

At Home Worship
February 7, 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

Let us lift our praises unto the Lord our Savior!

Let us sing our songs to the glory and wonders of our loving God!

We were all once broken and torn by our sins,

Yet God cleansed us, healed our hearts, and made us whole again!

From the joy and love in our hearts let us praise God's love!

Blessed be the name of the Lord!

O Lord, You alone are the Creator and Sustainer of all the Universe, and in Your merciful love You have extended to us Your healing and salvation. With true love we thank you, Lord. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Sing, Listen, or Read Hymn

“Seek Ye First”

175

1. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things, shall be added onto you, Alleu, alleluia!
2. Ask and it shall be given unto you, Seek and ye shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened onto you. Alleu, alleluia!
3. You shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God Alleu, alleluia!

A Time of Confession and Assurance

Lord, so often in our pride we forget the way we were before You touched our lives. And too often, Lord, we tend to forget what we would still be were it not for Your forgiveness and healing power. Forgive us, Lord, and give us the vision we need to share Your Gospel in our daily lives and to see that it is sent throughout the world. In Christ we pray.
(silent prayer of personal confession).....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

“Let Us Break Bread Together” #525

1. Let us break bread together on our knees, (on our knees)

Let us break bread together on our knees. (on our knees)

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,

O Lord, have mercy on me. (on me)

2. Let us drink wine together on our knees, (on our knees)

Let us drink wine together on our knees. (on our knees)

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,

O Lord, have mercy on me. (on me)

3. Let us praise God together on our knees, (on our knees)

Let us praise God together on our knees. (on our knees)

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,

O Lord, have mercy on me. (on me)

Time Out!

Mark 1:35-39

Sue Buchanan shares a good story about her father, a pastor in a small Southern town. This pastor wanted to help his granddaughter, Dana, deal with a particular fear. In this small town, a siren blew at noon every day. It was probably installed generations ago in order to let factory workers know it was time to go home for lunch. When little Dana visited her Grandpa, the siren scared her silly. So Grandpa suggested that, since this was a noontime siren, whenever Dana heard it, she should stand up and yell, “Go home and get your lunch!”

Sure enough, Grandpa’s suggestion worked. Whenever little Dana heard the siren, she began yelling, “Go home and get your lunch!” and she didn’t even think about being scared.

Well, one Sunday morning, Grandpa got really worked up over his sermon subject. He was preaching up a storm when the noon siren suddenly sounded. Little Dana took this as her cue. She stood up, turned to the congregation, and yelled, “Go home and get your lunch!” and all the people promptly gathered up their things and left.

I hope that little story doesn’t give any of you ideas.

At the height of his ministry Jesus was continually surrounded by crowds of people. They pressed around him everywhere he went. Probably there were times he wanted to yell at them, “Go home and get your lunch!” We think of the day he fed the five thousand. But, as we noted last week, this was a constant problem. People wanted to see him, be near him, touch him. Particularly those who had a serious need.

In today’s story, Jesus heals Simon Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever. By the way, do you think of Simon Peter being married? Obviously, he was. Wonder how his wife felt about his leaving everything and following Jesus? Maybe she was an understanding woman. I wonder, though, if it was a source of conflict. Sometimes we may think we don’t have time to serve Christ. Too many family responsibilities. Christ has heard that excuse before.

Anyway, Simon Peter had a mother-in-law, and that evening after sunset, after Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, Mark tells us, the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door. The next morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." It was evident that, from time to time, Jesus needed a time out. He needed to get away by himself. Anyone here ever feel like that? It goes with modern life, doesn't it? Jesus needed a time out and so often he would rise early and go off to a solitary place. "Everyone is looking for you!" his disciples would report. But that time out was essential to the effectiveness of Jesus' ministry.

You and I need to learn to take "time out" as well. Our lives become so frantic. So chaotic. With all there is to do, we can lose our soul if we are not careful. Taking time out is as much a part of Christian living as taking up the cross of Christian service. And for the same reasons, Jesus needed time out.

Jesus needed time alone to pray. That's remarkable when you consider what we know about Jesus. Son of God. Only begotten of the Father. Yet he needed time for prayer. Jesus knew from first-hand experience what a powerful force prayer can be in human life.

There is a story that comes out of World War II. After the Battle of the Bulge, a German officer was describing the capture of an American unit early in the fighting. This unit had in its possession a box which contained a cake. What was remarkable about the cake is that it had been sent to an American soldier from Boston and it was still fresh. This German officer described his feelings when he realized that the Americans had the resources to fly over cakes from home even in the midst of a global war. He said that he knew then, that they would never defeat an enemy that had such resources for the waging of the battle.

You and I have a resource that can help us in life's daily battles, if only we will make room for it. It is time alone with God. It is one-on-One communication with the Creator and Sustainer of life.

We human creatures are so very strange. We will believe almost anything except what millions of people have rested their lives on over the past two thousand years. That the God of all the universe is available through prayer.

Perhaps you are familiar with the so-called SETI project--the Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence. From the late 1960s until 1993 NASA funded this effort to one degree or another. Since 1993 the effort has been supported by the private non-profit SETI Institute and the grassroots SETI League. For 55+ years, spending hundreds of millions of dollars, we have been sending messages into the universe with the purpose of discovering whether there is any other intelligent life out there. And there has not been one response. Not one. Yet you and I can kneel down anywhere on earth and communicate with the One who created this universe and everything that is in it. Why in the world do we not make use of this amazing resource?

Anyone who makes a difference in the world needs time for prayer. Hudson Taylor was a missionary to China whose life has touched millions. Traveling in northern China, by cart and

wheelbarrow, sleeping in the very poorest of inns at night, it was not easy for him to make time for prayer and Bible study, but he knew that it was vital. Those who traveled with him testify that after others had quieted down at night for sleep, they would hear a match struck and see the flicker of candlelight. This told them that Hudson Taylor was pouring over his little Bible. It was his custom to spend from two to four a.m. in prayer. A biographer wrote that Hudson Taylor considered finding time to spend with God the hardest part of his work as a missionary.

It is so easy to neglect that which is most important to our lives. Jesus needed time for prayer. And Jesus needed time to focus on his primary mission. We can sympathize with the Master's dilemma. So many people whom he met needed a doctor. Think how many people are on our prayer list, and yet people in Jesus' time were not nearly as fortunate as we. They lived in pre-scientific times. A simple infection could bring an agonizing death. Epidemics could wipe out entire villages. Many of the diseases that vexed people in Jesus' time are unheard of today.

We are so fortunate to live in a time when doctors can do so much for us. I could not even imagine a world without the advantages of modern medicine. Of course, doctors are human beings, too. And not all of them have the interest of the patient at heart.

Reuters News Service carried a story sometime back about a Massachusetts doctor, a graduate of Harvard Medical School no less, who has had his medical license suspended for leaving a patient on the operating table midway through spinal surgery. It seems this doctor, an orthopedic surgeon, needed to deposit a check at his local bank. So he left the patient with an open incision in his back just lying there on the table. After a 35-minute trip to the bank, the doctor returned to the operating room and finished the surgery a few hours later.

Not every doctor has the welfare of his patient at heart. Jesus did. His heart went out to all the sick and hurting people who came to him for help. But healing people's physical bodies was not Jesus' primary mission. We need to understand this. If healing people were Jesus' main purpose for coming into the world, he could have set up a clinic in downtown Jerusalem. It would have been flooded with needy people day and night. But it would never have been possible for him to see them all.

Jesus' plan was much bigger. It is important that we understand this, too. His plan was to touch the lives of a few men and women who, on the Day of Pentecost, would be transformed into a mighty spiritual army, the church of Jesus Christ. And over the centuries, this spiritual army would build tens of thousands of hospitals and schools and all manner of charitable institutions all over the world. And millions of people would be touched by the ministry of the humble Galilean through his church. His followers would heal many millions more individuals than he could possibly touch in a lifetime.

This was Christ's plan from the beginning. That's why he needed time out from his healing ministry. He needed to spend time with his Father and he needed to refocus his ministry. Jesus said to those disciples who came to find him, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." And that is why he came primarily. Not to heal bodies, but to inspire hearts. He came that he might preach the kingdom of God.

And thus, Jesus needed time out--to spend time with the Father. And to refocus on his primary mission. I wonder if many of us don't need a time out as well. Are you spending the time you need in prayer? Does your life need to be refocused?

You and I live in a fast-changing and complex world. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves majoring in minors, ignoring the really crucial needs in our lives. But how do we do it? How do we find the time for this essential practice of taking time out to connect with God and to reflect on our lives? Here's a suggestion.

Some of you remember the name Catherine Marshall. Catherine Marshall is the widow of Peter Marshall, noted pastor and former chaplain of the U.S. Senate, about whom she wrote a best-selling book, *A Man Called Peter*. She also wrote many other fine books including the novel *Christy*, which was made into a movie.

In 1959 Catherine Marshall was newly remarried and trying to raise three stepchildren. With much to pray about, she and husband Len LeSourd, nonetheless, couldn't find time to pray. So, they began what they called The Coffeepot Experiment, in which an automatically timed percolator would aromatically wake them every morning at six. Feeling sleepily peaceful, they gave themselves fully to God in prayer. His peace then stayed with them all day. The best time for prayer, Catherine concluded, isn't found. It's made.

Did you catch that? You will never find time for prayer and reflection; you have to make time. The Coffeepot Experiment sounds like a great idea. Missionary evangelist and best-selling author E. Stanley Jones put it like this: "In the pure, strong hours of the morning when the soul of the day is at its best, lean upon the window sill of the Lord and look into His face, and get orders for the day. Then go out into the world with a sense of [God's] Hand upon your shoulder..."

If Jesus needed to spend time in prayer, how much more do you and I need to spend time in prayer? If he needed to call time out in order to refocus his ministry, how much more do we need to reflect upon our lives and reorder our priorities? But Catherine Marshall is right. We will never find the time; we will have to make the time. [Now I realize that it's just about that time in our service for someone to stand up and yell, "Go home and get your lunch!" but don't forget the central message of today's service.] Take time to pray. There is an invaluable resource available to us all. Let God help you determine those things that are most important in your life.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; he descended to hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Refrain:

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sinsick soul.

1. Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.

Refrain:

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sinsick soul.

2. Don't ever feel discouraged, for Jesus is your friend, who, if you ask for knowledge, will never fail to lend.

Refrain:

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sinsick soul.

3. If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, who died to save us all.

Refrain:

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sinsick soul.

Blessing

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen. Revelation 7:12