

First Presbyterian Church - Rouses Point NY
Order of Service - Virtual Worship July 5, 2020

Greeting

Prayer of Preparation

O Lord, our God, we gather this day to worship you. But many of us we bring with us heavy burdens which weigh us down. And our hearts ache inside us and we feel we can go no further. May we feel your healing touch for our wounded spirits and weary souls as we worship you this day. In the name of Jesus you gives us his peace, we pray. Amen

Call to Worship : Let us come to Jesus our Savior who call us to his side so he may walk with us on our life's journey. Let us worship the Lord our God.

*Prayer of Confession:

Merciful and loving God, we are so grateful for your redeeming love for each one of us. We confess that there have been times of doubt in our spirits. Forgive us for the times our faith waivers and we futilely seek to do things our own way, turning from you. Help us to place our trust in you. Remind us that you surround us continually with your care, you never just let us go to drift aimlessly about. Open our hearts and spirits again to your healing powers. For we pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen
ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Readings and Proclaiming God's Word

Old Testament: Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

New Testament: Mathew 11:25-30

Sermon: Faith over Futility

*Affirmation of faith: Apostle's Creed

Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Communion of the People

Prayer after Communion

*Benediction

Ecclesiastes 1 (KJV): ² Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. ³ What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? ⁴ One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. ⁵ The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. ⁶ The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. ⁷ All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. ⁸ All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. ⁹ The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. ¹⁰ Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. ¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after. ¹² I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. ¹⁴ I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. ¹⁵ That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. ¹⁶ I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. ¹⁷ And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Matthew 11:25-30 At that time Jesus said, "I thank¹ you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

SERMON SUMMARY-ECCLESIASTES 1:1-18 & MATTHEW 11:25-30

THE POINT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT READING IS A REMINDER ABOUT THE BREVITY AND THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF LIFE AND HUMAN STRIVING. HOWEVER, ECCLESIASTES DOES NOT SAY OUR LIFE OR EFFORTS ARE WORTHLESS, ONLY “A CHASING AFTER THE WIND.”

AND WHILE THE DIFFERENCE SEEMS MINIMAL, IT IS NOT. FOR EXAMPLE, A SINGLE BREATH IS BRIEF, TRANSITORY, YET ALSO USEFUL AND NECESSARY. SIMILARLY WE ARE NOT BEING TOLD OUR LIFE OR EFFORTS HAVE NO MEANING. YOU SEE, THE UNDERLYING TEACHING OF THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES IS THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF LIFE **APART** FROM GOD.

KING SOLOMON LEARNED THIS. THE GIFT OF WISDOM GOD GAVE TO HIM BECAME A VEXATION TO THE KING WHEN HE USED IT FOR HIS OWN GAIN, RATHER THAN TO SERVE THE LORD. THUS HE CONCLUDES IN VERSE 13 THAT EVEN THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE HE GAINED WERE A HEAVY BURDEN TO CARRY.

AND THIS LEADS US TO THE READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW, AND JESUS’ ANSWER TO THE BURDENS LIFE PLACES UPON OUR SOUL, THAT IS OUR WHOLE BEING.

THERE, JESUS CALLED TO ALL WHO WERE WILLING TO COME TO HIM. HE PROMISED WHAT ONLY HE COULD OFFER THEM, WHICH WAS TO LIFT THE BURDEN OF SIN AND THE STRAIN OF TRYING TO PERFECTLY KEEP GOD’S LAW.

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT JESUS MAKES US RIGHT WITH GOD. THUS, A WILLINGNESS TO COME TO JESUS IS NOT ONLY IMPORTANT, BUT NECESSARY.

FOR MANY PEOPLE, IT IS ONLY WHEN THEY ARE TIRED OF STRUGGLING THAT THEY ARE OPEN TO GRASPING JESUS’ OUTSTRETCHED HAND. IT IS THEN THE MEANING OF THE SIMPLE WORD “COME” GAINS ITS STRENGTH. WHEN WE TO RESPOND TO CHRIST’S CALL TO “COME”.

ANSWERING HIS CALL WITH A YES, THIS IMPLIES WE ARE READY AND OPEN TO LEAVE WHAT WE MUST BEHIND TO SEEK THE LORD’S GRACE AND HELP. AND THIS OPENNESS IS NEEDED AS MUCH BY THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY CHRISTIAN AS IT IS BY THOSE WHO COME TO JESUS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

THE REST JESUS OFFERS IS THAT OF REVIVAL AND RENEWAL, SO WE HAVE THE STRENGTH TO CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY.

REST IS AS IMPORTANT AS WORK, AS GOD DEMONSTRATED AFTER FINISHING CREATION, AND COMMANDS WE LEARN FROM HIM AND COPY BY THE SABBATH COMMANDMENT. SIMILARLY JESUS INVITES US INTO HIS OWN SABBATH REST, ONE THAT IS NOT INACTIVITY BUT SHARPENING OUR FAITH OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, WHEN WE GET UP TO WORK AGAIN JESUS OFFERS TO SHARE THE WORK, CARRY THE LOAD, WITH US. “TAKE MY YOKE” HE SAID. THUS THE YOKE AND THE BURDEN CHANGES FROM OURS TO CHRIST’S, FOR HE PROMISES- “MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.”

HIS WORDS BRING TO MIND A PERSON USING A YOKE TO CARRY BUCKETS OF WATER. ALONE IT IS A STRUGGLE. JESUS INVITES US TO SET DOWN THAT YOKE AND TAKE UP ONE WITH A LONGER POLE SO THAT WE JOIN WITH HIM IN THE TASK, WHICH MAKES THE BURDEN EASIER TO CARRY.

THE TERM “YOKE” WAS ALSO A COMMON METAPHOR IN CHRIST’S TIME FOR STRIVING TO OBEY GOD’S LAW. STRIVING TO PERFECTLY KEEP THE LAW WAS TOO BURDENSOME FOR MOST PEOPLE AND SO THEY FOREVER FELL SHORT IN THE EYES OF THE PHARISEES. THE APOSTLE PAUL EXPLAINED THE BURDEN OF THE LAW WAS A YOKE, AS WAS THE GUILT OF SIN THAT CAN NEVER BE LIFTED BY OUR OWN EFFORTS.

BUT IN CHRIST THE BURDEN OF TRYING TO SAVE OURSELVES IS LIFTED, AS IS THE VANITY OF OUR LABORS IN LIFE. INDEED, GOD, BY THE INCARNATION OF JESUS, REDEEMED WORLDLY TIME, BECAUSE IN CHRIST GOD ENTERED HUMAN TIME TO GIVE IT MEANING AND VALUE.

LET US THEREFORE TAKE HEART, LIVE BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AND FORSAKE THE VANITY OF WORLDLY HONORS. AND, MAY EACH ONE OF US, AS OFTEN AS WE NEED TO, HEAR AND HEED CHRIST’S CALL TO COME TO HIM, AND RECEIVE THE RENEWAL AND BURDEN SHARING HE OFFERS.

AFTER ALL, AT THE HEART OF THE CALL “COME TO ME” IS AN INVITATION FOR A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST, ONE THAT WE CAN REAFFIRM, AGAIN AND AGAIN. AMEN