



First United Methodist Church of Moweaqua

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Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors. The People of the First United Methodist Church.

Self - Guided worship For May 15, 2022- Fifth Easter

You may go at your own pace. Some ideas for centering yourself for worship: Set a particular time and a particular place. Light a candle as you begin and extinguish it as you end. Set aside a place in your home that is quiet, perhaps even a space where that is the only thing that will happen in that space- a spot in a spare bedroom, a corner of the living room, or a place that can be changed and used at the time. Turn off distractions like the TV or the computer. Take some deep centering breaths as you begin. Take your time and be present to the Holy Spirit at work in you.

Opening Words

Praise God from the heavens; Praise God from the heights!
Let me praise the name of God, for God's name alone is exalted.

Psalm Reading

Psalm 148

Prayer of Confession

Holy, almighty and everlasting God: Send your angels from heaven to guard, cherish, protect, visit and defend all who dwell in your house: and as you have loved me, so teach me to love others. Your mercy is extended to all creatures, but I become selfish and try to keep it for myself. I prejudge those who are different than myself. I do not love others as you have loved me. Forgive me and remake me in your image. Hear me this day because I pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

Time of Silent Prayer

Assurance of Forgiveness

Accept the good news, Christ died for me while I was yet a sinner; that proves God's love toward me. In the name of Jesus Christ, I have been forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open my heart and mind by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as I read the scriptures I may hear with joy what you say to me today. Amen.

First Lesson : Revelation 21:1-6

Second Lesson: John 13:31-35

Meditation on the Scripture: See meditation page

Offering (You may wish to place your offering in a prominent place at this time as a symbol of bringing it before God and then mail it later)

Offertory Prayer:

Most gracious and loving God, you give us all good things. You sent us your son that we might know of your great love for all of us. May I give to you as generously as you have given to me. Bless my offering today as I come before you. Magnify my efforts that through what I offer, your name may be glorified and those in need may hear your words, and see your face. I pray today in the name of your son Jesus the risen Christ. Amen.

Prayer for Joys and Concerns:

Most Powerful God, my eyes have not seen the resurrection, but your Holy Spirit is my witness. Make that Spirit present to me. Strengthen me for the resistance I encounter as I tell your story and make me faithful to the task of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. I lift to you those whose hearts are breaking this day because they have lost loved ones to death. Give them comfort in the words and actions I share. I bring to you those I know who are struggling with illness and physical pain and injury. Give them healing relief. Continue to give me a sense of wisdom and calm as I keep my community of church and school and work connected. Bless those who I name before you _____ . I give thanks for the joys that I have encountered this week. The joy of celebrating birthdays for _____ and anniversaries for _____. The simple joy of knowing I live in a community that cares for me. As I go into this week give me the strength and courage to face unafraid each day knowing you are beside me. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Benediction:

Christ the Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Go in the name of the risen Christ!

Scriptures:**Psalm 148 Common English Bible (CEB)**

- 1 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from heaven! Praise God on the heights!
- 2 Praise God, all of you who are his messengers! Praise God, all of you who comprise his heavenly forces!
- 3 Sun and moon, praise God! All of you bright stars, praise God!
- 4 You highest heaven, praise God! Do the same, you waters that are above the sky!
- 5 Let all of these praise the Lord's name because God gave the command and they were created!
- 6 God set them in place always and forever. God made a law that will not be broken.
- 7 Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all you ocean depths!
- 8 Do the same, fire and hail, snow and smoke, stormy wind that does what God says!
- 9 Do the same, you mountains, every single hill, fruit trees, and every single cedar!
- 10 Do the same, you animals—wild or tame—you creatures that creep along and you birds that fly!
- 11 Do the same, you kings of the earth and every single person, you princes and every single ruler on earth!
- 12 Do the same, you young men—young women too!— you who are old together with you who are young!
- 13 Let all of these praise the Lord's name because only God's name is high over all. Only God's majesty is over earth and heaven.
- 14 God raised the strength of his people, the praise of all his faithful ones— that's the Israelites, the people who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

Revelation 21:1-6 - Common English Bible (CEB)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look! I'm making all things new." He also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he said to me, "All is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring.

John 13:31-35 Common English Bible (CEB)

31 When Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Human One[a] has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32 If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One[b] in himself and will glorify him immediately. 33 Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now—'Where I'm going, you can't come.'

34 "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. 35 This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."."

Meditation:

Over a doorway in an old Dutch banking house is the following inscription:
"The Golden Age is the Age in which money does not rule!"

One of the surest ways most everyone will know whether we are Jesus' disciples is our attitude toward money. The character of a society will, in large measure, be determined by the place assigned to money in its hierarchy of values. And the same is true of individuals. To a large extent, our character will be measured by how money fits into our value system: why we want it, how we get it, and what we do after acquiring it.

Before his untimely death, spiritual writer Thomas Merton expressed great concern about the problem of money in our society. He said,

"As a nation, we have begun to float off into a moral void. We have reached the point where putting forth any moral standard automatically releases an anti-moral response in many people. But it is not with them alone that I am concerned. I am concerned with the (so-called) "good" people, the right-thinking people who stick to principle all right except where it conflicts with the chance to make money. I wonder," he said, "to what extent our ideals are now a front for organized selfishness and irresponsibility!"

In today's Lesson from the Gospel of John, Jesus commands us to open our minds and hearts to the divine influence. "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35). In another place, John writes, "Beloved, let us love one another;

for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is Love" (1 Jn. 4:7-8).

To become a genuine disciple, you must open yourself up at the center of your being to the Divine Influence. Your number one priority in the quest for happiness must not be rooted in the desire for more money and material possessions. Instead, the number one priority in pursuing happiness must be a more abundant, more profound, fuller union with the gracious God of love.

While visiting a Swiss town, an American businessman watched a man painstakingly carving the casing for one of the fine cuckoo clocks made in that region. Noting the slow rate of progress, the businessman said, "My good man, you'll never make much money that way." "Sir," the clockmaker replied, "I'm not making money. I'm making cuckoo clocks."

The origin of the word "money" has a fascinating history. In Roman mythology, Juno Regina was supposed to be the wife of Jupiter and the queen of the heavens. Juno assumed many characters and had many divine responsibilities. She watched over all women and guided them through marriage rituals. She was the savior, the war goddess, the moon-goddess, and, most importantly, the goddess of warning. A temple was built on the Capitoline Hill to honor her, and when coinage was devised, the Romans set up their mint in Juno's temple. And after that, Juno Regina was known as Juno Moneta. The name "Moneta" was derived from the Latin word "moneo" which means "warn." The word then crept into Old French with the spelling m-o-n-e-i-e, and eventually, it took on the English spelling, m-o-n-e-y. It is interesting for us to note, in this history, that money is rooted in a word that means warn -- especially so since, in the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly warns us about money.

I'm sure you've seen the alarming figures that illustrate the "excessive wealth syndrome" that we have come to accept in the 21st century. Today, 400 billionaires have as much wealth as nearly two-thirds of American households. And just three individuals (Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Bernard Arnault) have as much wealth as half of every living person in the United States.

So how does growing up in a money-obsessed environment affect our children? Everywhere they look, they see dollar signs. Against these pressures, parents genuinely interested in instilling Christian values in their children face a difficult task. Whether deflated, inflated, or otherwise, the dollar is god -- even for the very young. Destroying that theory and replacing it with another based on Gospel truth isn't easy.

Jesus clearly warns us against the "money is god" spirit of our time. He warns us against placing money at the top of our hierarchy of values. "No servant can be the slave of two masters," He says. "He will either hate the first and love the second or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave of both God and money" (Lk. 16:13).

Notice, however, that Jesus does not condemn money as intrinsically evil. Instead, he condemns the love of money as evil. In New Testament language, "The love of money is the root of all evils" (I Tim. 6:10).

Jesus also warns us about money in many of his parables. For example, he tells us the story of a rich man who hoarded his possessions. His farm was producing so abundantly that he ran out of room to store the crops. He is wealthy. He is set for life. Then he wonders about what all his money means to him. And in the process, he describes his hierarchy of values. All that money means to him is that he can "take things easy, eat, drink, and have a good time." In other words, the number one priority in his life consists of things that money can buy. But God says to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul, and this hoard of yours, whose will it be then? So it is when a

man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God" (Lk. 12:19-21). We make ourselves rich in the sight of God by giving priority to things that money can't buy!

We make ourselves rich in the sight of God by giving priority to Jesus' new commandment: "Love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples" (Jn. 13:34-35).

The English journalist, poet, and novelist Rudyard Kipling once addressed the graduating class of McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He spoke on the theme: if a person's scale of values is based solely on material wealth, that person will be in difficulty all their life. "Do not pay too much attention to fame, power and money," he advised the graduates. "Someday," he said, "you will meet a person who cares for none of these, and then you will know how poor you are."

"Remain in My love," Jesus says, "...so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete" (Jn. 15:9,11). Remain in Gods love and everyone will know you are a disciple. Remain in Gods love and you will know Christian joy – the one true joy that money can't buy!