

19th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST WORSHIP SERVICE

WORDS OF WELCOME

***CALL TO WORSHIP:** “*God Is Here as We Your People*” v.1

(Spoken in Unison)

*All: God is here! As we your people Meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure What it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, All our varied skills and arts
Wait the coming of the Spirit Into open minds and hearts.*

HYMN OF INVOCATION: “*Spirit Song*” v.1

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Verse 1

Oh let the Son of God enfold you with His Spirit and His love
Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul
Oh let Him have those things that hold you and His Spirit like a dove
Will descend upon your life and make you whole

Chorus

Jesus oh Jesus, Come and fill Your lambs Jesus oh Jesus, Come and fill Your lambs

SCRIPTURE & REFLECTION:

Philippians:

Often times throughout life we find ourselves in the midst of storms of trial, and suffering and conflict and to be honest find ourselves acting in ways that are very un-Christ-like. Sometimes we need both a word of hope and reprimand spoken into those situations in order quiet the storm that is raging out of control. Let us listen the the words of the Apostle Paul as he speaks words of hope and reprimand to a community that is experiencing suffering as well as the effects from a raging storm of division that is arising within the community and what message they have for us still today.

Philippians 4:1-9

Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Final Exhortations

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Please use these thoughts for time of reflection and sharing

- **What might we learn from this appeal for both steadfastness and unity?**
- **Why do you think Paul told the Philippians to not be anxious and reminded them that the Lord was near?**
- **When, if ever, have you experienced the Peace of God that transcends all understanding?**
- **What do you think is the significance of Paul telling them that their hearts and minds will be guarded but did not mention their lives?**

Matthew:

Throughout life we receive all kinds of invitations, some we accept, some we reject, and some we simply ignore as if we never even received them. Let us listen to these words from Matthew about an invitation to the wedding banquet for the king's son, to whom it is extended, what is offered at this banquet, what is the appropriate attire, and how do we make sense out of this parable for what it means to us today.

Matthew 22: 1-14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵“But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

¹³“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Please use these thoughts for time of reflection and sharing

- **What can we learn about what God desires to give us from the description of what is offered at the Wedding Banquet?**
- **Who is invited to the banquet?**
- **What do you think the Wedding Clothes represent?**
- **What do you make of the line “Many are invited but few are chosen.”?**

TIME OF REFLECTION: “Invited”

How many of you have seen the movie “The Blind Side?” For those of you who haven’t, the movie is based upon the life story of pro football player Michael Oher who experienced a very rough childhood being exposed to drugs, shootings, in and out of foster homes, and eventually finds himself living on the streets in high school. The Tuohy family noticed this and took Michael into their care and provided for all of his needs. They were a well to do family and big Ol’e Miss supporters. They helped Michael get on his feet but they also did a lot of nudging and grooming him for being a football player for their old Alma Mater. When he chose to go to Ole Miss there was an investigation about

the motives of the Touhey family in bringing Michael into their care. When the authorities questioned Michael about this he became upset as this question set doubt in his mind as to their motives for bringing him into their care. Did they really care for him or was all their care just manipulating him for their benefit to do what they wanted him to do. In the end his adoptive mother and he have a conversation that helps him and her realize that though they may not have asked him what he wanted their outpouring of love and support was truly intended for his wellbeing and what he wanted to do with his life was his choice. Leigh Ann Touhey told him it is your life, it is your choice. Michael then went back and told those conducting the investigation that they never asked him his motive for selecting Ol'e Miss only about everyone else's motives. So they asked him why he selected it and he said because that is where my family goes. In selecting Ol'e Miss it was his way of saying I choose among all of life's distractions to be a part of this family.

Today's scripture from Matthew reveals to us a God that continually goes out repeatedly extending an invitation to all and providing countless nudges to both good and evil alike to come to the wedding banquet, in other words to be a part of God's family. This scripture reveals a God who not only wants us to be a part of the family but desires to give us the very best and not just the leftovers. God extends the invitations and nudges not only through messengers, but through sending his only son. Like Leigh Ann Touhey told Michael, God tells us "It's your life, it's your choice." As we see in today's scriptures though all are invited and called, many make the choice to either outright refuse the invitation while others just ignore the invitation to be a part of and participate in God's family.

Listen to these words once more "But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them." God has given you life, God has given you choice. Do any of the words in today's scriptures ring true in your life? Maybe you haven't killed the messenger but are the concerns and worries and busyness of everyday life causing you to either ignore or be deaf to God's invitation. Maybe it is fear or apathy that is getting in the way of accepting God's invitation to the banquet. Some of life's greatest sins are not sins of commission but sins of omission; things that we leave undone. The judgment proclaimed in today's scriptures makes it clear that when we accept God's invitation to the wedding banquet we will not be left unchanged. The wedding clothes symbolize that change and transformation that will take place within us when we truly accept and embrace God's invitation to the banquet. The wedding guest who shows up at the banquet in inappropriate attire represents those who desire to reap the benefits of God's grace, love, mercy yet remain unchanged.

Good works are not how we earn salvation; rather they are the fruits of salvation. Salvation is a gift that brings out the best in us and weeds out the evil and darkness within. When we embrace God's invitation we can't help but desire to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God. To me this represents the wedding garment. It expresses the true desire to be a part of God's family and desire to participate in the rejoicing, caring, and "abundant life" giving love of God; not only reaping the benefits, but sharing freely those blessings with others.

We are all invited to the wedding banquet of eternal life; The question is are we willing to put on this garment that represents the transformation that happens within our lives as we truly embrace the gift of salvation extended to us in that invitation to the wedding banquet. God gave us each life. God gave us each choice. God has called and invited each of us by name just as we are yet, by responding yes to that invitation, we must be willing to be transformed by God's life giving grace. Throughout all of eternity God has given each individual the gift of life and the gift of choice; in essence God tells each person – "It is your life; it is your choice." The question that remains for each individual to answer is "What will I choose?"

I know accepting God's invitation requires of us daily even moment by moment turning to God and so I invite you to join in praying the words to Hymn 530 "*God Our Author and Creator*" and allow the words of this hymn not only to speak to you but to be your prayer to God.

Time of Reflection Closing Prayer: God Our Author and Creator #530 (Spoken in Unison)

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God our Author and Creator, in whose life we find our own,
Make our daily witness greater, by our lives make Your love known.
Help us show how love embraces those whom fear and greed down trod;
In all yearning hearts and faces let us see a child of God

Like those first apostles, Savior, give us strength to love and serve;
When our fainting spirits waver, fire our hearts and steel our nerve.
Teach us wisdom and compassion; bid our restless thoughts be still;
By Your guidance help us fashion lives conformed to do Your will.

Keep us faithful, Holy Spirit, help us bear the message true,
That at last all lands may hear it; "God is love Christ died for you."
Join our lives in mighty chorus till we come from every place,
With all those who went before us, to the fullness of God's grace.

A TIME OF PRAYER:

LIFTING UP PRAYER REQUESTS:

INVITATION TO OFFERING:

Pastor: All throughout the scriptures we see how God's blessings are meant to be received graciously and shared freely so that all God's people and creation will be blessed and know God's presence and provisions through the sharing of our gifts. As we have received, let us freely share from what God has entrusted to us as guided by God's Holy Spirit .

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION:** *"God Is Here as We Your People" v. 4 (Spoken)*

All: "Sovereign God, of earth and heaven, in an age of change and doubt,

Keep us faithful to the Gospel; help us work your purpose out.

Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;

We, who cannot live without you, We adore you! We believe!"

So we offer to you now these gifts and our very lives as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray---

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

SUMM-IT UP!

SENDING HYMN: *"Step by Step"*

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Chorus

O God You are my God and I will ever praise You

O God You are my God and I will ever praise You

I will seek You in the morning and I will learn to walk in Your ways

And step by step You'll lead me and I will follow You all of my days

CHARGE & BLESSING:

POSTLUDE:

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