

### Call to Worship

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, that you are welcome here. **Thanks be to God.**

We want you to know that grace is God's welcoming gift. **Thanks be to God.**

We want you to know that God's generosity overflows in this fellowship. **Thanks be to God.**

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, that worship is our welcoming gift to God. **Thanks be to God.**

### Prayer of Invocation

**Life-giving God, all of us come to you today aware of our need for new life that only you can give. Yet we come with hope and the confidence of faith in your love for us. We call upon you, for we believe that in Christ is the power to transform our distress into peace, our illness into wholeness. Therefore, we come praising you, giving thanks for your boundless compassion and mercy extended toward us in Jesus, our healer and redeemer. Amen.**

### The Word

Psalm 148

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from heaven! Praise God on the heights! Praise God, all of you who are his messengers! Praise God, all of you who comprise his heavenly forces! Sun and moon, praise God! **All of you bright stars, praise God! You highest heaven, praise God! Do the same, you waters that are above the sky! Let all of these praise the Lord's name because God gave the command and they were created! God set them in place always and forever.**

God made a law that will not be broken. Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all you ocean depths. Do the same, fire and hail, snow and smoke, stormy wind that does what God says! **Do the same, you mountains, every single hill, fruit trees, and every single cedar! Do the same, you animals—wild or tame— you creatures that creep along and you birds that fly!**

Do the same, you kings of the earth and every single person, you princes and every single ruler on earth! Do the same, you young men—young women too! — you who are old together with you who are young! **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. God raised the strength of his people, the praise of all his faithful ones—the people who are close to him. Praise the Lord!**

### Living the Word

Stewardship as a Christian, and as a part of a congregation is more than just giving money to the church. That is a part of it and it is important to keep all of the wheels moving, even during a pandemic. But there is so much more.

Stewardship is how you balance your life: what is important to you, where you put your time and attention. Often in churches, Fall is the season of Stewardship, though I try to challenge you to consider what is important to you every week, with scriptures and stories and questions for you to ponder to help you balance where God fits into your life. These next four Sundays we will consider some of the ideals that you can weigh on your personal balancing scales, giving you the opportunity to do an annual re-check of your Christian journey since the last re -check.

The Title of this series is entitled Abundant Joy. The reason it is so positive is, that just as I often say "We are blessed by blessing others." In human thought it is sometimes hard to comprehend that we

get more in our lives when we give. Yet in theory and reality, it works. By the way, the root of theory is Theo, meaning 'of God.' As we know that not everything 'of God' makes sense to us, we have to continue to live into the mystery of being blessed by blessing others...still knowing that it is by God's grace that we receive all things that are good.

This series has four parts of Stewardship: Giving God our day, giving God our worship, giving God our spiritual gifts, and giving God our income. We are not going to tell you how much of yourself you have to give to God, that is between you and God. It is also the most difficult part of the series – the talk you may need to have with God about how you keep balance in your life. We will give you some examples and some suggestions. The rest will be up to you.

Let's begin- Abundant Joy: Giving God your day... It begins with actively seeking God. Not just asking 'where are you God?' We know God is always present with us. Instead, being willing to ask 'Where am I missing you God?' The last two summers the sermon series were about helping you see where you might be missing God, by having you look for specific colors in 2019 and seeing your blessings in 2020.

There are any number of ways of having daily devotional time with God. Prayer: The Apostle Paul wrote in his first letter to the Thessalonians 5:16-18 "*Rejoice Always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.*" Is your life an unending prayer? In fact, how can it be? For me it is an ongoing conversation in my head and in my heart.

Not every thought includes the Lord, yet every thought is formed around creation. Be it the trash to be taken out, 'why is there so much Lord?' Or, 'That driver just cut me off', I wonder if I have done that to others. "Lord, keep me alert."

I ask God to be with me in sleep, as I need my rest. I pray myself to sleep by remembering the day with praise and concerns and all of the people in my head and my heart. When I wake up, I try to keep my eyes closed to 'pray-in' the morning and the day ahead, asking God to guide my steps. Try to find a balance of praise, thanksgiving, petitions and confession. Of course, there is a whole sermon series on how to pray...for another time...

Another way to Give God your day is to read the scriptures...and journal your thoughts and your questions. The Bible is a complicated book, yet it is crucial in knowing God, as well as understanding how God responds to us humans. Journaling is also helpful in daily recording where you have noticed God in your day. I am not always continuously faithful at daily journaling, yet I love to go back weeks and years later to see what I was processing at past times.

In the winter, when I am shivering, I can go back to my journal and be reminded how hot it was this last summer and the day I went out and threw water balloons with Oliver and cooled off as I got soaked... and again, I'm sure God smiles with me.

Do some research when you want to know more...Is there snow mentioned in the Bible. Yes, there is, but I am going to let you look it up...With the technology we have today, you can find all kinds of answers to your Biblical questions. How many times does the Bible mention the heart? Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible says 'the brain is not mentioned once, whereas the heart is cited 825 times.

The more you read parts of the Bible, and take time to reflect on it the more it begins to come back to you in the life you are living. Do you remember the story of King David dancing before the Lord because he was so happy? Sometimes I feel happy enough to dance and I am reminded that God is praised in my joy.

Praise is central to biblical faith. What does it mean to praise God? What happens when we heed the Psalmist's appeal to praise the Lord? First, we direct our praise exclusively to God. When we praise God we fulfill the purpose for which we are created; namely, to glorify God and to enjoy God forever. Praise testifies to the initiative of God in creation and redemption.

Praise confesses God is the source of all life, as the one whose purpose and presence order and sustain creation in accord with the divine intention, and as the one whose faithful providence issues in acts of blessing and salvation for God's people, and through them for all the families of the earth. This one alone, God, is Creator and Sustainer, Lord and Savior. Praise proclaims the universal sovereignty of God. Here is evangelism in the true sense; not the manipulative use of threats and fear to secure a conversion, but a joyful invitation to join the chorus of praise to the Creator and Redeemer.

Another focus is on the impact praise has on the one offering it, because the act of praise presents a wonderful gift to the one doing the praising. It takes the focus off ourselves. The fact is that we spend a good bit of time wrapped up in our own little worlds. Often people come to church, listen to the sermon and ask 'What is in this for me?' The Act of Praise – which is an action, not an idea – helps say 'Hey, it's not always just about you.' Praise requires noticing both what has occurred in the past and what is going on in the future. Christians name the divine activity as creative, redemptive and sustaining.

Praise becomes empty words when noticing God and God's Creation does not move us to gratitude for what we see and experience. We resist gratitude in those moments in which we are unwilling to acknowledge our dependence on God.

Begin by giving God your day by just acknowledging who you have been created to be and the gifts you have been given. Go about each day 'being'. Use your five senses to see and hear and taste and touch and smell all that you are surrounded by – celebrate even if just inside, with praise and thanksgiving, moment after moment.

In this time, when so much is happening in God's world, we need to be lifted up and to share with others the Good News that God continues to bless us. Sometimes we overlook God and God's blessings because we begin to believe that we deserve them, that they are ours. Praise and thanksgiving is forgotten. Start seeing God; acknowledging that you receive even when you don't really deserve – that is God's grace.

Thank God continually, and express out loud so others experience it as well. Giving of ourselves part of each day. Consider how many times a day do you intentionally stop to pray. Still working or even retired, we all run somewhat by the clock.

The Ancient Monastic orders had a 'Liturgy of Hours' that mark the hours of each day and sanctify the day with prayers. They prayed 8 times each 24 hours. The first was during the night, 2am; then dawn, 5am; early morning 6am; mid-morning, 9am; mid-day, noon; mid-afternoon, 3pm; evening,

6pm; and night, 7pm. Things, through time have changed – and there is not a right or wrong time to pray. So, consider if you want some order in your balancing of ‘giving God your day’, a schedule that could include prayers as you are waking up, at breakfast, at lunch, at supper and as you drift off to sleep.

Keep looking for God. How many things can you thank God for that you have often walked by and missed? Begin to find God each day this next week. In a color changing, falling leaf, in a chair – (thank God for carpenters – including Jesus); your car (How do they do make those?) Work at staying focused on the Creator.

Holy Communion – the bread and the juice given to us to help us focus in remembrance. Today is World Communion Sunday. Already as this morning has broken across the earth. Humanity of every kind have, in their own languages, shared a similar liturgy as we will share in a few minutes. Many different understandings of what it means to be a Christian, based on the scriptures of the Bible. Yet because of Christ who came to illuminate God and God’s Word, today we celebrate by giving God this part of our day.

### **Holy Communion**

**Invitation** Christ our Lord invites to his table all who loved him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

### **Confession and Pardon**

**Lord you have honored us with your unfailing covenant to be with us always. We can trust you, but we don’t; we can know you are ever present, but we forget; we can build a faith in you to get us through the good and the bad times, yet we are too busy building our faith around the people and things of this world. Forgive us we pray.**

**(Silent Prayer)**

In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven. **In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.**

**Praise God!**

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, is yours. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us give God praise and glory. **We praise God for the surpassing gift of Jesus Christ.**

We give you thanks, O God, for the mighty sweep of your love, embracing all people and all nations. We thank you that you have sent Jesus Christ to us to break down the walls of hostility which divide the earth’s people, and to reveal your all-encompassing love, making us all one. **Through the power of your Spirit, may this unity become reality.**

Now, by your presence, make sacred this feast in memory of Jesus Christ. **As this broken bread was scattered like grain on the hillsides, and then, when gathered together, became one loaf, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your eternal realm.**

Like Christ, who was offered up to you that we might live, and like the juice of this cup, which was poured out that all might share in the signs of new life, so may the lives of your people be poured out in compassion, and in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, and the hungry of this world. **For it is in the name of Jesus Christ, that we pray. Amen.**