

At Home Worship
January 10, 2021
First Presbyterian Church-Sweetwater

Find a Sacred Space

Sit comfortably, perhaps with something warm to drink, where you can look out on the beauty Of God's creation today. Read aloud or quietly to yourself, or as a family share the various parts of the service.

Greeting - The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Call to Worship and Prayer of Praise

Rejoice! The Lord has heard our cries. One is coming who will save us all.

Praise be to God! Will this one lead us as a mighty warrior?

The One to come will redeem us through love and the Holy Spirit.

But will this New Kingdom be strong and respected and admired by all?

The One to come will reign over the hearts of all throughout eternity!

Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Almighty God, whose mercy surpasses the bounds the human mind can comprehend, You sent the Christ to call us into Your family even when our vision was too small. Your love and acceptance of us gave us the courage to reach out to others in love and acceptance as well. We praise You, Lord! In Christ we pray. Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn "More Like the Master"

1. More like the Master I would ever be, More of His meekness, more humility;
More zeal to labor, more courage to be true, More consecration for work He bids me do.

Refrain:

Take Thou my heart, I would be Thine alone; Take Thou my heart, and make it all Thine own;
Purge me from sin, O Lord, I now implore, Wash me and keep me Thine forevermore.

2. More like the Master is my daily prayer; More strength to carry crosses I must bear;
More earnest effort to bring His kingdom in; More of His Spirit, the wanderer to win.

Refrain:

Take Thou my heart, I would be Thine alone; Take Thou my heart, and make it all Thine own;
Purge me from sin, O Lord, I now implore, Wash me and keep me Thine forevermore.

3. More like the Master I would live and grow; More of His love to others I would show; More
self-denial, like His in Galilee, More like the Master I long to ever be.

Refrain:

Take Thou my heart, I would be Thine alone; Take Thou my heart, and make it all Thine own;
Purge me from sin, O Lord, I now implore, Wash me and keep me Thine forevermore.

A Time of Confession and Assurance

Lord, so often we have tried to tell You what is best for us and our world instead of seeking Your eternal wisdom and guidance in prayer. Too often we have sought greatness and power by worldly standards and failed to hear Your call to serve even the poor and wounded around us. Forgive us, Lord, and give us the strength and courage to become Your servants anew. Amen.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We believe and although we fall short, we must persevere to the end. Hold tight to His Word. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn “Be Thou My Vision”

1. Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art Thou my best Thought, by day or by night, Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.
2. Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word; I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord; Thou my great Father, I Thy true son; Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.
3. Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise, Thou mine Inheritance, now and always: Thou and Thou only, first in my heart, High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.
4. High King of Heaven, my victory won, May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun! Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

You're A Good Kid!

Mark 1:9-13

Harriett Beecher Stowe was a most successful writer. She achieved her first triumph as an author at the age of twelve. She was a student at Litchfield Academy. With the other Litchfield students she was required to submit an essay at the end of the term. Her essay was awarded first prize by the unanimous vote of the judges and was one of two read at the graduation exercises by the headmaster, John Brace. So outstanding was her paper, the audience applauded when it was read. When it was revealed that Harriett Beecher was the author of this paper, her father Lyman, pastor of the local church, smiled proudly. The smile of her proud father was a reward Harriett cherished as long as she lived. Her biographer said, "Neither the honors nor the success she won in later life meant as much to her [as her father's smile], and, in effect, her career was determined." A father's smile--a mother's nod of approval. Powerful! Deep within the heart of every young person is the need to have a father or a mother say, "Well done. I'm proud of you. You're a good kid!"

THE DEEPEST NEED EVERY YOUNG PERSON HAS IS THE NEED TO FEEL ACCEPTED, LOVED, WANTED, APPRECIATED.

In our lesson for today Mark tells us that at Jesus' baptism he heard the voice of God saying to him, "You are my beloved son with whom I am well pleased!"

What a marvelous affirmation! Do you remember Luke's comments about Jesus' younger years, "...he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."

I wonder if his mother Mary ever said to Jesus, "You're a bad boy." I doubt it, don't you? I'm not saying that Jesus did not have a normal childhood. What I am saying is there were some things Mary believed about Jesus. She knew he was a special child. He might be mischievous, he might be rowdy, but he could never be bad! I wish every mother and father could believe that about their child.

We are all familiar with the term self-fulfilling prophecy. It means that we tend to conform to the image we have of ourselves. If we see ourselves as clumsy, we will act clumsy. If we see ourselves as intelligent, we will generally act intelligently. And if we see ourselves as bad, unacceptable, unlovable and unworthy, that is how we will behave.

In his book, *MISTREATED!*, Ron Lee Dunn tells about two altar boys. One was born in 1892 in Eastern Europe. The other was born just three years later in a small town in Illinois. Though they lived very separate lives in very different parts of the world, these two altar boys had almost identical experiences. Each boy was given the opportunity to assist his parish priest in the service of Communion. Ironically, each boy, while handling the communion cup, accidentally spilled some of the wine on the carpet. There the similarities end.

The priest in the Eastern European church, seeing the purple stain on the carpet, slapped the little altar boy hard across the face and shouted, "Clumsy oaf! Leave the altar!" That little boy grew up to become an atheist and a Communist. He was the strongman dictator of Yugoslavia from 1943 to 1980. His name was Josip Broz Tito.

The priest in the church in Illinois, upon seeing the stain near the altar, knelt down to the little boy's level, looked him tenderly in the eyes and said, "It's all right, son. You'll do better next time. You'll be a fine priest for God someday." That little boy grew up to become the much loved Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. Two young boys. Two similar experiences with radically different endings. We all need to feel loved, accepted, appreciated.

This brings us to the second thing to be said: **WE BECOME WHAT OTHERS TELL US WE WILL BECOME.** Tell a child that he or she is a good child, praise him for his positive acts, tell her she is pretty and you are proud of her, and he or she will live up to that positive self-image.

Pablo Picasso once said rather immodestly, "When I was a child, my mother said to me, 'If you become a soldier you'll be a general. If you become a monk you'll end up as the Pope.' Instead I became a painter and wound up as Picasso." Whether you appreciate Picasso's art or not you will have to admit he had a wise mother. We become what people tell us we will become. If people prophesy success for us then success is probably what we will attain.

There was once a very lonely and sad young man named Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). When Arthur was a boy, his father died by drowning. His mother, an advocate of free love, virtually abandoned him. Schopenhauer grew to young manhood groping for an understanding of life.

Once when he thought he was alone he bent over a rose and began speaking lovingly to the flower. A gardener came by and said in all earnestness, "Who are you?" Schopenhauer replied, "Ah, if you could tell me that, you would be the greatest philosopher in all the world."

Having said this he realized that if he could answer the question, "Who am I?" he would also be the greatest of all philosophers. How could he discover himself and realize his potentials?

One day after his mother had settled down, he visited her. She was having a party. A group of children, catching sight of Schopenhauer's serious, brooding face, laughed at him. Hurt by the attitude of the children, he walked mournfully away and stood at a window gazing out despondently. The taunts of the young people were suddenly cut short by a deep German voice, "Children, don't laugh at that young man. In time he will surpass us all."

Schopenhauer turned and met the thoughtful gaze of the speaker, a man named Goethe, proclaimed as the greatest genius of the eighteenth century. The words rang through Schopenhauer's mind: "He will surpass us all." It had been a chance encounter, but the sad, young philosopher never forgot it. Though he never let it be known, Goethe became his inspiration and idol. He did gain recognition as a philosopher of extraordinary ability. When he died he chose to do so seated in a chair beneath the picture of the German poet who saw him as he could be.

We all need somebody who believes in us somebody who sees us as we could be. We all need to feel loved, accepted, appreciated. We become what significant others tell us we will become. This brings us to our final point.

IN ORDER FOR CHILDREN TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES, PARENTS NEED TO LEARN TO SEPARATE THEIR CHILDREN'S DEEDS FROM THEIR WORTH AS HUMAN BEINGS. It's not easy being a parent. A mother of three unruly preschoolers was asked whether she'd have children if she had to do it all over again. "Sure," she responded, "but not the same ones!"

A famous pediatrician was asked by a mother what the best time was to put her children to bed. "While you still have the strength," was the answer.

It is not easy being a parent, but perhaps the most difficult part of all is separating a child's actions from his value as a person. It is one thing to say, "Tommy, you have done a bad thing. It is quite another to say, "Tommy, you are a bad boy." A child breaks a dish. Mother comes running with a scowl upon her face. "Naughty girl!" she says loudly. "Shame on you." A few moments later the child is tugging on Mommy's dress. She's looking up into Mommy's face. What she wants to know is, "Am I still loved. I have done something I shouldn't have done. Am I still a person worthy of my mother's love?" A wise mother or father will take the child up into their arms and offer comfort and assurance at this point.

Here we take our cue from Jesus--for this is what the cross is all about. Because of what Christ has done, our acceptability is separated from our sinful actions. What else does it mean that our sins have all been washed away?

It has often been noted that Jesus never called people sinners. The woman was not an adulteress. She was a person of worth who had committed an adulterous act. The man who stole is not a thief but rather a person of worth who has committed a grievous crime. When we say God loves the sinner but not the sin, we are stating the most foundational truth about the meaning of agape love. It is a truth we need to apply to our lives as families. Separate the action from the person.

One last word. Some of us are not parents. There is no one for whom we are responsible to bolster their self-esteem. No, we are not all parents, but we are all children. Some of us bear scars from our own upbringing.

Arturo Toscanini, as a child, never knew whether or not his mother loved him. When he grew up and received the acclaim of vast audiences everywhere, he still felt this gnawing emptiness, this chasm in his soul. He could never be sure that his success brought any joy or comfort to his mother's heart.

In Faye Welden's book, *FEMALE FRIENDS*, one woman expresses relief that her mother has died, saying that now there is one less pair of eyes to judge her.

Maybe that is your experience. Perhaps there were significant others who somehow communicated to you once upon a time that you were stupid, ugly, unacceptable.

Or perhaps you have let yourself down. There was an occasion or perhaps several occasions when you fell into a grievous sin. You are coping with guilt, with the fear of discovery, or the regret of having hurt people you love. Now you are sorry. You can't change the past, you are seeking to change the future. The past still haunts you, though.

I want you to look into the eyes of a man who hangs on a cross--eyes filled with forgiveness, renewal and love. Eyes that see you but not your sin. It makes a difference whether you once told a lie or that you are a liar. It makes a difference whether you once broke your marriage vows or you are an adulterer. It makes a difference whether you once cheated on your taxes or that you are a cheat. Unfortunately there are some people who continue behavior until they actually become a liar, a cheat, or an adulterer. But it doesn't have to be that way. At the foot of the cross there is hope. He is able to separate our worth as a child of God from our bad deeds.

A little child broke a vase that was a cherished heirloom. Because she knew its value, the child cried out when she broke it. Her mother came running. The child was surprised to see not anger but relief on her mother's face. "I thought you were hurt," her mother said, gathering her into arms. Looking back on that event later she said "I discovered that day that I was the family treasure." - Would that every child would grow up with that kind of feeling. "I am the family treasure." We all need to feel loved, accepted, valued. We have a tendency to become what people will tell us we will become. The wise parent separates a child's actions from his or her value as a person.

Fortunately that is how God values us. He is able to separate us from our sin. Thus he can cleanse and help us start anew.

My prayer for us going into 2021 is that each and everyone of us might feel, at a deep level, that love, acceptance, and value that Christ places on each of our lives and that because we feel it we help others feel it as well.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn “Pass It On”

1. It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing;
That's how it is with God's Love, Once you've experienced it, You spread the love to everyone
You want to pass it on.

2. What a wondrous time is spring, when all the trees are budding. The birds begin to sing, the
flowers start their blooming; that's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it. You want
to sing, it's fresh like spring, you want to pass it on.

3. I wish for you my friend this happiness that I've found; you can depend on God
It matters not where you're bound, I'll shout it from the mountain top - PRAISE GOD!
I want the world to know The Lord of love has come to me I want to pass it on.

I'll shout it from the mountain top - PRAISE GOD! I want the world to know The Lord of love has
come to me I want to pass it on.

Blessing

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's
Son, in truth and love. 2 John 3