

Worship at Home for September 6 2020

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Centering Prayer

You call us to contemplation and worship, Holy God.
You beckon us to focus inwardly, and find your Spirit residing in our hearts.
You invite us to focus outwardly, to find your Word at work in our world.
You abide with us we read, listen, ponder and question.
Thank you, Ever-present God.
Amen

Opening Music: "Praise the Lord"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu0LGJEcLRU>

Opening Prayer

For this Sunday of the Labour Day weekend, our opening prayer is by the famous theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. His 'Serenity Prayer' (God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference) is widely recognized and used.

O God, you have bound us together in this life.
Give us grace to understand how our lives depend
on the courage, industry, honesty,
and integrity of all who labour.
May we be mindful of their needs, grateful for their faithfulness,
and faithful in our responsibilities to them.
Amen

Scripture Romans 13:8-14

Owe no debt to anyone – except the debt that binds us to love one another. If you love your neighbour, you have fulfilled the Law. The commandments – no committing adultery, no killing, no stealing, no coveting, and all the others – are summed up in this one: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love never wrongs anyone – hence love is the fulfillment of the Law.

Besides, you know the hour in which we are living. It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent, the day draws near. So let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us live honourably as in the daylight, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with our Saviour Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the night.

Reflection

It seems simple, really. Love above all else. Love your neighbour, love the light, love God-in-Christ and wear that love like a skin. Love so much that you would never harm another – love yourself so much that you would never bring harm to yourself through negative behaviour. Love to fulfill God’s loving law for us all.

We know the realities of our lives make it difficult to love each other sometimes, and perhaps there is a darkness in us that prevents us from truly loving ourselves. We may love our church community, but lose patience with one another. We may love our friends – most of the time, but are challenged to love those who are more distant or different from us. Also in our time the concept of ‘love’ has been commercialized through television programs where contestants compete for the love of a man or woman, it is sometimes mocked by entertainers, it is the subject of song and story. Are we too inundated with unreal ideas about this love God calls us to share? How do we define ‘love’ anyway?

To me, this love – *agape* – is found in the deep respect I hold for others, even when I find them challenging or when we disagree. To feel this love is to remember deeply that no matter what, we are all beloved of God; we all matter to God and should be profoundly important to one another. To love my neighbour is to notice the differences, celebrate what we can, lift them up when needed, or walk beside when appropriate. When I feel held in God’s love, it is because I am respected, noticed, and held in high regard by another.

How would you define ‘love for your neighbour’? How comfortable are you in sharing that love?

Of course we do not live in a perfect world. I have heard more hate and intolerance in newscasts over the past few months than I think I have heard in many years, especially coming from south of our border, but we are not blameless. People seem to be finding more ways to be separate and fewer ways to share the simple blessing of love.

Have you heard or read words that seem opposite to ‘loving’? How do they make you feel?

Paul's words to the church in Rome seem just as appropriate for us today as perhaps they were almost 20 centuries ago, as we are faced once again with a world in turmoil: "So let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light." Let us cast off racism, let us cast off intolerance and ignorance, let us cast off our impatience and fears. Let us don armour that shines with truth and genuine care, with hope and respect, with the desire to change ourselves and our world so that we can love and be loved.

It's *not* simple, this loving our neighbours and living in Christ's light. It takes courage, it takes insight, it takes humility and patience with ourselves. It can bring us joy, or disturb us so much we must act, it can energize us or leave us exhausted. Ultimately, it can fill us.

May you find ways to love and be loved in your coming days, and may you always remember that God loves you more than you can ever imagine. Amen

Music: "Love is the Touch"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIBAX0cCKel>

Prayers of the People *Prayers for this Worship at Home are from our podcast, where we focused on the return to school for teachers, students and many others.*

God of love and light, today we offer thanks for all the ways that you call us to be students and learners. We can learn from creation, we can study scripture, we can be taught by one another. We thank you for teachers, professors, mentors and all people who share their knowledge, their experience, and their care and concern. We thank you for teaching assistants, bus drivers, janitors, administrators, school nurses and other professionals who add their skill to create safe and healthy places for students to learn.

We know, God that this will not be a 'back to school' like other years.

Parents, educators and some students are worried about what school will look like, and concerned about the spread of the COVID-19 virus in classrooms and schools of all kinds. So we pray for those who are worried right now, those who are nervous about returning to school and those who are concerned about returning to their work in schools. We also remember and pray for people who are worried about their jobs, or their families, or troubled about continued racial inequality. In our worries, God, send hope and calm. And we pray for the people who make decisions that affect our schools – principles and school boards, public health officials, politicians and other policy makers. Send your Spirit to guide their decisions with compassion and care, with justice and with humility.

Loving and Caring God, hear our prayers, and help us to offer our support to those who learn and those who teach – little ones just beginning their formal education and older ones beginning university or other training, eight year olds excited to see their friends again, and teens who have missed their school communities. Remind us to keep them all in our thoughts and prayers each day. Remind us that we can all be teachers, and all be ones who learn – especially about you, God. Help us to grow always in our faith, help us to share our questions and our discoveries. In the name of our teacher and friend Jesus, we pray. Amen

Closing music: "My Love Colours Outside the Lines"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zbBz9voqu0>

Blessing

Rise from your kitchen tables or your couches to spread the love of Jesus in your spaces.

Move from one task to another knowing that God accompanies us in each.

Look out your windows – and look forward - with the hope of the Spirit.

Amen

"The Lord Bless You and Keep You"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3V4paAmFiM&list=PLRRb1aKIl8lwllHuM4UkDU7ksuSbSaFwZ&index=50>