

**Fifth Sunday of Easter,
May 10, 2020**



MEDITATION: William Shakespeare, 16th century
"We know what we are, but not what we may be."

THE CALL

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

In you, O God, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to
shame; in your
righteousness deliver me.

Incline your ear to me,
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

You are indeed my rock and
my fortress;
for your name's sake lead
me and guide me, take me
out of the net that is hidden
for me, for you are my
refuge.

Into your hand I commit my
spirit; you have redeemed
me, O God, O faithful God.

My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand
of my enemies and
persecutors.

Let your face shine upon
your servant; save me in
your steadfast love.

PRELUDE:

SANDY WENTZLOFF

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

**NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, YOU ARE WELCOME AT
GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST — WITHOUT EXCEPTION!**

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL AVAILABLE EACH TUESDAY AT: WWW.LISTEN2GOD.ORG/WORSHIP/DEVOTIONALS

MAY COUNCIL MEETING VIA ZOOM MAY 12 AT 5:15 P.M.

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.

GATHERING HYMN: *"ALLELUIA! JESUS IS RISEN"* vs 1-3 WOV #674

ALLELUIA! JESUS IS RISEN! TRUMPETS RESOUNDING IN GLORIOUS LIGHT!
SPLENDOR, THE LAMB, HEAVEN FOREVER! OH, WHAT A MIRACLE GOD HAS IN SIGHT!

REFRAIN: JESUS IS RISEN AND WE SHALL ARISE: GIVE GOD THE GLORY! ALLELUIA!

WALKING THE WAY, CHRIST IN THE CENTER TELLING THE STORY TO OPEN OUR EYES;
BREAKING OUR BREAD, GIVING US GLORY: JESUS OUR BLESSING, OUR CONSTANT SURPRISE.

REFRAIN: JESUS IS RISEN AND WE SHALL ARISE: GIVE GOD THE GLORY! ALLELUIA!

JESUS THE VINE, WE ARE THE BRANCHES; LIFE IN THE SPIRIT THE FRUIT OF THE TREE;
HEAVEN TO EARTH, CHRIST TO THE PEOPLE, GIFT OF THE FUTURE NOW FLOWING TO ME.

REFRAIN: JESUS IS RISEN AND WE SHALL ARISE: GIVE GOD THE GLORY! ALLELUIA!

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Jesus said, I go and prepare a place for you, and I will come again.

People: **We gather in this place to know your presence and your love,
now and always.**

Leader: Jesus said, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

If you know me, you know God.
People: **We pray to know you more deeply, that we may know God more intimately, now and always.**

Leader: Jesus said, Ask me for anything, and I will do it.

People: **Help us to ask for the right things, Lord Jesus Christ, that we may fulfill your will, now and always.**

Leader: Jesus said, Believe in me, and Follow me.

People: **Help us to worship you fully - believing and following – now and always!**

INVOCATION

Ever-gracious, Way-Making God, we celebrate the gifts of your Spirit.
You have not fed us a diet of shame or shrinking, but with the milk of your truth you have made us strong and faithful servants of Christ.
You call us to take up the mantle of justice and to follow wherever faith leads us.
You fill us with strength and hope, and you invite us to share in the cost and joys of discipleship.
You promise us splendor and beauty in this life and in the world to come.
Meet us here, we pray, that your word will be fulfilled in our hearing and that your Spirit will fill us with courage. **Amen.**

GLORIA: **GLORY BE TO CREATOR, AND TO THE CHRIST, AND TO THE HOLY GHOST
AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING IS NOW AND EVER SHALL BE
ETERNAL LIFE, AMEN, AMEN.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: Ever-gracious God, from generation to generation you call forth faithful women and men to be willing servants of truth. You fill us with strength and hope,

All: Yet we find it is often not enough.

One: We pray both for great faith and for easy lives,

All: But we know these things seldom exist together.

One: We pray only to avoid the time of trial

All: When we need also to pray for strength and confidence to face the challenges that come with faithfulness.

Forgive us, God, for our limited vision and our feeble trust.

One: Make us strong like Stephen, so that we may rejoice in your unending grace even in the times of deepest suffering.

All: In Christ we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Do not let your hearts be troubled, but share instead in Stephen's vision of the heavens opened and Christ standing at the right hand of God. This glorious vision of hope is for all of us, for we are forgiven of all that separates us from the Holy One.

People: Blessed be God, the giver of life, and blessed be God's people, who rejoice in Christ, the way, the truth and the life.

LECTIONARY TEXTS:

1 Peter 2: 2-10 ~ John 14: 1-14

1 Peter 2:2-10

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation — if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," and

"A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

John 14:1-14

[Jesus said:] "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

MEDITATION

"WHAT WE MAY BECOME"

PASTOR DENNIS

"Hope for a Troubled Heart" John 14:1-14

People of God, grace and peace to you in the name of the risen Christ. Amen.

This is the seventh week now that I am sharing a sermon while looking out at a sea of empty church pews. As I give my sermon during this time, I try to imagine several of you sitting in your "usual" spot in the sanctuary. Yes, by now I can pretty much guess the general area where you sit on Sunday morning! This helps a bit, but I know that we are all looking forward to that day when the congregation can gather together in weekly worship again. Until this time, please know that you are remembered in prayer. Thankfully, the Spirit of God doesn't need to practice social distancing but continues even now to be actively moving to bring us the assurance of God's presence and the strength to carry on as people of faith.

Our gospel for today almost seems to be written for our present situation as we deal with the Covid-19 virus. Jesus begins with the words, "Let not your heart be troubled." It is Thursday evening, the night before Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus has just shared with the disciples that not only is he going to die but also one of them will betray him and Peter will deny him three times. It is in this context that Jesus says, "Let

not your heart be troubled.” “What?” the disciples must have asked. “Do not let our hearts be troubled? Are you kidding us?” Because of all that was happening, the disciples’ hearts were troubled. They were afraid. They didn’t know how to go on, where to go, and how to do it. We get it, don’t we? At this time, each of us is most likely troubled too. How can we not be? In our present situation, there most likely are a number of things that you and I can find troubling. So, how would you answer someone who asked you, “What troubles your heart the most these days?”

The disciples’ hearts were troubled, very troubled. And so they ask questions. Thomas and Philip ask questions about what Jesus is saying: “Where are you going? Can we see the Father?” And behind both of these questions, I suspect, is another, more primal question: Why? Why are you leaving? Why is this happening?

Have you ever noticed that? That when we are struggling to make sense of things or feel overwhelmed by circumstances, we often turn to questions. Why is this happening? Where is God in all of this? How did this happen? Why, God? Why?

How does Jesus respond to the disciples’ questions? In response, Jesus offers them not so much answers as he offers himself. My friend, the question of “why” is an important question. It gives voice to our deep need to understand, to comprehend, to make sense. We need to be assured that as people of faith it is good for us to ask our questions. But we also need to acknowledge that often times it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to answer why. Instead Jesus answers the question of “who”. “Who” is the one who loved them? “Who” makes demonstrably clear God’s love. Who is the one whom they can trust to provide all that they need in able to keep their hearts at peace? Sometimes, when we want answers, what we really need most is relationship! Questions of “why” are not helpful. What we really need most of all is the “who.” We need to know that Jesus’ presence stills our hearts. Jesus can lead us to God. Jesus, as “Love incarnate” shows us the love that will inevitably show us God.

This God is present to us always through the love of Christ. Whatever our questions, whatever our doubts, whatever the unknowns (and during this time we have a number of these), Jesus makes himself available to us. Indeed, Jesus offers himself to us, inviting us into a relationship that may not answer all of our “whys” but ultimately brings to us the who that can transcend all questions.

And what does God’s presence with us do? Consider Peter Arnett, the one-time commentator and reporter who shares of a time when he was in Israel, in a small town on the West Bank. An explosion went off. Everywhere he looked there were signs of death and destruction. A man came running up to him holding a bloodied little girl in his arms. The man pleaded with Arnett and said, “Mister, I can’t get her to a hospital. The Israeli troops have sealed off the area. No one can get in or out, but you’re press. You can get through. Please, mister! Help me get her to a hospital. Please! If you don’t help me, she’s going to die.”

Peter put the man and the wounded girl in his car, got through the sealed area, and rushed to the hospital in Jerusalem. The whole time he was hurtling down the road, the man was pleading from the backseat, calling out to him, “Can you go faster, mister? Can you go faster? I’m losing her... I’m losing her!”

When they finally got to the hospital, the girl was rushed to the operating room. The two exhausted men retreated to the waiting area and sat silently on a bench. After a short while, the doctor came out of the operating room and said to them solemnly, “She’s died.”

The man collapsed in tears, and as Peter put his arms around him to comfort him, he said, “I don’t know what to say. I can’t imagine what you must be going through I’ve never lost a child.” The man looked at Peter in a startled manner and said, “Oh, mister! That Palestinian girl was not my daughter. I’m an Israeli settler. That Palestinian is not my child. But, mister... There comes a time when each of us must realize that every child, regardless of that child’s background, is a daughter or a son. There must come a time when we realize that we are all family.

What does God in Christ’s presence with us do? It turns enemies into family. It breaks down walls and barriers that divide people. It helps all of us see that in spite of our differences, we truly are all family!

God never left the disciples or anyone alone. As God does not leave us alone in these uncertain times.

BENEDICTION

Once you were not a people, but now you are a people bound together in God's mercy and united in Christ's service. Depart from this place in peace and confidence, to love and serve in the name of Jesus the Christ, the living representation of God
– our way, our truth, our life. **Amen.**

Postlude

Sandy Wentzloff

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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/>

