

**Paul United Church of Christ**  
**5312 Old Blue Rock Road**  
*Cincinnati, Ohio 45247*  
*Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor*  
**Order of Worship for Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**August 29, 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)

Reading for the Opening of Worship: **Song of Solomon 2:10-13**

This morning, let's listen to the words of one of the Bible's most famous love songs, celebrating the season of warmth and nature in bloom:

*My beloved speaks and says to me:  
"Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;  
for now winter is past, the rain is over and gone.  
The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.  
The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom;  
they give forth fragrance.  
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

**\*Hymn**

**"For the Beauty of the Earth"**

**#40**

***For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth over and around us lies,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.***

***For the wonder of each hour of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.***

*For the joy of human love, brother sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth and friends above; for all gentle thoughts and mild,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.*

*For the church that evermore lifteth holy hands above,  
offering up on every shore her pure sacrifice of love,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.*

*For thyself, best gift divine, to our race so freely given;  
For that great, great love of thine, peace on earth and joy in heaven,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.*

**Morning Psalm: Psalm 15**

*O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?*

*Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,  
and speak the truth from their heart;  
who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends,  
nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;  
in whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honor those who fear the Lord;  
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;  
who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent.*

*Those who do these things shall never be moved.*

**\*Hymn**

**" Jesus Calls Us o'er the Tumult"**

**#345**

*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.*

**Epistle Reading: James 1:17-27**

*Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.*

*You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all*

*sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.*

*But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing.*

*If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongue but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*

**Gospel Lesson:** Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

*Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (for the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”*

*He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,*

*‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’*

*You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”....*

*Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.”....*

*“For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”*

**Sermon:** “From Within, from the Human Heart”

Jesus’ defense of his disciples when the Pharisees accuse them of not washing their hands seems strange to our ears today. We’re used to expecting the normal sanitary practice of washing our hands before eating, and for Jesus to say it is not what comes from the outside that defiles a person seems to go against all that we know about healthy behavior – especially in this time of increased attention to matters of health and safety. So a little explanation is needed. The custom of hand washing in this story is not about sanitation but about the source of actions that are harmful to ourselves and others. Jesus is critical of religious people who seem to think that it is enough to practice the outward rituals of their religion to cleanse them of sin. That’s not where the problem is, he says. It is our hearts that need to be changed.

## Pastoral Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, enter our hearts and renew us from within. Inspire us to find fulfilling joy in the life of Christ within us. Grant us happiness in following the way of Jesus and discovering the comfort and the hope of the fellowship we share.

As we grow in faith, may we learn to accept the challenges of life as callings to faithfulness, as we seek to support one another and put aside all feelings of jealousy, pride, judgment and cynicism about others.

We pray today for those within our fellowship who are sick, for those recovering from surgery, for those who are shut-in, and for those experiencing grief. May we be good friends to one another, so that the love of Christ becomes apparent in our life together.

We also pray for those nearby and far away who are dealing with issues affecting the wider world community. We lift up the people of Afghanistan, the refugees, the soldiers from all nations, and all who live in fear. We remember the people of Haiti, recovering from earthquake and storm. We pray for those afflicted with the COVID virus, for the hospital workers who treat them, and for children who are returning to school in unsettling times.

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

**“O Jesus, I Have Promised”**

**#458**

*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,  
Nor 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 will 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