

WORSHIP AT HOME: Week of 4/25/21

4th Sunday of Easter



In the event you are unable to view or hear an MPLC service, here's a brief worship order you can use at home. You might light a candle before you begin to quiet your heart and prepare to worship God. You will need a bible to look up the readings. You may read aloud or in silence to yourself.

BEGIN: *(You may trace a cross on your forehead or make the sign of the cross.)*
In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

GIVE THANKS: We thank you, risen Christ, for the water of life where you make us new, leading us from death to life, from tears to joy. We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us in the grace-filled waters of rebirth, like rains to our thirsting earth, like streams that revive our souls, like cups of cool water shared with strangers. Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear. Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness. Send us companions on our journey as we share your life. Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life. To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever. Amen.

PRAY: O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 and Luke 6:12-16 & 8:1-3

SERMON: *by Pastor Beth Ann L. Stone*

Our MPLC mission is "Growing relationships with God, each other, and our neighbors in the way of Jesus." Each part of that statement is important...but today we're going to explore "the way of Jesus" specifically when it comes to growing relationships with each other, other people here in the church community. After so much time apart from each other while we've been worshipping together in spirit but not in the same room, growing relationships with each other is more important now than ever!

But we're not interested in growing just ANY OLD kind of relationships, but the kind that Jesus shows us and teaches us how to grow. For this week, I chose two short readings from the Gospel of Luke that have some important things to teach us. The first section from chapter 6 says that Jesus went off by himself to a mountain to pray, spending the whole night in prayer to God. And in the morning, he got all of his disciples together and chose twelve of them. Did you catch that? There were more than twelve disciples traveling with Jesus, and he chose twelve out of that larger number.

Is that a different way of thinking about disciples for you? We tend to talk about "THE" Disciples of Jesus, picturing these twelve that he picked out specifically. But there were a lot more than just those twelve! A disciple is someone who's a student of someone else, a

follower. A disciple isn't just someone a student in general. It's someone who learns FROM someone else, their teacher, or rabbi, as the Jews say. And from the larger group of his followers Jesus chose twelve men that included a zealot, a tax collector, fishermen, and a traitor. We don't know much otherwise about these followers of Jesus, but there were definitely some differences among them.

As we read in Chapter 8 of Luke's gospel, there were many women who also traveled with Jesus as he went through the cities and villages around Galilee, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. Mary Magdalene was a prominent one, important enough to be named and remembered in all four Gospels as the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Joanna is also named by Luke as one of the witnesses at the tomb, and Susanna is only mentioned here. These women and many others, Luke says, provided for Jesus out of their resources. They, too, were among Jesus' many disciples.

Besides these fifteen known by name, there were many other followers of Jesus from all walks of life described in the Gospels: Zacchaeus, despised as a tax collector. Mary and Martha of Bethany, two sisters who hosted Jesus in their home. Lazarus, their brother, whom Jesus raised from the dead. A Roman soldier, a centurion, whose faith led Jesus to heal the man's servant. A Pharisee named Nicodemus who came to learn from Jesus under cover of darkness. A Canaanite woman who sought healing for her daughter. A Samaritan woman who shared a deep, theological conversation with Jesus that led her to bring her friends and neighbors to meet and hear him, too. And still more whose stories are lost to history but who were among those who came to learn from and follow Jesus.

I list all these people because their variety says something important about the way of Jesus. Jesus didn't pick out the best, most faithful people who were just like him to be his disciples. He didn't have a standard that people had to meet before they could be included. In fact, he specifically said, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." And those disciples came from all walks of life, and all segments of society--some powerful, establishment types; many working class poor; hated, reviled people; the forgotten and dismissed; Jews and gentiles, men and women. And once they formed a relationship with JESUS, their teacher, these disciples were formed into a new community of relationships as those who follow Jesus.

One of the hardest and best things about being part of a faith community is that it can include people you have no other reason to connect with, no reason to care about, than belonging to the same church. We all have spaces in our lives where we interact with people who are a lot like us. Maybe it's a club you belong to, where you all enjoy the same sport or hobby, or maybe you share the same nationality and cultural backgrounds. Maybe it's an online space where you interact with people who share your same political leanings and engage in issues that way. Maybe it's a social group of friends who went to the same school, or parents whose kids are all the same age, or people you work with and have grown close to. It's not that hard to find other people we share commonalities with, and to grow relationships with them.

But the community of faith is one of the few spaces where we're called to care about and grow relationships with people we might have nothing in common with! We're not just called, we're COMMANDED to love each other, in fact, by Jesus whose disciples we all

are. And the way of Jesus shows us, by his own example, that a diverse, weird mix of people is a beautiful expression of community in Christ.

St. Paul described being part of the faith community like being members of the same human body. And the human body, thank God, is made up of many different body parts that look different and have different functions. The challenge and the joy of being one of those body parts is remembering that we all need each other to be whole. We need the right pinky toe and the left elbow and the cerebellum and the pancreas, even if we're not really sure why. It's the differences between us that make us complete together.

So the way of Jesus for a diverse group of disciples who don't all look or act or think the same is remembering that each of us is a sinner in need of saving. Not one of us is perfect or better than the next person; we ALL fall short of the glory of God, starting with ME, starting with ourselves. God brings each of us into this community with things to teach and things to learn. We grow relationships with each other in the way of Jesus when we keep our hearts soft and our ears open...when we approach our differences with humility, grace, and curiosity. When we notice and celebrate the kneecap and the nose and the armpit and every unique member of the body, and value each person as an important and necessary part of this community. God has already brought us together in spirit. Let's work together on what love actually looks like when we live it out in real life. Amen.

PRAY: For MPLC to fulfill its mission to grow relationships by living out the love of Jesus; for reminders of resurrection life in spring growth; for victims of violence and prejudice, and for those who perpetrate to have changed hearts and lives; for the sick and those who grieve; for people without sustaining jobs, that they find work; and for ourselves...

We pray Ben Poulsen, Dick Jonas, Ross Larson, Trina Larsen, Linda Petersen, Helen Fiones, Sheila Johnson, Scott Christiansen, Karen Tyykila, Cathy Spatz, Jennifer Vyeda, Diane Poulsen, Barb Mains, Pastor Kara Baylor, Joanne Hoornstra, Laura Luehr, Mary Burks, Tom Guyton, Kenneth Tyykila, Andy Cawley, Kim Davis, Nancy Holtz, people suffering from Covid-19, and those we name aloud or in our hearts...

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

BLESS: May our glorious God grant us a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever. Amen. Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.





WORSHIP AT HOME: Week of 5/2/21

5th Sunday of Easter

In the event you are unable to view or hear an MPLC service, here's a brief worship order you can use at home. You might light a candle before you begin to quiet your heart and prepare to worship God. You will need a bible to look up the readings. You may read aloud or in silence to yourself.

BEGIN: *(You may trace a cross on your forehead or make the sign of the cross.)*

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

GIVE THANKS FOR THE GIFT OF BAPTISM: We thank you, risen Christ, for the water of life where you make us new, leading us from death to life, from tears to joy. We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us in the grace-filled waters of rebirth, like rains to our thirsting earth, like streams that revive our souls, like cups of cool water shared with strangers. Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear. Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness. Send us companions on our journey as we share your life. Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life. To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: Psalm 22:25-31

From you comes my praise in the great assembly;

I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the Lord.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied,

Let those who seek the Lord give praise! May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord;

all the families of nations shall bow before God.

For dominion belongs to the Lord,

who rules over the nations.

Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;

all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the Lord.

Their descendants shall serve the Lord,

whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn,

saying to them, "The Lord has acted!"

PRAY: O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: 1 John 4:7-21 and John 15:1-8

REFLECT: See the provided "Daily Discipleship" Bible Study handout for John 15:1-8.

PRAY: God of all fruitfulness, you abide in your church and your church abides in you. Cleanse us by your word and give yourself to the whole church on earth so that it bears fruit and witnesses to your love.

You have created the heavens and the earth. As we wonder at the beauty of creation, may we seek vital connections among all that depends on the earth for life.

You rule the nations with justice and love. Give the leaders of the earth assurance of your abiding presence, that they lead not by fear but with love for those they are called to serve.

You have loved us so that we can love others. We pray for all in need of your love: those who are poor, lowly, outcast, weak, or fearful. Provide for the needs of all, especially those we name before you.

You gather us with all the saints by the power of your Spirit. With them, may our hearts live forever in your keeping.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

BLESS: May our glorious God grant us a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever. Amen. Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.

