

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
318 4th STREET, BOX 385, GAYLORD, MN, 55334
20th Sunday after Pentecost
October 18, 2020



Paul Wellstone, 20th century
"Never separate the life you live from the words you speak."

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

"THE LITTLE CHILDREN AND JESUS"

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

NO MATTER WHO I AM, NO MATTER WHERE I AM ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, I AM WELCOME HERE.

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

ONE: WHO ARE YOU?

ALL: I AM A BELOVED CHILD OF GOD!

ONE: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

ALL: I AM A PERSON OF WORTH TO BE VALUED!

ONE: THEN WHAT WILL YOU DO?

**ALL: I WILL LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE OF MYSELF
AND ALL GOD'S PEOPLE!**

THE CALL

Psalm 96:1-9, 10-13

O sing to God a new song; sing to God, all the earth. Sing to the God, bless God's name; tell of God's salvation from day to day. Declare God's glory among the nations, God's marvelous works among all the peoples. For great is God, and greatly to be praised; God is to be revered above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols but God made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before God; strength and beauty are in God's sanctuary. Ascribe to God, O families of the peoples, ascribe to God glory and strength. Ascribe to God the glory due God's name; bring an offering, and come into God's courts. Worship God in holy splendor; tremble before God, all the earth. Say among the nations, "God is ruler! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. God will judge the peoples, God will judge the people with equity." Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before God; for God is coming, to judge the earth. God will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with God's truth.

PRELUDE

SANDY WENTZLOFF

CALL TO WORSHIP

inspired by Exodus 33:12-23

One: How shall we know that we have found favor in your sight, O God?

People: How do children know that they are created in your image?

One: How do we raise up youth to always know your presence goes with them?

People: How do we find this faith within ourselves, O God?

One: With Moses, we implore, "Show us your glory."

People: With the children, we seek your graciousness now.

GATHERING HYMN

"JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE CHILDREN"

INVOCATION

God of forever and right now,
By your Spirit open our ears to hear your Word to us
in scripture,
in sermon,
in song.

Open our eyes to see your Word to us
in children's faces,
in troubling statistics,
in our action together.

Open our hearts to feel your Word to us
in the warmth of love,
in the ache of sadness,
in the energy of commitment.

Strengthen our desire for justice for all children,
And our wills to advocate and organize,
So that all children may grow up safe, and thrive in community.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(adapted from Christian Resources for Children's Sabbath)

One: Growing God, we confess that we cling to the comfortable, fall back on the familiar, and allow apathy to dull our hearts and our commitment. We shrug our shoulders and say that poverty is inevitable even as it deprives children of the fullness of life that you intend and they deserve. We throw up our hands at the number of children without health coverage and accept what is unacceptable. We shake our heads over the bursting prisons but turn away from the things that push children toward prison rather than keeping them on the path to success.

People: Forgive us, Growing God, for callousness instead of compassion, for discouragement instead of determination, for selfishness instead of service. Allow us to grow into your ways and find favor in your sight. Mature with us so that just love may be realized for all your children. Daydream with us so that we might do justice on the behalf of all children. Answer these prayers we pray in the name of your Beloved Child, the hope of the world. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

(inspired by Exodus 33:12-23)

One: God grows with you. Look upon her face, as she speaks sweetly to you, saying, I will do the very thing you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.

LECTIONARY TEXT

Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The Emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

MESSAGE

"Remember Whose You Are"

Hans and Eric were born within minutes of each other. Their parents had prayed and prayed that God would give them children. And then came the wonderful news that they were pregnant, but they also learned that they were going to have twins. Well, you can imagine the activity in that home as the boys grew. 2 blond haired Scandinavian boys growing up at the same pace in the same place!

And Hans and Eric were pretty good at sharing but occasionally, they got into fights about whose toys those were and whose socks those were.

One day the two boys were playing with trucks on the floor. And then an argument broke out and one said, "Give me that truck, it's mine." And the other replied, "No it isn't, it is mine." The scuffle went on for a while, each claiming to the other that the truck was theirs. But then their Mom, without even raising her voice, said "Whose name is on the bottom of the truck?" And the boys stopped and turned over the truck and there in black magic marker was the name of Eric. The boys looked at the name on the truck and then Hans politely handed the truck to his brother and said, "Here, Eric. This is yours-your name is on it!" And they went back to playing.

Their Mom had wisely marked everything. Every coat, every pair of underwear, every toy. They were all clearly marked with a name so whenever a question came up, it was clear. Just look at the name on it and you will know who it belongs to!

This is one of the insights that Jesus reveals in today's gospel. Here in our reading we see that Jesus meets up with two groups in Judaism, the Pharisees and the Herodians. About the only thing that these two groups have in common is that they don't like Jesus. And so, the Pharisees and the Herodians hold their noses and put their differences aside and come together to pose a trick question to Jesus that they hope will entrap him and put him between a rock and a hard place. They ask Jesus, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the Roman emperor, or not?"

Now if Jesus answers "Yes, it is OK to pay taxes to the emperor, then the Pharisees can publicly denounce Jesus as an enemy of the people. And if Jesus says, "No, it is not OK to pay taxes to the emperor, the Herodians can denounce Jesus as an enemy of the government. Pretty slick, Huh!

But know that neither the Pharisees nor the Herodians really care about the answer Jesus gives. They are simply trying to get Jesus to say something that will get him into trouble. They have set up the argument and they are ready to pounce!

But Jesus not only evades their trap but entangles these religious leaders in their own devices. Jesus asks them to show him the coin that is used to pay the emperor's tax. They quickly procure one. And then Jesus asks the question, "Whose name is on the coin?" They answer "the Emperor's". But not only was the Roman Emperor's image on the coin but there were also engraved these words, "Tiberius Caesar, Augustus Son of the Divine Augustus" and on the other side "Pontifex Maximus" which means high priest. The coin proclaimed that the Roman Emperor was god. And so, any Jew holding the coin was breaking the first two commandments. Remember? "You shall have no other Gods before me...and you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain". All of which leads Jesus to respond to them: "So give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and give to God the things that are God's."

And so, instead of trapping Jesus, the religious leaders are the ones who are entrapped. They are guilty of spiritual amnesia. They have forgotten whose they were. They have forgotten in whose likeness they were made.

And here is where the story touches our lives today. Consider for a moment this question: "Whose image is on you? Whose image is on me? In whose likeness are we made?" Doesn't the very first chapter in the Bible say, "Let us make humankind in our image." Do you hear that? God has made each one of us in God's image. We were made in the likeness of God. Whose are we? We belong to God!

And then in our baptism, God personally comes to each one of us and names us-child of God! And marks us - "you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever." And also, in our baptism God claims "We are born children of a fallen humanity; but in the waters of Baptism we are REBORN children of God and made inheritors of eternal life." Whose are we?

Whose image is on us? God's!!

Life goes the best for me when I am mindful of this. When I remember whose I am.

What has kept me going as a person who in my life has been marginalized because God created me gay? It is remembering whose I am. No matter what society said, no matter what family or friends or even the institutional church said, I always tried to remember what God has said to all of us, "You are mine. You are in my image. You belong to me." As one person told me years ago, "We are made in God's image and God doesn't make junk." And so,

no matter what you may be going through,
no matter what you may be dealing with.

No matter what insensitive and awful comments others may say to you and about you.
And for that matter, no matter what self-defeating things you may say in your mind
about yourself

(things like "I'm not good enough. No one could love me. I've done too much wrong to
be accepted.")

No matter what you say about yourself,

God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have created you in my image,
I have called you by name, my image is deep within you, YOU BELONG to me!

Remembering whose we are, helps us during times of difficulty and struggle and remembering whose we are also assists us as we live in the world today. There are, aren't there, a lot of "Caesars" of this world that want to lay claim to us. Caesars in the form of greed, self-absorption and control of others and unforgiveness and many other things that want to lay claim on us and rule our lives. Dear friend, I don't know what Caesars you are tempted to worship. But what I do know it this, the next time you are tempted to do the wrong thing-STOP! And ask yourself, "Whose name is on me? And the next time you feel pulled (***pull hands apart***) to compromise your Gospel values. Stop! You belong to God. You bear God's image and God's name. And the next time you are headed down a path to what is sinful, Stop! Ask yourself, "Whose name is on me?"

You and I don't have to be blond headed Scandinavian twins to figure this out.

When it feels like evil is trying to fill you and divide your life.

When you are struggling with something in life,

Stop and remember the name written on you in baptism and remember you belong to God.

All of you. Every part of you.

Whose are you? Whose am I? We belong to God made known to us in Jesus the Christ.

Thanks be to God! Amen!

MORNING HYMN

"YOU ARE MINE"

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

God of Love and Compassion, creator of all that is, each creature and creation, bless us as we gather in this place, in your name. We give praise and thanksgiving to you for all with which you have blessed us. We lift up to you this day those who are ill. The pandemic continues to claim lives and bring weakened health to your people. We pray for all who suffer and grieve. We pray for the safety and health of those working on the front lines of fighting the virus and bringing hope and compassion to your people who are alone and afraid. We pray for our country in this election year. May each candidate yearn for peace and justice for all. May all who would be leaders seek your wisdom and guidance if given the call to lead. Be with the citizens of this great nation and enable and encourage them to take part in the American process by voting. Let each of us find our voice and lift it up to be heard. We pray for our church. Make it an instrument of your peace. A sanctuary of safety and assurance. Make us your people a caring people in the needs of each of the people of Gaylord and the world. Lead us to find our gifts and our callings. Give us the strength and guidance to follow as

you call us. May we take seriously that we are a called people that the world needs to bring blessings to life for all. Now give us strength as a community as we gather our voices in one prayer,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses and we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For you are the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

PIANO

"THREE FOLD AMEN"

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

God looks upon your face. God assures you when nothing else can.

"My presence will go with you," God says. "I will give you rest," God prays.

Let us carry this spirit into our giving. Let us praise God with our gifts of tithes and offerings.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

adapted from Christian Resources for Children's Sabbath

People: O God, help us to recover our hope for our children's sake.

Help us to recover our courage for our children's sake.

Help us to recover our discipline for our children's sake.

Help us to recover our ability to work together for our children's sake.

Help us to recover our values for our children's sake.

Help us to recover our faith in you for our children's sake. Amen.

SENDING HYMN

"GO NOW IN PEACE"

BENEDICTION

inspired by Exodus 33:12-23

ONE: Growing God, we have known your presence.

People: We have lived in your love.

One: Show us your glory.

People: Reveal your glory in us.

One: We will carry your glory from here.

People: We will show it to all your children. Amen.

One: People of God, go now in peace.

POSTLUDE

Sandy Wentzloff



Pastor Dennis has been tested for Covid-19 and will know the results by Saturday or after. If you were in worship on the October 11th and have any Covid-19 symptoms, you should call your doctor and let them know that you may have been exposed as a precautionary measure. He is quarantined at least until the results are known. We will let you know the results of the test as soon as possible. Please keep him in your prayers.

Remember in Prayer: Pastor Dennis, Greg Armstrong (Howard's brother), Sandy Wentzloff, Dick Carlson, Ewald Keller, Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and others at Oak Terrace and Golden Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

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

Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371. E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com • Website at listen2god.org

Giving our Gifts to God:

Tithes and Offerings can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334. You can also donate on our website or drop off at the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Thank you for your continued support for the ministries of this church.

GUCC ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

**On November 29 we enter the church year season of Advent.
Advent is a "Season of Hope."**

If there ever is a time when we need hope, it is this year! Will you help nourish your fellow congregational members in hope? I need 27 people to write a devotion centered on hope of about two paragraphs in length. You might want to write about a scripture or what is renewing your hope at this time or what is the basis of your hope, or whatever you feel would be of benefit to members of the congregation. Please email me at dmckee545@gmail.com soon and share that you are willing to share a devotion. I will need to receive your devotion via email or at the church office by November 15 so that the booklet can be compiled before the beginning of Advent. *Thank you for being a part of this project of Hope!*

- ❖ Our [From the Heart Offering](#) in **October** goes to *Neighbors in Need*. Deposit your donation in the Heart Basket near the Sanctuary doors.
- ❖ [Men's Fellowship](#) meets every [Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. in church in the Fireside Room](#).
- ❖ Gaylord UCC is delivering [Meals on Wheels](#) during October.
Volunteers are as follows:
 - Oct. 19-23 Howard and Fran Armstrong
 - Oct. 26-30 Don Swenson
- ❖ [Fall Cleaning Day at UCC](#) Wednesday, October 21 beginning at 5:00 p.m.
- ❖ [Women's Fellowship meeting after church Sunday, October 25](#) to discuss Christmas and Hanging of the Greens.

