

Order of Worship for August 23, 2020
Profiles in Faith: and Frankie Cayaban

COUNTDOWN

OPENING VERSE: Ruth 1:16

But Ruth replied, Don't urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

PRELUDE

GREETING

OPENING PRAYER

God of the Ages, we praise you in a chorus with all those people of faith who have come before us. We praise you with all those around the world who pray to you right now. And we praise you with the generations to come. May your people everywhere praise your holy name, and may we be inspired to love and serve you wherever we are. Amen.

HYMN

Brian Schroeder

Great Are You Lord

Leslie Jordan and David Leonard © 2012

Verse 1

You give life, You are love

You bring light to the darkness

You give hope,

You restore every heart that is broken

And great are You Lord

So we pour out our praise

We pour out our praise

It's Your breath in our lungs

So we pour out our praise to You only

Bridge

And all the earth will shout Your praise

Our hearts will cry these bones will sing

Great are You Lord

Chorus 1

It's Your breath in our lungs

VIDEO 1: Susanna Wesley

OFFERING and PRAYER (can use same one!)

****General Fund, Good Samaritan Fund, Building Fund****

OFFERTORY

Jesus on the Mainline

U Can Jug or Nots

VIDEO 2: Frankie Cayaban

SCRIPTURE: John 1:1-8 (The Message)

The Word was first,
the Word present to God,
God present to the Word.
The Word was God,
in readiness for God from day one.

Everything was created through him;
nothing—not one thing!—
came into being without him.
What came into existence was Life,
and the Life was Light to live by.
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness;
the darkness couldn't put it out.

There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

VIDEO 3: Liz Balabon

SERMON

Profiles in Faith, Week 3

Susanna Wesley, Frankie Cayaban, Liz Balabon

John 1:1-8

Rev. Rachael Warner

As we continue our series called Profiles in Faith, this morning we are highlighting people who have believed in the impact of the church without walls and have discovered meaningful ways to reach people with God's love.

I'm especially inspired by this week's profiles, as like many of you, I've grown weary of being separated from our church building and sanctuary and from the regular in person connections of Sunday mornings all together in one place. We were happy there, comfortable. We knew mostly what to expect. Our friends were there with us. The windows, so beautiful. The music, so rich and full of blessings.

Today, even as we feel that grief and loss and sadness about what has changed, these profiles offer inspiration for who we still are as the church, the body of Christ in the world. Each of the stories we've heard today tell us that God is not confined to a building or a comfort zone or an

established way of doing things. Each of the stories we've heard today is a testimony to innovation, to going where we are sent, and to the impact of presence in the spaces where people most need to know that they are valued and loved and that they are part of God's story.

Susanna Wesley, known as the mother of Methodism, lived in a time and social location that did not encourage women to be educated or opinionated. She was the twenty-fifth child in her family, the daughter of a clergy-man who had been removed from the priesthood for holding too many dissenting beliefs. In his book about Susanna Wesley, Rev. Donald Kline shares that she while she did not agree with all of her father's opinions, she did match his intellect even as a young teenage girl in the late seventeenth century. He writes that,

While still a teenager she studied Greek, Latin and French and was fluent in all three languages. She was perfectly at home in discussions of all theological topics as well as world problems and social issues. Her keen-witted, high-spirited beauty was laced with a modesty and humility unsurpassed.

She married Samuel Wesley, who was a dedicated, serious Anglican priest, and she became a mother to nineteen children. Facing many difficult circumstances including financial hardship, illnesses, and a fire that burned down their home and nearly took the life of young John Wesley, Susanna always maintained the firm convictions of her faith.

Susanna is the outlier in our group of profiles today because she did not physically travel to preach and teach the gospel or to serve others. All her life, her ministry happened home and very close to home. And yet, she still found a way to burst through the barriers and limitations and comfort zones of the time to reach new people, to draw many into prayer and devotional life together, and to train up her children into the leaders and world-changers they would become.

Many years into their marriage and family life together, when her husband Samuel was away to London for an extended time, Susanna found herself leading large groups of people in reading Scripture, prayer, and devotional time. This was not her role, it was not the way things were done in her time and location. And yet, this was where God was calling her out to a new place, to a new location, in which her voice and leadership was essential and valued and in which she could offer others the opportunity to recognize their value. I think her leadership, her passion, and her willingness to break barriers for the sake of the gospel are best summed up in her own words in a letter to her husband Samuel in 1711 while he was away in London. Here are a few short excerpts from that letter:

I thought it my duty to spend some part of the day, in reading to and instructing my family: And such time I esteemed spent in a way more acceptable to God, than if I had retired to my own private devotions.

This was the beginning of my present practice. Other people's coming and joining with us was merely accidental. Our lad told his parents: They first desired to be admitted; then others that

heard of it, begged leave also: So our company increased to about thirty; and it seldom exceeded forty last winter.

At last it came into my mind, though I am not a man nor a Minister, yet if my heart were sincerely devoted to God, and I was inspired with a true zeal for his glory, I might do somewhat more than I do.

With those few neighbours that then came to me, I discoursed more freely and affectionately. I chose the best and most awakening sermons we have.

Since this, our company increased every night; for I dare deny none that ask admittance.

Last Sunday I believe we had above two hundred. And yet many went away, for want of room to stand.

These are excerpts from throughout the letter, in which Susanna clearly struggles back and forth with her duties as a wife and mother and woman held up against the clarity of her call to share preaching and prayer with whomever might gather to receive it! Ultimately, she leaned in to the urging of God and as you heard, crowds too big to manage came to her home to be part of her ministry!

In this way, she shared a message with her own children and with all who gathered that over time would make a way for many more women to preach and teach and lead in the church

Now, remember our gospel reading this morning? There we met another person of faith who broke barriers to make a way for the gospel. His name was John, called the baptist. With a clear awareness that God was up to something new and remarkable, he wandered and preached, called out the message of the coming Messiah, and baptized people to prepare them for meeting Jesus.

Theology professor Ginger Barfield writes about this text,

John the Witness made Jesus known. There have been countless others throughout the ages.

The gospel message does not go forward without witnesses like John.

How can we point towards Jesus in mission in such a way that others come to know him and come to know and love God?

John's gospel opens so differently from the others, not with a list of genealogy or a birth narrative or even jumping right into Jesus' ministry on earth. Instead, John pans out...way out...to a view of the cosmos, of an eternal God and a Messiah who is part of that big story,

transcending time and space. John uses theological language to describe the impact of Jesus' presence on earth.

Scholar Gail O'Day points out that this cosmological imagery of creation and eternity and transcendence is wedded to concrete historical experience through the person and witness of John. The story of the Word, of God's self-expression, does not remain outside human experience but belongs to that experience. Moreover, the story of John the Baptist introduces faith and human response to the light into the story of the Word.

In these opening verses of John's gospel, John the Baptist is called a witness who prepares the way for Jesus, and as the chapter goes on, he will give his witness testimony. He will give it to unprepared audiences and to complaints, pointed questions, and severe critique. He will give it in every place he goes, preparing the way for Jesus. He will give his testimony until his life is taken from him because he has come to know the truth and he cannot ever go back from it.

We are so blessed to have heard two more profiles this morning of present day Methodists bringing the message of the gospel wherever they are led. Pastor Cayaban in the Philippines, who travels across any terrain and many miles to make sure that there is no place too remote to be remembered, no person unworthy of his time and travels and effort. He goes to these places to bring the gospel, but I'm inspired to wonder if it is his very going in the first place that is the heart of the gospel. That he would have such faith that he would go to such incredible lengths to preach and teach and love God's people!

And how blessed are we to hear Liz share about her ministry with Meals on Wheels? Many of the people I talk with and check in with during this pandemic season have been sustained in these isolating times by the delivery of meals. And bringing meals isn't only about food - it's about love. It's about a check in to know someone's doing okay, a friendly word, the awareness that someone cares enough to come and bring those meals. Not only is Liz someone who brings God's love by delivering meals, but she trains and coordinates others of us to do the same! To go where God sends and bring good news - of a hot meal, of a loving presence, of a community that remembers people.

All of these profiles are great reminders to us that God calls people from all different times and places and circumstances to the work of preaching, teaching, and serving others. Some of the scariest moments in our lives might happen when God nudges (or shoves) us toward something out of our comfort zones, something that challenges the status quo, or something that draws new or unexpected people into our circles. Today we heard from and about people who have, nevertheless, risen to the occasion before them and put their faith in God first, following where God has led.

May it be so for us as well.
Amen.

HYMN

Here I Am, Lord

I, the Lord of sea and sky
I have heard my people cry
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save

I who made the stars of night
I will make their darkness bright
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night
I will go, Lord
If You lead me
I will hold Your people in my heart

I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame
I will set a feast for them
My hand will save

Finest bread I will provide
'Til their hearts be satisfied
I will give my life to them
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night
I will go, Lord
If You lead me
I will hold Your people in my heart

PASTORAL PRAYER (Laura)

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Congregation)

HYMN

Sent Out in Jesus' Name

Sent out in Jesus' name, our hands are ready now
to make the world the place in which the kingdom comes.

The angels cannot change a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love, of justice, and of peace.
The task is ours to do to set it really free.
O help us to obey and carry out your will!

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE