

Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
June 20, 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 9:1-2, 9-12)

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

And those who know your name put trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Sing praises to the Holy One who dwells in Zion. Declare God's deeds among the peoples.

For the One who avenges blood is mindful of them; God does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

***Hymn**

"Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me"

#441 (black hymnal)

***Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll, hiding rock and treacherous shoal;
Chart and compass ever be; Jesus, Savior, pilot me.***

***As a mother stills her child, you can hush the ocean wild;
Boisterous waves obey your will when you say to them, "Be still."
Wondrous Sovereign of the sea, Jesus, Savior, pilot me.***

***When at last I near the shore, and the fearful breakers roar,
Keeping me from peaceful rest, then while leaning on your breast,
May I hear your words so true, "Fear not, I will pilot you."***

Opening Meditation:

One day, Jesus and his friends were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and a storm came up; and Jesus was asleep in the stern:

On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Mark 4:35-41

The disciples asked, "Do you not care?"
as he was sleeping in the stern.
The little boat was tossed by wind,
and waves poured in and frightened them.
Sometimes our life seems out of control,
Like a small boat on a restless sea.
And we cry out, "Are you sleeping, God?"
But Jesus just answers, "Why are you afraid?"
And in God's time, the wind is stilled.

Opening Prayer (unison)

Holy Savior, still our hearts as we gather now for worship. Our world is filled with tumult, waves and deeps, and giants to alarm us. But you are there. And here, within the infinite possibilities of an incomprehensible universe, your hands have placed us. Indeed, in so great a world there is much to fear, and more to discover and enjoy. And there is much to do, if the human portion of your creation is to fulfill its destiny, and complete the conscious community of love. May this worship time set aside for you bring calm to the troubled waters that lie within us and prepare us for the journey still to come. Amen.

*Hymn

“Jesus Calls Us o’er the Tumult”

#345 (blue hymnal)

*Jesus calls us o’er the tumult of our life’s wild, restless sea;
Day by day his sweet voice soundeth, saying, “Christian, follow me.”*

*Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world’s golden store,
From each idol that would keep us, saying, “Christian, love me more.”*

*In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,
Still he calls, in cares and pleasures, “Christian, love me more than these.”*

*Jesus calls us – by thy mercies, Savior, may we hear thy call,
Give our hearts to thine obedience, serve and love thee best of all.*

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: 1 Samuel 17

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle.... Saul and the Israelites gathered and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and formed ranks against the Philistines.... And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span (about 9 feet tall). He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels (or 125 lbs) of bronze. He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver’s beam, and his spear’s head weighed six hundred shekels (or 15 lbs) of iron; and his shield bearer went before him.

He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.”

But Saul and all his soldiers were frightened by this giant of a man, and no one was bold enough to fight him.

It happened that Jesse, a man from Bethlehem, had three sons who fought in the army of Saul. They had five other brothers, and the youngest of them, whose name was David, was keeping the family sheep. Jesse told David to take some food to his brothers in the camp, and some cheese to the commander of the troops. While he was there in the camp, David heard the challenge being offered by the giant Goliath, and the rumor that anyone who would accept the challenge to fight him and prevail would be greatly rewarded by the king. “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine,” David asked, “that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for David. David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

Saul was doubtful about sending a young man with little experience to fight against the giant warrior, but David finally convinced him.

Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I am not used to them." So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand and he drew near to the Philistine.... When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.... But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand."

When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

Sermon:

"How to Conquer a Giant"

Are there giants in your life – obstacles that seem to have a great advantage over you as you consider what you want to accomplish? "If only I were older." "I wish I were younger." "If only I had more money, more power, more prestige, more self-assurance..." "I wish I knew more." At any given moment, we can only be who we are right now, and our challenge is to be and use the best of what we are, and to know that in God's sight it will be enough.

Perhaps you've also thought at one time or another that you were armed with everything you needed, and then, like David in Saul's armor, discovered that your dependence upon the protection of material goods weighed you down and made you clumsy, when what you really needed was to be more vulnerable to those around you, and guided by an inward strength.

The miracle in this ancient wonder story is accomplished as the young hero David lays aside the royal armor and allows his devotion to God's purpose to be his protection and to steady his hand.

Special Music

"Shadow of Time"

Paula Weil

Pastoral Prayer

Holy God, when we fear the storms that happen in every human life, we often place our faith in solutions that do not protect us but weigh us down. At those moments when our feelings run toward anger, and we feel the impulse to protect ourselves from others, help us remember that it is in our power, with God's help, to do our part by listening to those we have not understood. Teach us to search actively for fair solutions to the disruptive issues in our communities.

We pray that we ourselves may find the peace of mind that comes from trusting the ways of Jesus, so that we may not fail, by your grace, to practice hospitality to all people, wherever they are on life's journey, generosity with all that we have, faithfulness and honesty in our relationships, and commitment to justice and to nonviolence as a way of life. In each of these commitments, we confess that we have often fallen short. We ask your forgiveness, and pray that we may grow in faith and love.

For the world of many troubled waters, we offer our prayers today. For those forced from their homes in many lands by civil disturbance, religious discrimination, political oppression, and simple greed, we pray that they may find safe lodging in the days to come. For those in the world who suffer from armed conflict – soldiers and civilians and accidental victims – we pray for healing and for the day of peace.

We lift up today all members of our own community who suffer from illness, from hospitalization, and from mental and spiritual need. May we all be ministers of your compassion among those we know in the fellowship of faith. We lift up also those who are known to us in the broader community who have a need for prayer and acts of kindness.

God, we pray for the peace of mind that Jesus displayed on the stormy sea, so that we may minister in the knowledge of a spiritual strength within us that is not afraid. 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**

“O Jesus, I Have Promised”

#458 (blue hymnal)

*O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
Remain forever near me, my Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle if you are by my side,
No wander from the pathway, if you will be my guide.*

*O let me hear you speaking in accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will.
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
Now speak, and make me listen, O guardian of my soul.*

*O Jesus, you have promised to all who follow you
That where you are in glory, your servant shall be too;
And Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.*

***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