

Fourth Sunday of Easter May 3, 2020
A Service of Communion



Morning Meditation

Sr Joan Chittister, 21st century

"The death of Jesus left a fledgling faith community bereft until they themselves rose out of his grave to begin life over again, wiser for what they knew, stronger for what he was, determined now to finish what had already been begun. All things end so that something else can begin."

PRELUDE

SANDY WENTZLOFF

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE AT GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST! NO EXCEPTIONS!

TUESDAY NIGHT DIGGING DEEPER WITH DENNIS

BEGINS: TUESDAY MAY 18TH VIA ZOOM AT 6:30 P.M.

BOOK: *"WHEN CHRISTIANS GET IT WRONG"*

AN EMAIL INVITATION WILL BE SENT OUT BEFORE THAT DATE. FOLLOW THE CODE IN THE INVITATION TO JOIN THE VIDEO CONVERSATION. A PHONE CALL-IN NUMBER WILL BE PROVIDED, AS WELL. BOOK NOT REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE.

WEEKLY DEVOTION:

BEGINS: TUESDAY MAY 11 ON WEBSITE

AVAILABLE BY TUESDAY EACH WEEK AFTER 12 P.M. *"GROWING WHILE ISOLATED"*

WWW.LISTEN2GOD.ORG/WORSHIP/DEVOTIONAL

GATHERING HYMN: *"AWAKE, MY SOUL, STRETCH EVERY NERVE"*

NCH #491

1 Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,
and press with vigor on; A heavenly race
demands your zeal, and an immortal crown,
and an immortal crown.
2 For God's all-animating voice still calls us to
the race; And God's own hand still gives the
prize with never-ending grace, with never-
ending grace.

3 O Savior, shown the way by you,
I have my race begun;
And, crowned with victory, at your feet
I'll lay my honors down,
I'll lay my honors down.

CALL TO WORSHIP (after Psalm 23)

Leader: Let us pray these familiar words, recognizing in the Risen Christ, our Good Shepherd:

**ALL: Jesus, you are our shepherd. We shall never want.
You make us lie down in green pastures; you lead us beside the still waters.
You restore our souls.**

**You guide us in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake.
Even though we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
we fear no evil, for you, Christ, comfort us.**

**Jesus has prepared a table for us in the presence of our foes;
Jesus has anointed us with the oil of salvation; our cup runs over!**

**Surely, goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives,
And we will dwell in the house of our Holy Savior forever and ever. Amen.**

INVOCATION

Leader: Incarnate God, You are the one who comes to us in Jesus Christ.

Response: Holy One, You are the one who comes to us in the Holy Spirit.

Leader: Sovereign of Earth and Heaven, You are the one who calls us to recognize you today and every day as splendid *Mystery*.

Response: Gather our hearts and minds this day.

Leader: Kindle our God-consciousness.

Response: Let us worship you in awe and wonder!

GLORIA PATRI

**GLORY BE TO CREATOR, AND TO THE CHRIST AND TO THE HOLY GHOST
AS IT WAS FROM THE BEGINNING IS NOW AND EVER SHALL BE,
LIFE WITHOUT END, AMEN, AMEN.**

LECTIONARY TEXTS

Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 2:19-25

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

1 Peter 2:19-25

For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

MESSAGE

IN SANCTUARY; BEING SANCTUARY

PASTOR DENNIS

Fire engines, ambulances, patrol cars line the streets of cities outside of hospitals in praise and thanksgiving. This outpouring of recognition of nurses, doctors, technicians, custodians, emergency responders who are on the front line of the fight for life against Covid-19. Young boys start a virtual pledge of allegiance to the American flag that goes viral pulling our country together. Little girls sing songs of love that remind us we are all in this together. Hearts decorate windows of homes, churches, empty schools, and closed business reminding us that even in hard times we are community.

We are people who depend on each other. We are people who need to remember that we do not live unto ourselves but for the betterment of us all.

The book of Acts reminds us of who we are to be as people of faith. Luke writes of the early church, *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”* It does not talk about how they went out buying and spending wages on clothing, better appliances, nicer carpeting, trips to more comfortable climates. Luke writes about people of God going about dedicating their lives to looking after one another. Seeing that basic needs are being met. Luke continues, *“All who believed were together and had all things in common, they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”*

These are foreign words to us in a culture that preaches building bigger barns and putting extra aside to make sure we have all we want, beyond what we ourselves need. I was at a virtual Zoom empowered family reunion last week where one of the conversations was about how we accumulate so much stuff and hang on to so much stuff. It causes us to live in crowded spaces or to rent space to keep even more stuff. We laughed as we confessed our guilt. We collect possessions not sell them. If we do have a garage sale, estate sale, liquidation sale, the money is for our own pockets. We think, *“What can I buy with the proceeds of my sale?”* We think not of what we might do to help others with our profit.

Restaurants who cannot serve in house prepare meals for first responders and those who find themselves unemployed. A woman who works at a grocery store gives of her time away from work to purchase and deliver groceries to elderly neighbors who cannot get out. Families touch through window glass as they are confined during the pandemic. Person after person makes masks by the dozens, hundreds, to donate to those who work in hazardous places, and others who are physically vulnerable.

I go to the grocery stores today and find empty shelves. Dairy cases with no eggs, with a few cartons of milk. Not because there is a shortage of the product, but that people are panic buying. Afraid they might run out. I was walking through a store last week and was in awe of the lack of products. As I walked down the paper products isle, empty shelves with signs saying “limit 2 packs per item per person”. A sign was needed to remind us to think of others.

As I continued down the aisle, there came a man in his late sixties/early seventies. He smiled as he reached for the last pack of four rolls of toilet paper. He carefully put it in his cart as if it was a child. As he turned to leave the aisle, a young man with two young children in tow gave out an audible sigh as he saw the empty shelves. The older man said are you looking for toilet paper? One of the young children said we only have two rolls left! Then the man reached for the treasure in his cart, handed it to the young child and said, “Here take this.” I thought the father was going to cry. I know I did!

And Luke said, *They “distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising god and having the goodwill of all the people.”*

In the world crisis we are experiencing, we see changes in our daily routines. In our time isolated in our homes, we find ways to help others. We deliver packages of aid to others, leaving them on their porch and waiving from a distance to let them know we care. People drive by another’s home waiving banners, yelling, singing, throwing beads to celebrate the birthday of the person

inside. People sharing funds with those who have lost funding for their business and families.

We find churches reaching out through the internet, Facebook, chat rooms, video broadcasts. Reaching out in different ways because we cannot be community together. But we can be community. Being creative. Caring enough to find ways to reach out.

And Luke continues that they were, “praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

And you know what it meant to be saved? Devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. .. and they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.” And day by day, they remind us all of what it means to be a beloved child of the living God. Let us let this pandemic change us.

Let us,

Devote ourselves to the apostles’ teachings

Spend time in fellowship, in person or through technology

Break bread together

And pray.

PASTORAL PRAYER

CALL TO OFFERING

Good Shepherd of the Sheep, you have opened the door to new life for us through your dedication and your sacrifice. May we reflect your love for us by opening the doors of our hearts to you and your church in the act of giving our tithes and offerings.

OFFERTORY DEDICATION

Thank you, Risen Christ, for moving the hearts of the people to give of themselves. May our offerings of service and financial support give voice to your work for justice and peace in this world. May we grow more mindful of you through our giving and our living.
Amen.

COMMUNION HYMN:

“GATHER US IN” vs 1&3

WOV #718

1. Here in this place new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away;
See in this space our fears and our
dreamings.
Brought here to you in the light of this day,

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in, the blind and the lame;
Call to us now and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.

3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
Here we will take the bread of new birth,
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt for the earth.

Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
Give us to eat the bread that is you;
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

CONFESSION

One: Merciful and Loving God, we ask forgiveness because our consciousness of you is dimmed by everyday desires and needs.

ALL: Raise our consciousness of you, O God.

One: We forget that we are a reflection of your image.
We act as though you are a Sunday-only event.

ALL: Increase our mindfulness of you, O God.

One: Help us to a greater common awareness of your deep mystery and infinite presence.

ALL: Rouse our awareness of you, O God.

One: Open our eyes from surface focus to depth perception.
Turn our heads from shallow concerns to eternal truths.

ALL: Awaken us from faint-heartedness, O God.

One: Forgive us for our narrow and selfish ways.
Save us from cheap grace with your amazing grace.

ALL: Forgive us, O God. We ask in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Holy, Forgiving God, we are your sheep. You keep us awake and aware.

You can increase our God-consciousness every day of our lives.

Bless you and praise you for forgiving us when we are barely mindful enough to ask.

Help us to enter by the door when we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd.

We hear your voice of pardon.

Through Christ's grace we are forgiven this morning, and we go in. **Amen.**

CALL TO THE TABLE

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

PARTAKING OF THE BREAD AND CUP



THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK IS DONE IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST.

THE CUP OF BLESSING WHICH WE DRINK IS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

COMMUNION HYMN: "GATHER US IN" vs 4

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining
Not in some heaven light years away
Here in this place the new light is shining
Now is the kingdom, and now is the day
Gather us in and hold us forever
Gather us in and make us your own

Gather us in, all peoples together
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

BENEDICTION (from 1 Peter and John 10)

One: You are called for a purpose: for the sake of knowing and drawing close toward God a person bears up under sorrows.

All: We are not here by chance.

One: You are choice and precious in the sight of God, and as living stones, your lives are being built up into a spiritual sanctuary where the justice and mercy and peace of the Risen Christ may dwell.

All: We are not here by chance.

One: Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

All: Jesus, we are the sheep of your pasture. You have chosen us. We have chosen you. We are not here by chance. Amen

POSTLUDE

SANDY WENTZLOFF

Remember in Prayer

Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, Aggie Schue, Howard Armstrong's brother Greg Armstrong. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and those at Oak Terrace and Golden Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere since everyone is affected by this virus in some way. We pray with anticipation for the day we can all gather again with our church family. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

Giving our Gifts to God:

**Tithes and Offerings can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ P.O. Box 385
Gaylord, MN 55334 or dropped by the church office on Wednesday between 10a.m. – 4p.m.**

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371.

E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com

Our Website: listen2god.org For the sermon: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>

