



September 3, 2023
Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ

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Sunday Morning Meditation

Make no mistake: Jesus can descend from the cross and save Himself at any moment. It isn't the nails that Keep Him there. What keeps Him there is what placed Him there – His passion to the will of His Father, and His love for sinners like you and me.

– C. J. Mahaney
Christ Our Mediator (2004)

Community News

Prayer List and Prayers of the People

Prelude/Lighting of the Candles

* *Call to Worship*

Give thanks to the Holy One!

The God of our ancestors is with us!

Give thanks to the Holy One!

We call upon the name of our God, and our God responds.

Give thanks to the Holy One!

The steadfast and faithful love of our God lasts forever!

* *Invocation*

Eternal God, when we search for you, we find you. When we seek you, we find you seeking us. Your presence among us changes our circumstances and our lives. We honor and worship you as an act of devotion and discipleship. Infuse us with your Spirit that our witness and ministry may be a testimony to your everlasting love. Amen.

* *Opening Hymn* "All Creatures of Our God and King" TH #15

Prayer of Transformation and New Life (Confession)

Forgiving God, we acknowledge that repentance opens the door to forgiveness and transformation. We turn from our desire for comfort over compassion, easy solutions or challenging resolution, and avoidance over confrontation. We need your strength, fortitude, and conviction to overcome our fear of loss to make room for the gains of new life for ourselves and our neighbors through our generous and sacrificial living. Amen.

Words of Grace

God is faithful to forgive and to redeem. God will sustain us through the hard work of confronting truth about ourselves, our communities, and our world. Receive the companionship of the Holy Spirit who leads and guides us in all truth.

Old Testament Reading

Exodus 3:1-15 NIV

Moses and the Burning Bush

¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

⁵ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

¹² And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

¹³ Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’”

“This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.

Epistle Reading

Romans 12:9-21 NIV

Love in Action

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

* *The Reading of the Holy Gospel*
Gloria Tibi (Glory be to Thee, O Lord.)

Matthew 16:21-28 NIV

TH #497

Jesus Predicts His Death

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

* *Gloria Patri*

Children's Message / Congregation Conversation

* *Meditation Hymn* “O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright” TH #48

Today's Message

* *The Apostle's Creed*

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord; who was
conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered
under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he
descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the
Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic/Christian
church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;**

the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is
in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And
forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.**

Sung Response “Hear Our Prayer, O Lord” TH # 501

The Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Statement
Offertory (MH)

* Doxology TH # 551
* Offertory Prayer

**Generous God, thank you for the seeding and inspiring
generosity in us. May these gifts be a blessing to the
ministry of this church. Multiply them and make us fruitful
and faithful steward of our time, talent, and treasure.
Amen.**

* *Closing Hymn* “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” VH #28

* *Benediction*

May our lives serve as beacons of hope, compassion, and
possibility as we go with God on the journey of truth. Amen.

* *Three-Fold Amen* TH # 558

* *Postlude/Extinguishing of the Candle*

Confrontation: Service Prayers for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ.