

Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 12, 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)

Opening Praise (Psalm 19:7-14, Responsive)

Your law, O God, is perfect, reviving the soul; your decrees are sure, making wise the simple.

Your precepts are tight, rejoicing the heart; your commandment is clear, enlightening the eyes.

Our awe of you is pure, enduring forever; your ordinances are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the drippings of the honeycomb.

By your precepts, your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

But who can detect their errors? Clear me of hidden faults.

Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

*Hymn

“I Sing the Almighty Power of God”

#31

*I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;*

the moon shines full at God's command and all the stars obey.

*I sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food;
he formed the creatures with his word and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how your wonders are displayed where'er I turn my eye,
if I survey the ground I tread or gaze upon the sky!*

*There's not a plant or flower below but makes your glories known,
and clouds arise and tempests blow by order from your throne;
while all that borrows life from you is ever in your care,
and everywhere that I may be, you, God, are present there.*

Morning Prayer

God, grant us the wisdom to walk before you humbly. God grant us the knowledge of how little we comprehend of your works in all creation. Yet we walk by your light, and we rejoice in the world you have made and are making; and we come together seeking the truth we find in fellowship with you. We have seen in our lives the darkness and the light, days of mindless destruction and times of repentance and hope. On this 20th anniversary of a terrorist attack that brought about twenty years of bloodshed, our soldiers are coming home and refugees of war are seeking to resume their lives; and on this day we place our trust in you and lift up prayers for a lasting peace.

*Hymn

"Let There Be Peace on Earth"

#614

*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator, children all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*

Lesson from the Hebrew Tradition: Wisdom of Solomon 7:26-8:1

What is Wisdom?

She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of God's goodness.

Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.

She is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars.

Compared with the light, she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail.

She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well.

Epistle Lesson: James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue – a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Gospel Lesson Mark 8:27-38

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan!" For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world

and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

***Hymn**

"The Summons"

#350

*Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?*

*Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?*

*Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?*

*Lord, your sum mons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.*

Sermon

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God, Jesus' own disciples, even the great apostle Peter, mistook the meaning of his life, believing him to be a conquering Messiah, the one who would bring victory over the worldly powers of oppression. He silenced them, and called them to follow him in pursuing the more difficult task of committing their lives to works and attitudes of compassion in order to build the beloved community where your people live in peace. We pray, God, that we may live by Christ's vision and follow his example especially when times are hard. May our work to communicate the way of Christ be seen more in our actions than in our words; and in all that we do and say, may we demonstrate the kindness that distinguishes the fellowship of divine love from the many false gospels of our time.

We pray for our earthly home in a time when climate disasters offer a warning and a call to us to use the resources we have been given to preserve all forms of life. We pray for

the nations of the earth, on this weekend when we remember too clearly the loss of life 20 years ago in New York and the Nation's capital, and the loss of so many lives that followed. May the wisdom that lives only in those who see the world as wholly interdependent and your people as one prevail over the discontent and divisions of this day.

We lift up before you, God, the needs of those in our congregation who are sick or in recovery, those who are confined because of health or due to caution, those who are anxious, and those living with grief. May your love be known to all of them, and may each of us share in the expression of that love.

Thank you, God, for the Gospel of salvation, for the inspiration of your Holy Realm, for the work we share and for the love we know in you.

And now we pray as Jesus taught us.

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**

"We Are Called to Be God's People"

#580

*We are called to be God's people, showing by our lives God's grace,
one in heart and one in spirit, sign of hope for all the race.*

*Let us show how God has changed us, and remade us as his own,
let us share our life together as we shall around his throne.*

*We are called to be God's servants, working in God's world today,
Taking his own task upon us, all his sacred words obey.*

*Let us rise, then, to his summons, dedicate to him our all,
that the world may know the blessing of the doing of God's will.*

*We are called to be God's prophets, speaking for the truth and right,
Standing firm for godly justice, bringing evil things to light.*

*Let us seek the courage needed, our high calling to fulfill,
that the world may know the blessing of the doing of God's will.*

***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