

## Worship July 5, 2020

### Welcome

I welcome you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it.

### Opening Prayer

Join me in prayer

Wonderful Savior, thank you for the gift of your presence in and among us, whether we are gathered together or dispersed throughout the world. Unite us in your love. Give us rest in your ways. We thank you for all the ways you have blessed us and for the freedoms we enjoy here. Help us to let go of the distractions of this world and focus our hearts on you in worship. Amen.

### Hymn UMH 696

### America the Beautiful

### Children's Message

Ben Ziegler

### Scripture Psalm 72 (New Living Translation)

Please pray with me.

Quiet our hearts before you Lord, and open our ears to your word. Give us understanding and lead us in your ways, Amen.

### A psalm of Solomon.

- <sup>1</sup> Give your love of justice to the king, O God,  
and righteousness to the king's son.
- <sup>2</sup> Help him judge your people in the right way;  
let the poor always be treated fairly.
- <sup>3</sup> May the mountains yield prosperity for all,  
and may the hills be fruitful.
- <sup>4</sup> Help him to defend the poor,  
to rescue the children of the needy,  
and to crush their oppressors.
- <sup>5</sup> May they fear you as long as the sun shines,  
as long as the moon remains in the sky.  
Yes, forever!
- <sup>6</sup> May the king's rule be refreshing like spring rain on freshly cut grass,  
like the showers that water the earth.
- <sup>7</sup> May all the godly flourish during his reign.  
May there be abundant prosperity until the moon is no more.

<sup>8</sup> May he reign from sea to sea,  
and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

<sup>9</sup> Desert nomads will bow before him;  
his enemies will fall before him in the dust.

<sup>10</sup> The western kings of Tarshish and other distant lands  
will bring him tribute.  
The eastern kings of Sheba and Seba  
will bring him gifts.

<sup>11</sup> All kings will bow before him,  
and all nations will serve him.

<sup>12</sup> He will rescue the poor when they cry to him;  
he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.

<sup>13</sup> He feels pity for the weak and the needy,  
and he will rescue them.

<sup>14</sup> He will redeem them from oppression and violence,  
for their lives are precious to him.

<sup>15</sup> Long live the king!  
May the gold of Sheba be given to him.  
May the people always pray for him  
and bless him all day long.

<sup>16</sup> May there be abundant grain throughout the land,  
flourishing even on the hilltops.  
May the fruit trees flourish like the trees of Lebanon,  
and may the people thrive like grass in a field.

<sup>17</sup> May the king's name endure forever;  
may it continue as long as the sun shines.  
May all nations be blessed through him  
and bring him praise.

<sup>18</sup> Praise the Lord God, the God of Israel,  
who alone does such wonderful things.

<sup>19</sup> Praise his glorious name forever!  
Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.  
Amen and amen!

In addition to this scripture the meditation today is based on Matthew 11:28-30 (New International Version), focuses on how God is with us in times of despair to breathe fresh

breath, transform us, and give us dreams and new vision that we may experience life anew. Therefore, we stand ready always to give a reason for our hope.

### **Meditation**

Please join me in prayer. Lord, these are weary times. Many of us carry the burdens of this world. Give us the courage to surrender our cares to you and take up your work. May you use these words today to strengthen us in following you. Amen.

Rest and burden don't sound like words that should go together, do they? Yet in today's passage, this is precisely what Jesus offers us. We can only find real rest through life in Jesus. Let's start off thinking about burdens. What comes to mind when you think of a burden? One literal example that quickly comes to mind is a time when Melissa and I had to carry all our camping supplies during a hike.

It was about a month ago we went on a camping trip. The state parks were just starting to open back up for camping and we reserved a backpacking site out of desperation. We were packed for a drive-in site though. While the spot was only half a mile from the parking spot, it proved to be a challenge. We trudged along with all the comforts we were accustomed to: chairs, air mattresses, a large jug of water, two backpacks full of clothes and provisions, and two more packs for carrying tired children. I remember midway to the camp on the second trip wishing I had some kind of yoke to get the load up on my shoulders more comfortably.

I think it is helpful to reflect on the literal side of the Bible's word pictures. They convey a feeling that resonates with our experiences. While you may not all be campers, I'm sure there are times that you have struggled under a weight. First there is the prideful assumption that we can handle it. It's not that heavy. It's not that far. Then we begin to feel the weight pressed upon us. Surely adjusting the load slightly will help. Maybe just a short breather. As you go on you get sweaty and shakes, every breath of air becomes a greater challenge. Finally, you arrive. The burden is delivered, and all you can do is sink down into a chair or lay down somewhere and gather yourself.

Jesus doesn't speak to us of a short half mile walk though, but of the countless miles of life's journey. Our burden is not static or even being slowly reduced through eating and drinking, but instead it grows. We may think we have what it takes, but we don't really know what we are getting ourselves into. We all bear burdens.

The Gospel of Matthew is expertly crafted to instruct us. Not only do we have Jesus' teaching in this passage, but it is sandwiched between two examples of burden bearing. First, we have the burden of discipleship in chapters 10-11, then we have the burden of the Pharisees in chapter 12. In this particular case, Jesus uses the Sabbath as the context of demonstrating the burden of the Pharisees.

You are probably familiar with the biblical teaching on the Sabbath: do no work, but rest. This was a gift from God to draw us closer to him and for our benefit. I mean, how many of us would

love part of our job description to be: take this day off, spend time with your family, take a nap and do not show up to work. Yet this became a contentious issue. The Jews of the day were not just bound to the biblical command, but to the rules of tradition. These were extra rules which created boundaries about the Sabbath. They defined what counted as work, listing off specific activities that were prohibited.

Jesus and his disciples break two of these specific rules from the tradition, they were picking a fight with the Pharisees. We get two stories about it in this passage. First, they pick grain on the Sabbath. Second, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath. In these instances, Jesus was putting on full display how light his burden was, much to the dismay of the Pharisees!

This morning, we are all in our homes worshiping over the internet, so I don't really know who is out there listening right now, but I strongly suspect that none of you are observant Orthodox Jews. The burden that Jesus bucks here is not something that really strikes home for you, but all of us bear some kind of burden. Think of some of those burdens you carry. As for me, I often remember my own failures. Times I have yielded to temptation or taken the easy way. Times I have slacked and been slothful rather than diligent. Times I have failed to show compassion or taken initiative in loving someone. Times I have lost patience or spoken harshly.

Yet in picking this fight, Jesus was not only displaying the kind of burden the Pharisees were laying on everyone, but he was putting his own burden on display. This is the same burden he offers us, a burden which offers us true rest. So, what is this burden? What does it look like?

In Chapter 10 he sends out his disciples bearing this burden. In contrast with my camping trip, the disciples had next to nothing to carry, but they brought with them the good news of Jesus Christ. The good news of deliverance and freedom. He warned them that this could result in a being arrested. This was no surprise to them since we learn in the next passage that John the Baptist had been imprisoned.

John exemplified the burden. He left behind the burdens of perusing wealth and success to proclaim the gospel, and in turn he was arrested for speaking out against Herod. It was hard for him. He even sent his followers to ask Jesus if he was really the Messiah, and Jesus told them to look at what was being done. People were being healed and the good news proclaimed.

When Jesus picks his fights with the Pharisees, he does it by bearing the burden he calls us to. He and his disciples pick grain to sustain them when they are hungry, even though it's the Sabbath. He heals a man who was suffering and disabled even though it was the Sabbath. Through these words and these actions, Jesus shows us that his burden is to love. He quotes from the Hosea 6:6 as he responds to the Pharisees in Matthew 12:7, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

What does it mean then to set aside our burdens and take up his? It means we give up all the guilt, shame and religious duties we've acquired and confess them to Jesus, letting him take care of it. Then we take up his yoke, the burden of mercy and love.

As we've seen with the disciples, this does not mean that we will not work and even suffer in our following, but our labors give us rest rather than weariness. It is in this way that Jesus' message is so countercultural. We can be sure of God's satisfaction when we exchange burdens with Jesus. We can rest in the humility and gentleness of Jesus.

But what does this look like for us? First, we give up to him all those burdens we cling to. We give up our bitterness. We give up our failures. We give up our guilt and our shame. We give up our pride and superiority. Then our hands are empty to receive the humble and gentle yoke of Jesus. We can take up humility. We can take up being gentle with others. We can take up looking after the needs of people in every way available to us.

There is a danger here of replacing one law with another. Here are a couple safe guards against going down the path of rules. First, are you in a relationship with Jesus? Do you talk to him? Do you listen to him and obey him? That personal interaction with Jesus offers us freedom from impersonal lists of rules. Second, what are your motives? Have you really given up your burden, or are you trying to prove yourself by carrying something else? You don't need to worry about pleasing God, but follow him, and out of recognizing what he has done for you, love others.

Pray with me. Jesus, thank you for coming to us with humility. Thank you for saving us from the evils of our hearts and of the world. Bring in us a newness of life; a trust and love of you. Praise be to your name. Amen.

**Hymn** UMH 347

Spirit Song

### **Offering**

At this time in our service we usually make an offering. Through our gifts we do at least two things. We celebrate God and thank him for the numerous ways he has provided for us. We also take part in the ministry of his church. These gifts help us to gather together as a community in worship and to show mercy and love to our neighbors. Take a moment to consider the gifts God has given you and reflect on what giving back might mean. It's okay if you want to pause right now to do that. Join me in praying for these gifts.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

Gracious God, you have given us more than we can possibly fathom. Give us eyes to see a fraction of what you have done for us. Give us hearts to respond with joy and to join in your work here. May these gifts advance your kingdom. Amen.

### **Benediction**

Surrender the burdens of your life and go forth in the mercy and love of Jesus. May you find true rest in him. AMEN.

## **Announcements**

- Thank you to music leader Ellen Timmers and accompanist Elaine Keehr.
- Thank you to my helpers for the children's message
- If you are interested in receiving an Upper Room Meditation for July and August contact the church office.
- We are once again having youth group. If you are going into 7<sup>th</sup> grade or older, please join us for a time of fellowship and discussion behind the church on Wednesdays from 5:30-7:00..
- **Mora and Ogilvie United Methodist Church will not offer in-person worship until we can do so safely**, adhering to federal and state recommendations, and the guidance of the Minnesota Annual Conference.  
As we continue to navigate this challenging season, let us remember that God is with us.

So until we meet gather again, I wish you peace.