

7th Sunday of Easter Memorial Sunday
May 24, 2020



MEDITATION

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 19th century

"Earth's crammed with heaven... But only he who sees, takes off his shoes."

The Call

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

Let God rise up, let God's enemies be scattered; let those who hate God flee before God. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, let the wicked perish before God. But let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy. Sing to God, sing praises to God's name; lift up a song to the one who rides upon the clouds — be exultant before God whose name is the Sovereign. Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing praises to the Lord, O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens; listen, God sends out a voice, a mighty voice. Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel; and whose power is in the skies. Awesome is God in God's sanctuary, the God of Israel gives power and strength to God's people. Blessed be God!

Prelude

Sandy Wentzloff

Welcome and News of the Church

- Digging Deeper continues on Tuesday May 19, 26, June 2nd and June 9th. Join us.
- On this Memorial Weekend may we find ways to celebrate the reason for this Memorial Day and in this Pandemic time. In the images of this video may we also remember the women and men who now sacrifice for all life in the face of the Pandemic that threatens us all.

Mansions of the Lord https://youtu.be/F6Pz_BGQit!

Gathering Hymn

"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You"

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|---|--|
| 1. Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before you,
op'ning to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
drive the storms of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day! | Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
Singing bird and flowing fountain
teach us what our praise should be. |
| 2. All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heav'n reflect your rays,
Stars and angels sing around you,
center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, | 4. Mortals, join the happy chorus,
which the morning stars began;
Boundless love is reigning o'er us,
reconciling race and clan.
Ever singing, move we forward,
faithful in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us Sunward
In the triumph song of life. |

Call to Worship

(based on Ps 68, The Inclusive Bible translation)

One: We shout for joy to God who rides upon the clouds!

**All: We sing praises to our awe-inspiring God, before whom the earth quakes,
and whose abundant blessings provide for all in need!**

One: God is Sovereign over the earth, Defender of the defenseless, and Parent to orphans;
God creates families for those who are alone.

All: God leads captives to freedom and breaks the yoke of oppression.

One: God goes forth before the people, marching through the wilderness of their lives, bringing forth restoration and justice.

All: Sing praise to God, Rider of the ancient skies, who dwells in holiness.

One: Proclaim the power of God!

**All: O God, how awesome you are in your sanctuary!
You give power and strength to your people.**

One: Let us worship God!

Invocation:

God Most High, we gather to honor and glorify you. Receive our invitation to dwell with us. Enfold us in your presence and fill us again with holy awe and mystery. We are yours and we claim you as our God. **Amen.**

**Gloria Glory be to the 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.**

Confession

Blessed One, you created human beings for your glory and pleasure. Forgive us for being self-absorbed and choosing to live solely for ourselves. Forgive us for ignoring the prompting of your Spirit, your purpose for our lives, and for placing our will above yours. Grant us courage to share in Christ's sufferings, to be his witnesses, and to carry your loving compassion to a hurting world. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

As the Body of Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's witnesses. Each of us has our own story of what Jesus' life means for us. Through our life-stories we can convey hope to the hopeless, joy to the downtrodden, and peace where there is turmoil. Therefore, let us "clothe ourselves in humility," sharing the Good News of Christ, that we "may all be one." In this God is well pleased.

Lectionary Texts

Acts 1:6-14

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

John 17:1-11

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Message

"Left Behind, for Good"

Pastor Dennis

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, come. Inspire our souls and fill our hearts with a passion for your light and love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do you remember what you were doing on May 21, 2011? You may not remember. But you might remember a guy by the name of Harold Camping. He predicted that the rapture was coming on May 21, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. He based his prediction on a passage of scripture that was not talking about this at all. Anyway, he claimed that on this date Jesus would return in glory and take the righteous with him and the rest of us... well, we would be left behind!

I did not pay much attention to his prediction until about a week before when someone asked me, "How are people in your congregation doing in preparation for May 21?" I answered, "I don't know but I would guess they are about as prepared for that as they are for May 22, I don't know!" Then I saw a billboard along the highway which said, "Are you ready? You don't want to be left behind at 6:00 p.m.?" That sort of woke me up to this thing and so I reached out to a pastor friend by phone. He wasn't available but on his voice message were these words, "The pastor of this church has been raptured- never to be heard from again. Have a good day!!" Well, Harold Camping's "left behind" predications were sheer nonsense. However, in our two readings for today we hear of another "left behind" incident and this story, unlike Camping's, is true, uplifting, and meaningful for our lives.

Both of our readings for today speak of the same event, the ascension of our Lord up to heaven. We know that forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven. Our reading from the book of Acts tells us that as Jesus was gathered with his disciples, "*as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.*" In our gospel, Jesus shared with the disciples that he will soon be departing- returning to the Father. Why? So that we may know God (17:3) and- are ready for this? -so that we may do God's work on earth. That is right! Jesus ascends. Jesus leaves- but we stay. Why? To continue the work God first entrusted to Jesus!

Jesus leaves, but we stay! This is the ultimate "left behind" story, but according to Jesus, this "left behind" is neither a sign of imperfect faith nor a chance to prove that you are worthy- as people like Harold Camping would say. Rather, being left behind is for us an honor, an invitation to participate in the glory of the Father, a commissioning, in fact, into the work of Christ. Here Jesus calls each one of us to do what Jesus does- caring, feeding, listening, sharing loving- making manifest the grace and mercy of the God whose greatest desire is to love and to bless everyone in God's world.

In the wonderful words of the 16th century Spanish Carmelite mystic, Saint Teresa of Avila:

*Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

The Good News today is that you and I are the embodiment of Christ and the glory of God- radiating the love and the grace of Christ to others. Jesus ascended. Jesus leaves, but we stay! We are “left behind” for GOOD- to love God and to love others and to change the world. Why? Because LOVE wins!

If you are looking for a movie to watch during these days of physical distancing, I would recommend to you the movie, *42*. This movie recalls the story of the baseball player, Jackie Robinson. Now America during the 1940's was racially segregated, and baseball was America's game. There was the American League, the National League, and the Negro League- completely segregated and seriously bigoted. And the epicenter of bigotry in America was baseball- because it was America's game.

The manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch Rickie, decided that he was going to desegregate baseball. Because he loved the game, he was going to for it what it did not want to do for itself. (You see love is not about your own good but the greater good.)

In order to help baseball for good, Branch Rickie decided to bring a player up from the Negro League. Now there were other players who were faster than Jackie Robinson but there were few others that had the type of integrity that Jackie Robinson had. He loved his wife, he was faithful to her, he went to church, and he believed that Jesus meant the stuff he said.

Branch Rickie was someone who was trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. That is why he believed segregation must end. He believed that segregation was anathema to the name of God who is Love. That is why he did what he did!

When Rickie brought Robinson up, the Philadelphia Phillies did not want to play the Dodgers if Robinson was on the field. Rickie called up the manager and said, “Do you believe that God loves baseball?” The manager responded, “Well, I guess so.” “Well” replied Rickie, “What do you think God is going to say on judgment day when God asks you how come you didn't want to play the Dodgers and you tell God, ‘Because Jackie Robinson was on the team.’” “I don't think that is going to be a sufficient answer!”

In an interview Branch Rickie said that he needed a player who was not going to fight back. He told Robinson, “They are going to come at you with everything they've got- threaten you, throw things at you, spit on you. I need someone who has the courage not fight back- just like Jesus Christ. Then Rickie reached into a drawer and took out a devotional book about the life of Christ. It was based on the Sermon on the Mount. He read to Jackie from the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the merciful and compassionate, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are those who hunger and thirst that God's righteous justice might prevail, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spite you.” “In this way”, Rickie told Robinson, “We can change the baseball.” Jackie Robinson was scared to death, but he agreed. And those two men changed baseball... changed America... and helped change the world! Doesn't this speak of the oneness that Jesus prays for in our gospel for today?

Truly the Ascension of our Lord is the greatest “left behind” story of all time! At his Ascension, Jesus reminded his disciples of who they were and that they will receive power and help to continue Jesus’ mission here on earth. They will be his hands and feet to continue what Jesus has started.

Are not you and I called to do the same! So, go forth, beloved people of God and shine! Go forth, believing that even in the ordinary tasks of life- work, play, family life, connecting with others, that all these ordinary things are also opportunities that honor God. Go forth and let the light and the love of God radiate through you out into the world. May our focus once again this week be: *To Love God, To Love Others and To Change the World?* Why? Because in the end, **LOVE WINS!** Amen.

Hymn *“Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”* vs. 1, 4, 5 NCH #290

1. **Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move.
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.**

4. **Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.**

5. **Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The kindling of the heav’n-descended Dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.**

Prayers of the People and Our Lord’s Prayer

One: Lord in Your Mercy

All: Hear Our 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Offering Invitation

The author of the First Letter to Peter encourages us to humble ourselves before God so that we may be exalted by God on “the appointed day.” Let us share in today’s offering with humble spirits and generous hearts.

Prayer of Dedication

Ever-present and loving God, your Word tells us to cast our cares on you because you care for us. In faith and trust we present these gifts, and ourselves, to you. Bless and multiply them to meet the needs, both hidden and apparent, of your beloved ones. Inspire each of us to live as Christ’s witnesses, today and ever more.
By the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

***Sending Hymn**

“Forward Through the Ages”

NCH #377

1. Forward through the ages, in unbroken line,
Move the faithful spirits, at the call divine.
Gifts in diff'ring measure, hearts of one
accord, manifold the service, one the sure
reward;

2. Wider grows the kingdom, reign of love and
light; For it we must labor, till our faith is
sight. Prophets have proclaimed it, Martyrs
testified, poets sung its glory,
Heroes for it died. **[Refrain]**

Refrain:

**Forward through the ages, in unbroken
line, move the faithful spirits at the call
divine.**

3. Not alone we conquer, not alone we fall;
In each loss or triumph lose or triumph all.
Bound by God's far purpose in one living
whole, Move we on together
To the shining goal! **[Refrain]**

***Benediction**

Continue to be faithful, remain committed, be witnesses for Christ.
For the God of all grace has called you to eternal glory through Jesus Christ, and will fulfill,
restore, strengthen, and establish you through suffering and struggle.
Go forth from this place, empowered by Christ's love, with Christ's name on your lips,
the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit in your mind,
God's love in your hearts, God's beloved ones always in your sight, and
God's still speaking voice in your ear. **Amen.**

Postlude

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Remember in Prayer: Phil Keithahn, 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.

**Our sympathy and prayers go to Cheryl Anderson and Karen Culbert on the loss of their sister,
Beatrice Trout, who passed away last week.**

**Our sympathy and prayers to Susan Schmitt and Cheryl Messner on the passing of their
step-father.**

**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.**

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.**

**Our *From the Heart Offering* for May is for Mission Board Scholarships and can be
sent in or dropped off at church on Wednesdays.**

- ❖ You can **view the Service** online by Friday or Saturday each week.
Click on the link to *view the Service* at: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>
- ❖ **UCC Church Directories** are available for pickup inside the north door each
Wednesday.
- ❖ **Weekly Devotional** available each Tuesday at: www.listen2God.org/worship/devotionals

- **Digging Deeper** continues on Tuesday May 19, 26, June 2nd and June 9th **6:30 p.m. via Zoom.** We will be discussing the book “When Christians Get it Wrong.” The book is not required to participate. 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.
 - **Thank You to Karen Culbert and Cheryl Anderson** for planting the beautiful flowers around church.
- ❖ **The US Census Department is looking for Census takers in our area. The pay is \$22/hour. Call: 720-606-9047 if you are interested. You can also check out their website for more information at 2020Census.gov/jobs.**

**May is Mental Health Awareness Month,
a time to remove stigmas and attain wellness.**



EVERY DAY I WILL:

- Move my body
- Take a screen-time break
- State 3 things I am grateful for (write down or say aloud)

ONCE EACH WEEK I WILL:

- Connect virtually with a friend or family member
- Plan an outdoor activity, like a picnic, hike or bicycle ride
- Set a new goal, like finishing a work, school or home project

ONCE THIS MONTH I WILL:

- Finish reading a book
- Take a 1-day break from all social media and news
- Try a creative activity



*He has made everything beautiful
in its time.” Ecclesiastes 3:11*