

Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
July 25, 2021

(Although we are now holding worship in our building, we are conscious of the ongoing challenge of in-person worship while the coronavirus persists, and the need many feel to avoid the possibility of contagion. Therefore, we will be continuing the practice of sending a worship bulletin to all who are on our mailing lists for email or hard copy. Those who will be worshipping from home and who have computer access will also be receiving a recorded version of the service that will be sent out by email on Sunday afternoon and also can be seen on our Facebook page. We welcome your participation in any way that is convenient for you, and we encourage you to share our worship service with any person you know who may appreciate receiving it.)

Welcome, Announcements and Prayer Concerns

Prelude (recording begins)

Call to Worship: Psalm 111:1-3

Good morning, friends. We begin our morning worship with faith declarations and songs of praise, giving glory to God for the things God has done.

Praise to the Holy One! I will give thanks to God with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

Great are the works of God, studied by all who delight in them.

Full of honor and majesty is God's work, and God's righteousness endures forever

*Hymn #111

"When Morning Gilds the Skies"

#111, blue hymnal

When morning gilds the skies, my heart awakening cries,

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Alike at work and prayer, to Jesus I repair, may Jesus Christ be praised.

Does sadness fill my mind? A solace here I find, may Jesus Christ be praised!

Or fades my earthly bliss? My comfort still is this, may Jesus Christ be praised!

The night becomes as day, when from the heart we say, may Jesus Christ be praised!

The powers of darkness fear when this sweet chant they hear, my Jesus Christ be praised!

***Be this, while life is mine, my canticle divine, may Jesus Christ be praised!
Be this th'eternal song through all the ages long, may Jesus Christ be praised!***

Responsive Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to the One who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

***Hymn #66**

“To God Be the Glory”

#66 blue hymnal

***To God be the glory, great things he hath done;
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.***

***Refrain: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give him the glory, great things he hath done.***

***O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.***

Refrain

***Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.***

Refrain

Prayer for the Inspiration of God's Word (unison)

Holy God, whose judgment and grace are spread upon the world, penetrate our minds and hearts with insight and with truth, so that we who listen to your Word, and to the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ, may begin to comprehend our calling to be the people of your way. Amen.

*Response

"O Word of God Incarnate"

#670, vs 1, blue hymnal

O Word of God incarnate, O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging, O Light of our dark sky;
We praise you for the radiance that from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our foot-steps, shines on from age to age.

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: 2 Samuel 11:1-21

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die." As Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant warriors. The men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting; and he instructed the messenger,

“When you have finished telling the king all the news about the fighting, then if the king’s anger rises, and if he says to you, “Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?” then you shall say, “Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.

Sermon

“In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle”

An aging king with time on his hands because he has decided to delegate his responsibilities to others now misuses the power given to him for wise governance of the nation to satisfy his lust for a married woman. As we see the effects of this disastrous lapse in the king’s sense of justice, we realize the far reaching implications of his act in multiple betrayals, broken relationships, loss of honor and death. It is a dark story and a cautionary tale about a moment when a man’s power to satisfy his own desires caused him to lose the empathy for others that he needed to be a good and effective leader.

What is empathy, and why is it an essential element in Christian life and ethics?

***Hymn**

“Rise Up, O Saints of God!”

#590, blue hymnal

***Rise up, O saints of God! From vain ambitions turn;
Christ rose triumphant that your hearts with nobler zeal might burn.***

***Speak out, O saints of God! Despair engulfs earth’s frame;
As heirs of God’s baptismal grace, his word of hope proclaim.***

***Rise up, O saints of God! His kingdom’s task embrace;
Redress sin’s cruel consequence; give justice larger place.***

***Give heed, O saints of God! Creation cries in pain;
Stretch forth your hand of healing now, with love the weak sustain.***

***Commit your heart to seek the paths which Christ has trod;
And quickened by the Spirit’s power, rise up, O saints of God.***

Pastoral Prayer

Holy God, we celebrate your presence in this congregation, where we seek to practice your love. We give thanks for this time together on a day set aside for rest and peace in holy fellowship. Let the personal troubles that disturb us fade from our minds for now. Let the worries about our well-being recede as faith grows within us. In this Sabbath time, may we find ourselves surrounded by your arms of grace and understanding – for you know our inmost thoughts, and you have already accepted us as your own.

It fills us with hope, when we lift up our prayers for one another, and it helps us feel that all is well on our journey through life. We remember those among us who are sick, those recovering from illness or surgery, those confined in nursing homes or hospitals, any who are lonely or depressed, and all who are caregivers for persons we love. We know that you, in your infinite

mercy, hear our prayer and grant us the peace of knowing we are deeply loved. As we receive the assurance of grace in this fellowship, may we find ourselves empowered to reflect upon the wider community of our world, and feel the intensity of our calling to seek the strength and courage we need to engage the challenges standing in the way of the beloved community of Christ.

We confess that our world in this present time is filled with turmoil, God; and much of it is human-made. Perhaps this has always been so. But now, each conflict, each mistake, has the power to affect us all. Nations at war; communities of hardship; people driven by famine, oppression, poverty and crime, to seek a better life in places that are not their home; harsh policies that exclude so many from the opportunity to enjoy a healthy and abundant life; and nature itself in seeming rebellion, with melting ice caps, rising temperatures, violent storms, raging wildfires, and the loss of habitat for all creatures of the earth and seas. So much of this is rooted in human arrogance and pride, using wealth and power to take more than is needed and failing to acknowledge when others suffer because of it. How can we who have grown as a species so powerful be unable to find remedies for the problems we have made?

We pray for the just distribution of the fruits of the earth. We pray for an end to the politics of war. We pray for commitment to the stewardship of creation, and to faith in the one human family, and to the self-giving love of Jesus for all the children of the world. And we declare that these are the ancient values of our faith that must not be swept aside by the silence of believers or the powers of this world.

As we consider the sins of David in our Scripture for today, may we see the things that need to be put aside in every time, and may we work to make it so, so that your Realm on earth may grow up in our midst. Amen.

As Jesus has taught us, let us pray:

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 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.

***Closing Hymn #717**

"Go Now in Peace"

#717 blue hymnal

Go now in peace; though friends must part, your presence lives in every heart.

Your gifts to us no words can tell; go now in peace, in Christ go well.

Go now in hope, and hopeful stay, though shadowed valleys hide your way;

Through good and evil, joy and pain, with God, in Spirit, you remain.

Go now in faith, through time and chance, until we join the wedding dance

As partners of the Three-in-One, where all is ended and begun.

***Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace.

Postlude