

"Celebrating the Blessings of Worship"

I Chronicles 16:8-15-, 23-36
October 6, 2019

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Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship

Psalm 95:6; 18:46; 34:3

It is World Communion Sunday for Christians around the earth; 24 hours of continuous breaking of bread, the Body of Christ.

Come, let's worship and bow down! Let's kneel before the LORD, our Creator!

The LORD lives! Bless God, my rock! Let the God of my salvation be lifted high!

Magnify the LORD with me! Together let us lift his name up high!

Prayer of Invocation

Compassionate God, Open us to all that you would have us be for you and for others. Breakthrough into our lives and our church with new possibilities. We come praising you for the gift of your love revealed among us in Christ Jesus, sent into the world that we might find life through him. Help us, we pray, to become both willing and prepared to make true our worship by living in the world with the love of Jesus. Amen.

The Word

I Chronicles 16:8-15, 23-36

Common English Bible

Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make his deeds known to all people!

Sing to God, sing praises to him; dwell on all his wondrous works!

Give praise to God's holy name! Let the hearts rejoice of all those seeking the LORD!

Pursue the LORD and his strength; seek his face always! **Remember the wondrous works he has done, all his marvelous works, and the justice he declared— you who are the offspring of Israel, his servant, and the children of Jacob, his chosen ones.**

The LORD—he is our God. His justice is everywhere throughout the whole world. **God remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded to a thousand generations.**

Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Share the news of his saving work every single day!

Declare God's glory among the nations; declare his wondrous works among all people because the LORD is great and so worthy of praise.

He is awesome beyond all other gods because all the gods of the nations are just idols, but it is the LORD who created heaven!

Greatness and grandeur are in front of him; strength and joy are in his place.

Give to the LORD, all families of the nations—give to the LORD glory and power!

Give to the LORD the glory due his name! Bring gifts! Enter his presence!

Bow down to the LORD in his holy splendor! Tremble before him, all the earth! Yes, he set the world firmly in place; it won't be shaken.

Let heaven celebrate! Let the earth rejoice! Let the nations say, "The LORD rules!" Let the sea and everything in it roar! Let the countryside and everything in it celebrate!

Then the trees of the forest will shout out joyfully before the LORD, because he is coming to establish justice on earth!

Give thanks to the LORD because he is good, because his faithful love endures forever.

Say: 'Save us, God, our savior! Gather us! Deliver us from among the nations so we can give thanks to your holy name and rejoice in your praise.' **Bless the LORD, Israel's God, from forever in the past to forever always. And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD!**

Living the Word

There is fear in the world because there are so many people who are not like us. There are many religions, and many ways to worship God. We can be unsure of what others do because they seem 'not like us.' Recently, someone asked me if I thought that Jewish people and Muslims worship the same God as we do.

My response was and is: yes, because I believe there is only one God. Our understanding of that God may differ, but even amongst ourselves that is true. We worship differently, but even within our own denomination, even within our own congregation there are now more than one way to worship.

I have spent much of this week at Green Lake Conference Center doing Continuing Education Studies. The topic was 'gratitude' and I learned some new thoughts on the subject. Yet one of them stands out and I want to share it with you as we go into this time of celebrating our ministry of worship.

Dr. Dan Baker in his book entitled "What Happy People Know" says this: *"During active appreciation, the threatening messages from your amygdala [the fear center of the brain] and the anxious instincts of your brainstem are cut off, suddenly and surely, from access to your brain's neocortex, where they can fester, replicate themselves, and turn your stream of thoughts into a cold river of dread. It is a fact of neurology that the brain cannot be in a state of appreciation and a state of fear at the same time. The two states may alternate, but are mutually exclusive."*

Alright you bunch of 'Method'ists, Wesley followers, people of order: since you have come to this celebration of worship, let's look at the bulletin together. In it you will find several headings in all caps. Somewhere along your journey you made the decision to be here this morning for worship. The approach begins with you opening yourself to God's call upon your heart to come.

We try to facilitate that by posting worship hours in the newspaper, on the sign out front, and having a short hymn sing about 5 minutes before we begin for those who are still on their way...You may be welcomed by greeters, ushers and others before I stand up and give you a casual good morning. We share the announcements and our joys and concerns for the good of the community. Our Call to Worship and first hymn invites your mind to enter in closer to the activity of worshipping God. The light of Christ is carried in to two candles to remind us the Jesus was fully human like us and at the same time, fully God present with us.

Then we turn to prayer. Invocation – a big word to say "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest" or acknowledge that we want to feel & know God's Spirit in this place.

After the prayer we share the peace of Christ. This creates and opportunity for you to greet each other, but was originated as a way to make peace with any neighbors who you may have had conflict during the week. Sometimes while sharing the peace, I come to someone that I know is going through worry, trial or pain. Most often we don't have answers for them and all we have to offer them is God's peace for their life.

The second parts of the service is to give you God's Word. We share God with the children in some way, the choir shares God with us in some way and we read together some part of the Bible. We reflect through sound and sight on the theme of the morning. Did you know there is a theme every Sunday? Sometimes someone will share with me the theme that they heard and I am surprised that it is different than the one I thought it was... Often when that happens it is even more in depth than I heard.

We finish the section called The Word with some ways for us to 'live into the word', formerly known as a sermon. I always say that the good ones are written by the Holy Spirit – the not so good ones were probably mine alone...

The third section is the Response to the Word beginning with a tie-in hymn and once a month, Holy Communion. Jesus asks us in the holy meal to remember him. That is what we try to do. Today he is being remembered in this way by Christians all over the world – "One Bread, one Body, one Lord of all." Some will come forward to receive this gift like we do, some will serve each other this gift where they stand. Many will be in church buildings, but some will be hiding in private places, for fear of their lives.

In the Joys and Concerns, I try to share back what has been expressed, some of what I know needs prayer and whatever God puts on my heart in that moment. You may consider some of my words to be too casual with God, but I talk the same with God as I do with you. It is just me, being me. If you aren't with me and my words, it is ok, but take the time to express through your thoughts to God what is on your heart.

Yet all together we will remember the gift of earthly life and eternal life that Christ came to offer us. I am sad for those who don't come to share this worldwide meal with us today; both those who ignored God's call to be in a Christian gathering today and those who don't understand the saving grace of Christ that is offered also for them...

The fourth section is our opportunity to surrender ourselves to God's will for us. We do this by sharing our gifts of money and service. We pool, gather and celebrate the harvest, then it can be shared with those who need. The fifth section sends us forth, renewed to take our offerings out to others as we witness by our words and our deeds to the love of God that we experience in our lives. The light from the Christ candles is carried out before us into the world always leading the way for us to go.

Approaching God, experiencing the Word, responding, offering ourselves and sharing with others: these are all active verbs; they are a way of 'being' that God has created for us as humans, as Christians. Can there be ways to worship without a bulletin? Seems un-Methodist to me, as it is a part of most of my formal worship experiences; yet John Wesley, though always dressed formally, no matter where he was preaching, followed his friend Mr. Whitehead out into open fields and mining town streets to preach to those who couldn't or wouldn't enter the Church of England Cathedrals.

Without a bulletin, the early Methodists were able to still experience the Christian activity of approaching God, experiencing the Word, responding, offering ourselves and sharing with others. The order was still present, though they may not have consciously thought about it, like I'm sure you do each week as you worship...

In the gospel of John, chapter 4, we have these words from Jesus: starting with verse 19: "*The woman said, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem."*

²¹ *Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you and your people will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You and your people worship what you don't know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way.*

²⁴ *God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth."*

Worshipping God is praising God; making the connection between you and your Creator. Both giving and receiving. In addition worship is a communal activity between us as we gather to sing praises together.

Music is such a big part of who we are here at HUMC. In the rhythms we can find our heart beat and the movement of our praise. In the words, which have been chosen for that moment in the service we hear the words that hve come down, many of them from old and ancient times. In the hymns we are living the word. Our theology, what we believe about God, is written in the words that we sing.

Scripture tells us to love one another. We do that by sharing the good news in ways that it will take hold in the hearts of ourselves and others. When we are in relationship with another person, as we celebrate who they are with us, we are praising God's Creation. Together our relationship with God and our relationship with others is a reflection of Christ in us and to the world.

Just before we remember Christ by the sharing of the bread and cup, let us stand and releasing all fear, share in the appreciation of God by reading responsively, expressively,

Psalm 66:verses 1-8:

"Shout joyfully to God, all the earth!

Sing praises to the glory of God's name! Make glorious his praise!

Say to God: How awesome are your works! Because of your great strength, your enemies cringe before you.

All the earth worships you, sings praises to you, sings praises to your name!"

Come and see God's deeds; his works for human beings are awesome:

He turned the sea into dry land so they could cross the river on foot. Right there we rejoiced in him!

God rules with power forever; keeps a good eye on the nations. So don't let the rebellious exalt themselves.

All you nations, bless our God! Let the sound of his praise be heard!

Amen.