

Order of Worship for Sunday, June 7
Extra Credit: Perseverance

One License: A-734080

CCLI: 1825996

©

Prelude

Greeting

Opening Prayer

Holy God, even from a distance, our spirits are gathered together to worship you. Bless us with your presence and open our hearts to your Spirit. Hold us in grief, sustain us in waiting, help us to consider the needs of others, and draw us always nearer to you. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn

Spirit of God, vs 1-3

The Faith We Sing #2117

Words and Music ©1987 Steve Garnaas-Holmes

*Spirit of God, bright Wind, breath that bids life begin,
glow as you always do; create us anew.*

*Give us the breath to sing, lifted on soaring wing,
held in your hands, born on your wings.*

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

*Spirit of God, bright Dove, grant us your peace and love,
healing upon your wings for all living things.*

*For when we live your peace, captives will find release,
held in your hands, born on your wings.*

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

*Spirit of God, bright Hands, even in far off lands
you hold all the human race in one warm embrace.*

*No matter where we go, you hold us together so,
held in your hands, born on your wings.*

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

What is Perseverance

Perseverance is a hard word. It's hard to say and hard to spell and hard to explain. But if you keep trying, you'll get it.

And that's what it means, too. Perseverance is about not quitting.

Perseverance means that even when something is very hard or even seems impossible, you keep on doing it or trying to do it.

A person who shows perseverance doesn't give up when something gets hard or uncomfortable. That person keeps on going as long as it takes.

God wants us to learn perseverance, especially with faith. Sometimes it is hard to keep believing in God when bad or scary things are happening. Sometimes it seems like maybe God has given up on us. Sometimes we want to give up on God.

But no matter how hard things get or how long we have to wait for them to get better, God never gives up on us.

Even when we do bad things or ignore God, God never gives up on us. God is always faithful. God perseveres.

God wants us to do the same thing and never give up on God. God also wants us to persevere in loving one another – that includes our family and friends and even people we don't like very much or don't understand. One of the ways we can practice perseverance is by being better at listening than talking. We learn a lot about how to keep going when we hear the stories of others who have kept going through hard things for a long time.

God, help us all to persevere. Amen.

Farewell to Dave

Today we say goodbye for now to our Director of Family Ministries, Dave Long. As we do, may we feel the presence of our God who is with us and who understands the goodbye we are experiencing as the story of our congregation takes a turn, and Dave's story launches into a new direction.

Please join me, wherever you are this morning, in a prayer for Dave:

God of our life's journeys, we gather here to celebrate the goodness of Dave, to honor the many ways he has touched our lives, and to ask your blessing as he continues on the road of life and ministry. May the love that is in our hearts be a bond that unites us forever, wherever we may be. May the power of your presence bless this moment of our leave-taking. Amen.

Dave, we will remember and treasure the gifts that you have shared with us over the years.

As you journey onward, may you remember always that our love and appreciation for you are etched on our hearts.

As you share your passion in ministry at camp and beyond, may you see in each one the face of Jesus.

As you walk through the good times and the hard times, may you never lose sight of the shelter of God's loving arms.

And when you question your decisions and wonder about the fruits of your choices, when the days are long and the work is exhausting, may the peace of God reign in your heart.

ALL: We know that God goes with you.

We praise and thank God for you, Dave, and entrust you to the loving care of God, whose Spirit accompanies you on your way. Amen.

Dave's Video
Thanks, Dave Video

Dave's Song
Blessed Be Your Name

Offering Info/Prayer

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 29:4-14 (Nancy Jo Mattson)

The Lord of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims to all the exiles I have carried off from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and settle down; cultivate gardens and eat what they produce. Get married and have children; then help your sons find wives and your daughters find husbands in order that they too may have children. Increase in number there so that you don't dwindle away. Promote the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because your future depends on its welfare.

The Lord of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Don't let the prophets and diviners in your midst mislead you. Don't pay attention to your dreams. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I didn't send them, declares the Lord.

The Lord proclaims: When Babylon's seventy years are up, I will come and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope. When you call me and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you search for me, yes, search for me with all your heart, you will find me. I will be present for you, declares the Lord, and I will end your captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have scattered you, and I will bring you home after your long exile, declares the Lord.

Message

Sermon Meditation for UMCA

Perseverance

06-07-2020

We have a very full time together this morning, as we celebrate our graduates, say farewell to Dave, and prepare for the sacrament of Holy Communion. So, as we take a look at perseverance as a skill of faith in this extra credit installment of our Homework series, I will try to be brief.

Many of you, and many of us over the years have taken note of Jeremiah 29:11 as a favorite verse from the Bible, one that we hold close as a guide and source of strength and hope. If we have any capacity as human beings to practice perseverance, this is a verse that motivates us to do so. For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future. That's the version of Jeremiah 29:11 that I memorized growing up. I know that many of you have also memorized this verse over the years, and internalized it. When we take this verse personally, it makes us feel loved, seen by God, and like things are going to be okay.

But this verse isn't a stand alone verse in the Bible. It's written in the context of a much bigger story, one that I believe we should know and recall when we recite this verse. I don't think the bigger story diminishes the power of this verse for our lives - indeed, I believe that knowing the context makes this verse even more significant for us.

The verse wasn't written to an individual from God, even though Jeremiah as an individual really could have used a verse like this. Being a prophet when things were NOT going well for the people of Israel was a very hard job. He was mocked. He was hated. He experienced bouts of severe depression and wondered what the point was of any of it. But he had been called forth by God to speak to the people and to draw them into God's presence when they kept on choosing again and again to go a different way.

Jeremiah 29 is a letter to the Israelites who are exiles in Babylon. Now, to make a very long story very brief, the people of Israel had been through some stuff. Their kingdom had been conquered by the Babylonians and many of them had been taken out of their homes and away from everything they had known and loved. They were brought to Babylon to live as servants for the Babylonians. Exiled and enslaved.

Of course, the people were wondering, HOW LONG? When would God free them from this suffering? Would God allow this suffering to continue? They were sorry. They had learned their lesson. They wanted to go home, to be free. Jeremiah gives them tough instructions.

Settle in, he says. We're going to be here for a while. He was right, by the way. This exile in Babylon lasted for about 70 years. That's several generations. A lifetime for many. By the time

the exile would be ended, it would be the grandchildren of many of the original exiles who would return to Israel.

So do you see now how much more powerful verse 11 becomes when we know the story? For I know the plans I have for you...for you to prosper...to give you hope and a future. These words are a message from God to a whole people. They aren't about one person's bad day, they are about the power of God's justice and God's mercy to prevail over the long arc of history.

In the meantime, the verses around verse 11 say, persevere. Make for yourselves a home in Babylon, raising your families in the faith and contributing to the common good. We're going to be here, in this hard place, for a while. Perseverance is worth it, though. In the end it will lead to SHALOM, Jeremiah tells them, the deep abiding peace of God that can only exist when justice is complete.

Here we are in June 2020 in Minnesota, in the United States. Some of us are feeling like we are experiencing exile. The coronavirus has us feeling exiled from what our lives were like just a few months ago. So many of our comforts and our sources of connection have been removed from us. And in just these last two weeks, events in our city and our country have brought some things to light. And some of us are feeling caught off guard, exiled from our ability to compartmentalize or ignore injustice and exiled from our sense of peace.

Others have experienced exile in this country for a long, long time. For four hundred years or so. There is more than one pandemic raging in our world, as our bishop, Bruce Ough wrote last week to United Methodists in Minnesota. We are now face to face, in a powerful way with the pandemic of Covid-19 and the pandemic of racism. Both threaten to do great harm. And yet, this is not a moment for us to quickly resolve so we can get back to our comforts and pretend things are okay again.

This is a time when we are called to persevere. To dig deep and settle in to these feelings of unease, of unrest, of uncertainty. This is not a blip that will be over in a week or two, when we will go back to the way things were. This is a transformation, a moment in which we are called to seek what is good for all people and no longer what is only good for some of us.

This is my hope for our graduates, you who have experienced such an unimagined season at this pivotal time in your lives. And this is my hope for us all. That we will not hide from this moment. That we will not rest in seeking justice. That we will persevere in building a new life together, one grounded in anti-racism and seeking the health and well-being of all people.

We are followers of Jesus, who relentlessly persevered in seeking God's kingdom. God's plans for hope and a future require us to persevere in what is right. Your homework this week is this: live in this moment. Do not hide from it. Plant seeds here that in time will spring forth the branches of justice and equity for all people. Persevere in pursuit of God's kingdom.

And, for extra credit, read something written by a person of color this month that will give you perspective and help you learn and grow.

Amen.

Celebrating our Graduates Video

Transition:

Bless Grads, transition to Communion

Hymn

Let Us Break Bread Together, UM Hymnal 618, vs 1-3
Afro-American Spiritual ad./arr. William Farley Smith
©1989 The United Methodist Publishing House

Let us break bread together on our knees
Let us break bread together on our knees
When I fall on my knees with
My face to the rising sun
O Lord, have mercy on me

Let us drink wine together on our knees
Let us drink wine together on our knees
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun
O Lord, have mercy on me
Let us praise God together on our knees
Let us praise God together on our knees
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun
O Lord, have mercy on me

Communion

(w/prayers)

RACHAEL:

God is with us. Let us pray.

It is good to be joyful as we give thanks to You, Holy God.

You created us in your image and gave us life with your breath.

Your love does not falter, even when we neglect you and our neighbors.

You liberate people from bondage. As we commune with you and one another this day, we come seeking your liberation for all people and your comfort in our distress.

With joy, and with all of Creation, we proclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy
God of Power and Grace
Heaven and Earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest
Hosanna in the highest

LAURA:

You are Holy God, and blessed is your Child Jesus
Your Spirit descended upon him and he took on his mission to
proclaim good news to the poor
heal the sick
feed the hungry
socialize with sinners
and liberate those who were captive.
His life gave birth to the church through a new covenant
one born out the Holy Spirit
whose power dwells within us today.

RACHAEL:

On the night in which he gave himself over, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, God, and said, "take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After dinner, he took the cup, gave thanks, and said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many. Drink from it in remembrance of me."

LAURA:

In remembering the mighty acts of Jesus, we offer ourselves as a living witness
proclaiming the mystery of faith:

Christ has died
Christ has risen
Christ will come again

RACHAEL:

Pour out your Spirit on the gift of these elements and upon all who will receive them.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ,
that we may be the body of Christ for the world, redeemed in love.

LAURA:

Your Spirit makes us one with Christ and one with each other
It binds, blends, and multiplies us, as we minister to the world,
as one beloved community of faith
singing your praises on Earth and in Heaven

until Christ comes again,
and we feast at the divine table
in perfect harmony.

We pray now for our church, community, and world.

God we need you. Turn our hearts to seek you.

Receive our confessions,
unite us in the work of justice.

Strengthen us with perseverance to sustain us as we work for your kingdom here and now.

Pour out your power and healing and grace upon us.

We remember the sick, the suffering, and all who provide care.

We remember those who are fearful, those who are angry, and those who provide protection.

We remember those who cry out for justice and pray that their cries will be heard and that
change will come.

We remember those who are grieving unimaginable losses and those who are grieving
inevitable loss.

We remember that you, O God, are able to do more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

And hear us now as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction (w/invitation to come get Communion/greet grads and Dave)

Postlude