Shari McCourt

On the days that we wonder if Jesus was part human and part Divine, we can wonder no longer! This story is without doubt a demonstration of Jesus fit of human temper. Today's gospel reading from John regarding Jesus turning over the tables in the temple is found in all four gospel texts. The synoptic gospel text, Matthew, Mark and Luke are probably the most historically accurate of the readings. This text has two parts, first Jesus' actions and what prompted his actions and second the meaning of what he was conveying to the people.

The people going to the temple were there on a pilgrimage to celebrate Passover. **Passover** is an important, biblically derived Jewish holiday. Jews celebrate Passover as a commemoration of their liberation by God from slavery in ancient Egypt and their freedom as a nation under the leadership of Moses. It commemorates the story of the Exodus as described in the Book of Exodus, in which the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Passover is a spring festival which during the existence of the Temple in Jerusalem was connected to the offering of the "first-fruits of the barley", barley being the first grain to ripen and to be harvested in Israel.

In the story from Exodus, we learn that God helped the Children of Israel escape from their slavery in Egypt. God inflicted ten plagues, upon the ancient Egyptians before the Pharaoh would release his Israelite slaves; the tenth and worst of the plagues was the death of the Egyptian first-born. The Israelites were instructed to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a slaughtered spring lamb and, upon seeing this, the spirit of the Lord knew to *pass over* the first-born in these homes, hence the English name of the holiday, "Passover."

When the Pharaoh freed the Israelites, it is said that they left in such a hurry that they could not wait for bread dough to rise (leaven). In commemoration, for the duration of Passover no leavened bread is eaten, for which reason Passover was called the feast of unleavened bread in the Torah. Instead matzo (flat unleavened bread) is eaten during Passover and it is a tradition of the holiday.

The people headed to the temple where they celebrated this religious holiday. Most traveled far to get there, and did not bring their first born to sacrifice. They would have needed to purchase animals in Jerusalem in order to participate in temple worship. They also had temple tax to pay, which could not be paid in their Greek or Roman currency. The sale of animals, and exchange of money was necessary for them to be able to participate in worship in the temple.

Jesus was stated to visit the Temple in Jerusalem, where the courtyard is described as being filled with livestock, merchants, and the tables of the money changers, who changed the standard Greek and Roman money for Jewish and Tyrian money. Jerusalem was packed with Jews who had come for Passover, perhaps numbering 300,000 to 400,000 pilgrims.

The story today, begins with Jesus arriving in Jerusalem for a high Jewish holiday. All of the acts that were expected from people were ideally to help them to get closer to God. There was a practicality in not traveling with a first born baby animal. However, the practice of offering up to God what was God's, is what is asked of God's people. With so much given to us from God, we are asked to offer back to God a small portion of what is given to us or entrusted to us as, God's steward of God's blessings and abundance. That is not what Jesus found! There were many abuses of the money changers ripping people off in God's temple. They had traveled far. It was expensive to travel, and hard work, because they weren't riding in their luxury RV. They walked. The animals that were being sold in sacrifice were not their first born. They were most likely not anyone's first born. A practice of what was to help them become Holy, had been perverted in God's name.

The account from John is the most dramatic of the four gospels, as Jesus is depicted making a whip of cords. Jesus' anger, was not just losing his temper. He had time to think about it, as he found the materials to make the whip of cords. We often think of Jesus as our friend who is meek and mild. Jesus is our friend! The kind of friend who has your back, and will kick someone's behind, if necessary to care for us.

Jesus was radical for the times then, and radical for the times today. Jesus was overturning the old practices. Church/Temple culture is "we have always done it that way." Jesus' challenge for the people was, 'Quit it! Look at what you are doing! Live your love of God with intention!'

These acts of the selling of animals for sacrifice and exchanging money were "mindless, have too, checklist items." They had more to do with what others thought of them, than relationship with God. We can only imagine the other deals that were going on behind the scene, that were not reported in the text.

Jesus used his whip of cords to scare the animals, and animal caretakers out of the temple courtyard. He drove them out, the sheep, and the cattle. The money changers must have been shocked, as Jesus overturned their tables. He poured out their coins, and their coins rolled all over the courtyard. Their precious money as coins rolled away from them, as the doves flew up in the air, and away. Jesus told them, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house into a market place!" They asked him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do this?" I wondered this week, what was in Jesus' mind when they asked this question. They were sacrificing animals to make themselves clean, and acting like they were.

By this time in Jesus' ministry, his humanness, had more than likely come to terms with the fact that he was born to die, as the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. He was trying as hard as he could to teach the people the way that leads to life. His death and resurrection put an end to the victory that death had over us all. Those "we've always done it this way people" were staring at the ultimate

sacrifice for all of our sake. They were looking at the grace, upon grace, of GOD in God's only son, Jesus who was describing to them what they did not understand. Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up!" He was not talking about the temple building that took 40 years to build—He was talking about the sacrifice of God's only Son's body as the temple that was filled with the Holy Spirit, was crucified, died and buried, and rose again in three days in fulfillment of the promise of God, as found in scripture. God keeps God's promises!

I pondered the disciple's response. They must have been even more afraid for their friend, and teacher, Jesus. They too, were trying to understand why he was so very angry. It is so very human of all of us, to have right in front of us, what is so plain and simple and miss it. When we look at ourselves in the mirror, can we see the places in our lives that we are living in judgement of others, and doing things only because we have always done them that way in the past –totally missing the point, of living life with the intension to live it in the present with our Lord and Savior? Even the disciples struggled who walked with Jesus. It was not until after the resurrection that they remembered what Jesus said, and understood the new found hope in Christ.

Let us pray.

Holy Jesus,

We often miss the mark of our discipleship as we are busy doing things as we have always done in the past failing to seek the newness of the life we have in you. Help us to understand that we are cleansed, by the love of your blood that was shed for our sake, and salvation. Place in us a clean heart that will live in the present under the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Thank you for all that you have done for us, and our new life in you. Amen.

#### OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS TO GOD

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

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**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**

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#### 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

#### Offering Prayer

Faithful God, we give you thanks for the constancy of your promises through all generations. We offer these gifts as willing partners in your covenant. Guide us to use these resources as we work toward

the fulfillment of your promise to bring about your kingdom on earth. In the name of Jesus, who is your living promise to all humanity, Amen.

Closing Hymn

“Sanctuary”

TFWS 2164

Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary,  
Pure and holy, tried and true.  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living  
Sanctuary for you.

“Cry of My Heart”

TFWS 2165

It is the cry of my heart  
To follow You  
It is the cry of my heart  
To be close to You  
It is the cry of my heart  
To follow all of the days of my life (2 times)

Teach me Your holy ways O Lord  
So I can walk in Your truth  
Teach me Your holy ways O Lord  
And make me wholly devoted to You

Open my eyes so I can see  
The wonderful things that You do  
Open my heart up more and more  
And make it wholly devoted to You

In me Lord renew my mind  
As Your will unfolds in my life  
In living every day  
By the power of Your love

#### BENEDICTION

Blessed by God's wisdom, we go forth refreshed and renewed. Called by Christ, we go now to serve. Amazed by God's love, we go now to love.

POSTLUDE

“Let Us Break Bread Together” (Afro American spiritual)