

ORDER OF WORSHIP
October 18, 2020
CONFIRMATION (Outdoors)

PRELUDE

Diane, keyboard, 10 minutes (start at 3:50pm)

GREETING

Pastor Rachael

Good afternoon! Welcome, welcome.

It's a brisk Minnesota fall afternoon, and we are so grateful that you have braved the cold to join us for this most exciting day, Confirmation day! The young people sitting here will soon profess their faith in Jesus and their commitment to follow Jesus with their lives. As many of you know, that is no small commitment. But they are ready for this moment, ready to claim and be claimed by Jesus, ready to spend the rest of their lives growing in faith and in love of God and others. They are an inspiration to me, and an example to all of us! A pandemic can force us outdoors, it can change our schedules and routines, it can leave us feeling the disappointment of the things that are not how we imagined they would be. But a pandemic cannot take Jesus away from us, and it cannot take us away from Jesus. And thanks be to God for that!

And now may God bless this sacred space and this holy moment. May we come into God's presence with gratitude and joy. May the Holy Spirit warm our hearts in ways we never expected. Amen.

A READING FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Pastor Laura (Isaiah 43:1-3)

But now, says the Lord—
the one who created you, Jacob,
the one who formed you, Israel:
Don't fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
when through the rivers, they won't sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire, you won't be scorched
and flame won't burn you.
I am the Lord your God,
the holy one of Israel, your savior.

Please join us in singing, humming, or listening to *Here I Am, Lord*.

HYMN

Here I Am, Lord, #593, 2 verses

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

A READING FROM PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Pastor Laura (Philippians 4:12-13)

I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty.
In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry,
of having plenty and of being in need.
I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength.

MESSAGE

Pastor Rachael

Many of our youth have chosen this reading from Philippians this year, and over the years, as a verse that inspires them in their faith, a verse to carry with them in their lives: *I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength.*

A few weeks ago as we met to begin our final preparations for today, we talked a little bit about how helpful it can be to have a verse from the Bible that we have not just memorized, but internalized and can draw upon for strength, motivation, and inspiration. And we also talked a little bit about how it's important to know more about the verse we choose than just how it makes us personally feel: who wrote it? Why did they write it? How does it fit into the bigger paragraph, story, or book of the Bible where it's found? What did it mean for the people it was first written about, for, or to? And how does that relate to what it means for us? When we do this, we sometimes find out that a verse we thought sounded just right on its own doesn't really mean the same thing in context that we were using it to mean when we plucked it out to stencil on the wall or make into a bumper sticker!

Other times, though, we discover that a verse only becomes more inspiring when we learn about its context and how it fits into the whole of Scripture. So today, we are looking a little closer at this verse from Philippians, and the one before it. As it turns out, I think it will hold up as a pretty perfect reading for a Confirmation class coming to profess their faith in the cold, outdoors, in masks, during a pandemic.

Our reading from Philippians is at the end of a letter Paul wrote to this faith community, arguably one of his favorites among all the churches he started! He has written them this brief letter, likely we have here just one small piece of the history of their letters back and forth to one another. Paul is not there with them in Philippi - he has been off on many journeys, including being thrown in prison because of his preaching and organizing for Jesus. In his absence the church has been tended by local religious leaders. But the Christians in Philippi have not had it easy. They have faced challenges, opposition to their faith, and it appears based on what Paul shares with them in this letter that they were also struggling within their own faith community because of disagreements.

Paul writes this letter reminding them that no matter what happens to them or even what disagreements arise among them, the most important thing is for them to behave like followers of Jesus! And this is a great letter because in several places Paul gets right to the point and tells them exactly what that means - he describes with simple lists what he expects followers of Jesus to do when they are stressed out, overwhelmed, frustrated, exhausted, annoyed with one another, locked in disagreement, fearful about the future. Things like this:

Whatever happens, live your life in a way that honors Christ.

Don't do things for selfish reasons, think of other people above yourself, watch out for each other. Don't spend your time complaining and arguing.

Remember that we are all at different places in our faith journeys, so focus on being where you are in yours with integrity and not on judging other people for being in a different place.

Rejoice in God! Be gentle in the way you treat people. Bring your worries to God.

Focus on what is good and just and holy.

And then, as he wraps up the letter, he shares closing thoughts with the Philippians based on his own experiences. Paul has been beaten up, thrown in prison, dragged to court. He has been cast out of communities, abandoned by former friends. His faith has cost him a lot. Still, when he sits down to write this letter he is not focusing on what he has lost so much as what he has gained. He has survived and been convinced that God is real in the hardest of hard times. He has had times in his life when everything was great and he had status and wealth and popularity. And he has also had times of being hated, mocked, and not having a nickel for bread. And what he has learned is that happiness, fulfillment, and a sense of integrity are not tied to any of those circumstances. Instead, he's figured out that no matter what the outside circumstances are, he has a source of satisfaction and joy: Jesus.

We are going through some things right now, aren't we? Really. All the things. We are going through all the things. A pandemic that has completely turned our lives inside out - we can't go to school the way we are used to, our work lives are unpredictable and always changing, we are having church in a parking lot in the cold. Every time we see our friends, if we get to see them at all, we know we are taking risks. A lot of people have gotten sick and then better, and a lot of people have gotten sick and died.

Our country is in an election process that has not brought out the best in us. Arguing and tensions are high. Frustration is at its peak.

Our attention has been drawn to injustices in our communities, especially those experienced by black, indigenous, and people of color. We struggle with how uncomfortable it is to become more aware of racism and marginalization in the places we call home and work and school and church.

All the things.

And yet - here you are. Here we are together.

Because, even if we grumble along the way,
even if we haven't been as gracious or patient or loving with each other as we aspire to be,
even if we have been frustrated by too many things changing all at once,
even if we have felt abandoned or picked on or misunderstood,
even if we have wanted more from our leaders,
even if we have wanted more from ourselves, even if ALL THE THINGS:

We can do ALL THE THINGS.

We can worship in a parking lot. We can proclaim our faith in the cold fall air.
We can offer grace to one another, recognizing that we are doing the best we can.
We can be grateful for all that we do have.
We can choose to lift one another up instead of tearing one another down.

We can do ALL THE THINGS.

But not because we are strong enough on our own,
or gracious enough, or pleasant enough, or good enough.
We're not. Left to our own devices, we're stressed, annoyed, angry, sad, lonely, frustrated,
uncertain, complaining, unkind.

So it's a very good thing that we are not alone.

We are not left to our own devices. We are left to the grace and mercy, forgiveness and love of God in Jesus Christ. We are left to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. We are left to one another.

We can do ALL THE THINGS through Christ who gives us strength. Thank God. Amen.

CONFIRMATION

Pastor Laura:

Family in Christ, through the sacrament of baptism, we are initiated into Christ's holy church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation

and given new birth through water and the Spirit.

All this is God's gift of grace, offered to us without price.

Through confirmation,

we renew the covenant declared at our baptism,

acknowledge what God is doing for us,

and affirm our commitment to the church.

Today I present:

Abby Doerr, Alexa Meyer, and Luke Ross for confirmation

and Kaylynn Lowe and John Patrou for baptism and confirmation.

Pastor Rachael:

At this time, Confirmands please stand and face me.

Do you affirm and embrace the truth that God loves you, forgives you, and claims you for faithful life in Jesus Christ? If so, answer, "I do." **Confirmands: I do.**

Do you reject all that is evil, repent of your sin, and accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves? If so, answer, "I do." **Confirmands: I do.**

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in God's grace, and promise to serve Jesus as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races? If so, answer, "I do." **Confirmands: I do.**

According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as representatives of Jesus in the world? If so, answer, "I will." **Confirmands: I will.**

You may be seated.

Pastor Laura (holding up the water and the oil):

Please bow with me in prayer.

Generous God, we give you thanks that by the gift of water you sustain all living things.

Through water you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In water, your son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us through death into new life. Over thousands of years and many generations, anointing with oil reminds us of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the strength God gives us to persevere in faith. God, bless this water and this oil by the power of your Holy Spirit that they who receive it will know your love and forgiveness and may continue forever living in the light and saving grace of Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Rachael:

Abby Doerr, please come forward.

Abby comes forward and kneels at kneeler. Bring parents/mentor as well.

Rachael put stole on shoulders.

Laura sprinkle water on Abby's head and say:

Abby Doerr, remember your baptism and be thankful.

All lay hands on shoulders, Rachael hands on head and say:

Abby, may the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rachael anoint with oil on forehead.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen.

Abby goes to microphone to read her faith statement.

parents/mentor go sit down.

HALLE HALLE:

Diane play the chorus of Halle, Halle one time through as student sits down.

Pastor Rachael:

Kaylynn Lowe, please come forward.

Kaylynn comes forward and kneels at kneeler. Bring parents/mentor as well.

Rachael put stole on shoulders.

Laura sprinkle water on Kaylynn's head and say:

Kaylynn Lowe, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All lay hands on shoulders, Rachael hands on head and say:

Kaylynn, may the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rachael anoint with oil on forehead.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen.

Kaylynn and Rachael to microphone to share her art piece?

parents/mentor go sit down.

HALLE HALLE:

Diane play the chorus of Halle, Halle one time through as student sits down.

Pastor Rachael:

Alexa Meyer, please come forward.

Alexa comes forward and kneels at kneeler. Bring parents/mentor as well.

Rachael put stole on shoulders.

Laura sprinkle water on Alexa's head and say:

Alexa Meyer, remember your baptism and be thankful.

All lay hands on shoulders, Rachael hands on head and say:

Alexa, may the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rachael anoint with oil on forehead.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen.

Alexa goes to microphone to read her faith statement.

parents/mentor go sit down.

HALLE HALLE:

Diane play the chorus of Halle, Halle one time through as student sits down.

Pastor Rachael:

John Patrou, please come forward.

John comes forward and kneels at kneeler. Bring parents/mentor as well.

Rachael put stole on shoulders.

Laura sprinkle water on John's head and say:

John Patrou, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All lay hands on shoulders, Rachael hands on head and say:

John, may the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rachael anoint with oil on forehead.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen.

John goes to microphone to read her faith statement.

parents/mentor go sit down.

HALLE HALLE:

Diane play the chorus of Halle, Halle one time through as student sits down.

Pastor Rachael:

Luke Ross, please come forward.

Luke comes forward and kneels at kneeler. Bring parents/mentor as well.

Rachael put stole on shoulders.

Laura sprinkle water on Luke's head and say:

Luke Ross, remember your baptism and be thankful.

All lay hands on shoulders, Rachael hands on head and say:

Luke, may the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rachael anoint with oil on forehead.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen.

Luke goes to microphone to read her faith statement.

parents/mentor go sit down.

HALLE HALLE:

Diane play the chorus of Halle, Halle one time through as student sits down.

PASTOR RACHAEL:

Abby, Kaylynn, Alexa, John, and Luke. You have confirmed your faith in Christ. Now, I invite you to stand and become members of UMCA! Please stand and face me.

Will you now become members of the United Methodist Church of Anoka, and as members will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness? If so, answer, "I will." **Confirmands: I will.**

PASTOR RACHAEL:

Please turn and face this congregation!

Congregation - be bold, as you represent all those who are not physically present with us today!

Members of the household of God, I commend these persons to your love and care. Do all in your power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

CONGREGATION:

We give thanks for all that God has already given you and we welcome you in Christian love. As members together with you in the body of Christ and in this congregation of The United Methodist Church, we renew our covenant faithfully to participate in the ministries of the Church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

PASTOR RACHAEL:

May the God of all grace, who has called us to eternal glory in Christ, establish and strengthen us all, that we may live in grace and peace. Amen.

Please join us in singing, humming, or listening to Spirit of God

HYMN

Spirit of God

TFWS #2117, 3 verses

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 Flame, send us in your holy name,
the power to heal, to share your love everywhere.

We cannot fail or fall, or know defeat at all,
held in your hands, born on your wings.

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

Spirit of God, in all, we gladly hear your call,
the life in our hands that sings, the power of your wings.

Born of your grace we rise, love shining in our eyes,
held in your hands, born on your wings.

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

Alleluia! Come, Spirit, Come!

BENEDICTION

Pastor Laura:

Today we have celebrated new lives in Christ through the waters of baptism and prayers of confirmation. Today we have been reminded of our own commitments to Christ and inspired by the faith of these newly confirmed followers of Jesus. We are again challenged to share our witness and ministry—in our homes, our neighborhoods, our schools, and our jobs.

Pastor Rachael:

So now go! Go out with joy clothed in Christ! Go in the grace and peace of God, the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Go to love God and love others. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Diane