

Welcome: (inspired by Mark 1:21-28)

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
what hopes do you bring to worship?
We bring hope for health and wholeness.
What afflictions do you bring to worship?
Physical pain?
From illness and injury.
Emotional pain?
From sad and scary life situations.
Mental pain?
From dis-ease of many kinds.
With all of these afflictions,
it's a miracle that any of us have made it to worship
this morning!
But where else would we be?

We yearn to know God's powerful love
and to know that wholeness is possible.
In today's gospel, a person with an "*afflicting
spirit*" * interrupts Jesus
and Jesus frees him.
And where does the miracle of his story and our
stories begin?
When we bring all of who we are
—hopeful, afflicted, bold—
into relationship with the Divine.
So come, let us enter this sanctuary with our whole
selves
—hopeful, afflicted and bold—
Come, let us worship!

Prelude: All hail the power of Jesus Name Oliver Holden, arr. Melody Bober

Call to Worship:

L: Come to worship this day. Bring with you all your joys and sorrows.

P: Jesus will offer hope.

L: Come to worship this day believing in the power of God through Jesus Christ.

P: Jesus will bring us healing.

L: Come to worship this day feeling the presence of God.

P: Jesus will teach us new ways to live. AMEN.

Lighting the Christ Candle:

We light this candle as a symbol of the light of Christ, which cannot be held back by distance, which shines in each one of us, no matter where we are.

Hymn: Count Your Blessings

1 When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

2 Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by.

3 When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings, money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

4 So, amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Refrain:

Count your blessings, name them one by one;

Count your blessings, see what God hath done;

Count your blessings, name them one by one;

Count your many blessings, see what God hath done.

“To Retrieve the Lost Art of Blessing,” John O’Donohue writes,

The force of a blessing can penetrate through and alter the inner configuration of identity. When the gift or need of the individual coincides with the incoming force of the blessing, great change can begin. This kind of change and reconfiguration means that a blessing is not always a comfortable and cozy thing. Sometimes the blessing most needed is one that involves confrontation and calling out, that requires standing against what is not of God. Such a blessing may be difficult to give—or to receive. It calls us to acknowledge and challenge and grapple with forces that thrive within chaos, forces that often work in ways that are exceedingly subtle and cloaked and require even more wisdom and discernment of us than when such forces take clear and obvious forms. But, as Jesus shows us in the Mark 1 passage where we see him healing a man in the grip of a destructive spirit, such a blessing—the blessing that comes in facing the chaos rather than turning away from it, the blessing that comes in naming what is contrary to God’s purposes rather than letting it persist unchecked—makes way for the wholeness we crave. It brings release to what has been bound; it invites and enables and calls us to move with the freedom for which God made us. The human heart,

- continues to dream of a state of wholeness,
- a place where everything comes together,
- where loss will be made good,
- where blindness will transform into vision,
- where damage will be made whole,
- where the clenched question will open in the house of surprise,
- where the travails of a life’s journey will enjoy a homecoming.

To invoke a blessing is to call some of that wholeness upon a person now.

Is there some part of you that has become bound—that recognizes what is holy and craves its blessing, but fears the change that would be involved?

Is there a habit, a belief, a relationship? .an aspect of your life that has you in its grip, that confines you, that limits the freedom with which you move through this world. —perhaps without your even realizing it? What might be keeping you from greater wholeness?

This day, this week, may you give and receive a blessing that will help you and yours enter more deeply into wholeness. Peace to you.

Introduction to Be thou my vision:

This hymn acts as a prayer to our God that He would be the first that we seek after, and continually refocus the direction of our life. This hymn can be sung throughout the liturgical year and is a particularly powerful prayer of response to God’s call for our lives, whether heard in a sermon or a Scripture passage.

Hymn V.U. 642: Be Thou my Vision

1 Be thou my vision, O joy 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, my calm in all strife;
I ever with thee, and thou in my life;
thou loving parent, thy child may I be,
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

3 Be thou my battle shield, sword for the fight;
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,
thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower;
raise thou my heavenward, O power of my power.

4 Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 Great God of heaven, after 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.

Children's Time: with Ashley

Prayer of Confession:

Let us confess together that we have not
always lived as those forgiven, set free, and
united in Christ:
O God, source of life and grace, we are
aware that we are, at times, prisoners of fear
and habit. Through the healing touch of
Christ, set us free to live and to love, that we
may be the people you have created us to be.
Amen.

Words of Assurance:

The good news is that Christ calls us to new
life and enables us to begin again and again
and again. Let us praise God with songs of
joy! *Ruth Duck, Bread for the Journey,*
Pilgrim Press, 1981, p. 29.

We Believe – Anthem Dorchester Choir

Prayer For Illumination (*inspired by Mark 1:21-28*)

Un-stop our ears, O God,
that we may hear your Word proclaimed this day.
Open our minds and hearts to be changed.
Free us from the unclean spirits of worry, fear, destruction, and pride.
Teach us, Lord, that we may follow you more faithfully.

Hymn V.U. 217 All creatures of our God and King

1. All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Bright burning sun with golden beam,
Soft shining moon with silver gleam!

Refrain:
Sing Praises! Sing Praises!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

2. O rushing wind and breezes soft,
O clouds that ride the winds aloft,
Sing praises, Hallelujah!
O rising moon, in praise rejoice,
O lights of evening, find a voice!

3. Earth ever fertile day by day,
Bring forth rich blessings on our way,
Sing praises, Hallelujah!
The flowers and fruits that verdant grow,
Let them God's glory also show.

4. For everyone of tender heart,
Forgiving others, take your part,
Sing praises, Hallelujah!
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
Praise God and yield up all your care!

5. Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship Him in humbleness,
O praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise God eternal, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One!

Teach Us To Listen *A Prayer Based on Deuteronomy 18:15-20*

Lord, teach us to listen.

Unstop our sluggish ears so that we can listen to...
your still small voice and your awe-inspiring voice
smacking us upside the head.

Teach us to listen deeply.

Unblock our ears so that we can listen deeply to...
the voice of our ancestors
and the voice of our young people
who will lead us on to the Promised Land.

Teach us to listen deeply to one another.

Unplug our ears so that we can listen to...
the prophets in our sanctuaries

and the prophets in the streets,
prophets that the Lord is raising up for us among our own people.

Teach us to listen.

Teach us to listen deeply.

Lord, teach us to listen deeply to one another so that we may hear your voice and dare to respond.
Amen.

We are All Connected from Everyday Psalms -Wood Lake Books

1 The bright blue planet spins in the vast darkness of space;
let all who live on the earth rejoice.

2 Only on this one tiny orb do we know life exists;
let all who live on the earth give thanks.

3 The vision takes our breath away;
let all who live on the earth open their eyes.

4 This fragile ball bursting with life is a work of art;
let all who live on earth recognize God's goodness.

5 Foxes and field mice, humans and whales, eagles and ants –
all are woven together in a tapestry of relationships;
let all who live on the earth recognize this reality.

6 And God has delegated responsibility to us;
let all who live on the earth be mindful.

7 We must exercise care not to upset the delicate equilibrium of shared life;
let all who live on the earth understand their responsibility.

8 A tapestry cannot be reduced to a single thread;
let all who live on the earth accept their responsibility.

9 This egg floating in the dark womb of the universe is like God's own embryo;
let all who live on earth treat it as holy.

10 We share an awesome and terrible responsibility;
may God live forever.

Hymn V.U. 602 Blest be the Tie that Binds

1 Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the unity of heart and mind
is like to that above.

2 Before our Maker's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

3 We share each other's woes,
each other's burdens bear;
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

4 The glorious hope revives
our courage on the way;
that we shall live in perfect love
in God's eternal day.

Mark 1:21-28

²¹⁻²² Then they entered Capernaum. When the Sabbath arrived, Jesus lost no time in getting to the meeting place. He spent the day there teaching. They were surprised at his teaching—so forthright, so confident—not quibbling and quoting like the religion scholars.

²³⁻²⁴ Suddenly, while still in the meeting place, he was interrupted by a man who was deeply disturbed and yelling out, “What business do you have here with us, Jesus? Nazarene! I know what you’re up to! You’re the Holy One of God, and you’ve come to destroy us!”

²⁵⁻²⁶ Jesus shut him up: “Quiet! Get out of him!” The afflicting spirit threw the man into spasms, protesting loudly—and got out.

²⁷⁻²⁸ Everyone there was spellbound, buzzing with curiosity. “What’s going on here? A new teaching that does what it says? He shuts up defiling, demonic spirits and tells them to get lost!” News of this traveled fast and was soon all over Galilee.

Blessing to All that is Chaotic in You. - Jan Richardson,

let there come silence.
Let there be
a calming
of the clamoring,
a stilling
of the voices that
have laid their claim
on you,
that have made their
home in you,
that go with you
even to the
holy places

but will not
let you rest,
will not let you
hear your life
with wholeness
or feel the grace
that fashioned you.
Let what distracts you
cease.
Let what divides you
cease.
Let there come an end
to what diminishes

and demeans,
Let there be
an opening
into the quiet
that lies beneath
the chaos,
where you find
the peace
you did not think
possible
and see what shimmers
within the storm

Holy Holy Holy:

Holy, holy, holy!
Lord God almighty!
Early in the morning
our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy!
Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons,
blessed trinity!

Blessing for a Whole Heart. - Jan Richardson,

You think
if you could just
imagine it,
that would be a beginning;
that if you could envision
what it would look like,
that would be a step
toward a heart
made whole.
This blessing
is for when
you cannot imagine.
This is for when
it is difficult to dream
of what could lie beyond
the fracture, the rupture,
the cleaving through which

has come a life
you do not recognize
as your own.
When all that inhabits you
feels foreign,
your heart made strange
and beating a broken
and unfamiliar cadence,
let there come
a word of solace,
a voice that speaks
into the shattering,
reminding you
that who you are
is here,
every shard
somehow holding

the whole of you
that you cannot see
but is taking shape
even now,
piece joining to piece
in an ancient,
remembered rhythm
that bears you
not toward restoration,
not toward return—
as if you could somehow
become unchanged—
but steadily deeper
into the heart of the one
who has already dreamed you
complete.

Please Join us in singing:

We lift our voices
We lift our hands
We lift our lives up to You
We are an offering

Lord use our voices
Lord use our hands
Lord use our lives they are Yours
We are an offering

All that we have
All that we are
All that we hope to be
We give to You
We give to You

Offertory Prayer:

God of power and wisdom, we give you our eternal thanks for the gift of your Son, who came not only to save but to teach us about your kingdom and how we might live, readying ourselves for that kingdom. He taught with authority, and if we listen, we will live a life of generosity, mercy, and compassion. Bless what we give this day and help us be faithful in the use of all our resources, that we might live like those anticipating your kingdom. In Christ, we pray. Amen. (Mark 1:21-28)

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

8¹⁻³ The question keeps coming up regarding meat that has been offered up to an idol: Should you attend meals where such meat is served, or not? We sometimes tend to think we know all we need to know to answer these kinds of questions—*but* sometimes our humble hearts can help us more than our proud minds. We never really know enough until we recognize that God alone knows it all.

4-6 Some people say, quite rightly, that idols have no actual existence, that there's nothing to them, that there is no God other than our one God, that no matter how many of these so-called gods are named and worshiped they still don't add up to anything but a tall story. *They say—again, quite rightly—that there is only one God the Father, that everything comes from him, and that he wants us to live for him. Also, they say that there is only one Master—Jesus the Messiah—and that everything is for his sake, including us. Yes. It's true.*

⁷ In strict logic, then, nothing happened to the meat when it was offered up to an idol. It's just like any other meat. I know that, and you know that. But knowing isn't everything. If it becomes everything, some people end up as know-nothings

⁸⁻⁹ But fortunately God doesn't grade us on our diet. We're neither commended when we clean our plate nor reprimanded when we just can't stomach it. But God *does* care when you use your freedom carelessly in a way that leads a fellow believer still vulnerable to those old associations to be thrown off track.

¹⁰ For instance, say you flaunt your freedom by going to a banquet thrown in honor of idols, where the main course is meat sacrificed to idols. Isn't there great danger if someone still struggling over this issue, someone who looks up to you as knowledgeable and mature, sees you go into that banquet? The danger is that he will become terribly confused—maybe even to the point of getting mixed up himself in what his conscience tells him is wrong.

¹¹⁻¹³ Christ gave up his life for that person. Wouldn't you at least be willing to give up going to dinner for him—because, as you say, it doesn't really make any difference? But it *does* make a difference if you hurt your friend terribly, risking his eternal ruin! When you hurt your friend, you hurt Christ. A free meal here and there isn't worth it at the cost of even one of these “weak ones.” So, never go to these idol-tainted meals if there's any chance it will trip up one of your brothers or sisters. All who treat others as know-nothings. Real knowledge isn't that insensitive.

Psalms 111 1-10 Hallelujah!

I give thanks to God with everything I've got—
Wherever good people gather, and in the
congregation.
God's works are so great, worth
A lifetime of study—endless enjoyment!
Splendor and beauty mark his craft;
His generosity never gives out.
His miracles are his memorial—
This God of Grace, this God of Love.
He gave food to those who fear him,
He remembered to keep his ancient promise.
He proved to his people that he could do what
he said:

Hand them the nations on a platter—a gift!
He manufactures truth and justice;
All his products are guaranteed to last—
Never out-of-date, never obsolete, rust-proof.
All that he makes and does is honest and true:
He paid the ransom for his people,
He ordered his Covenant kept forever.
He's so personal and holy, worthy of our
respect.
The good life begins in the fear of God—
Do that and you'll know the blessing of God.
His Hallelujah lasts forever!

From the Complete Jewish Version: Psalm 111 *Halleluyah!*

I will wholeheartedly give thanks to *Adonai*
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.
² The deeds of *Adonai* are great,
greatly desired by all who enjoy them.
³ His work is full of majesty and splendor,
and his righteousness continues forever.
⁴ He has gained renown for his wonders.
Adonai is merciful and compassionate.
⁵ He gives food to those who fear him.
He remembers his covenant forever.
⁶ He shows his people how powerfully he works
by giving them the nations as their heritage.
⁷ The works of his hands are truth and justice;
all his precepts can be trusted.
⁸ They have been established forever and ever,
to be carried out truly and honestly.
⁹ He sent redemption to his people
and decreed that his covenant should last forever.
His name is holy and fearsome —
¹⁰ the first and foremost point of wisdom is the fear of *Adonai*;
all those living by it gain good common sense.
His praise stands forever.

Message: "Could you write a reference letter for God?" **Tabitha**

Hymn V.U. 288: Great is thy Faithfulness

1 Great is thy faithfulness, God our Creator,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou has been thou forever wilt be.[Refrain:]

Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided --
great is thy faithfulness, ever to me!

2 Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love. [Refrain]

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow --
wondrous the portion thy blessings provide.
[Refrain]

Benediction: - *(based on Mark 1:21-28)*

Go forth...
...replenished by the grace and mercy of God,
...blessed by the healing love of Jesus,

Postlude: Jesus Shall Reign John Halton arr. Cindy Berry