

A Service of Covenant Renewal – January 5, 2020

Gathering and Announcements

Call to Worship

Leader: This covenant I advise you to make, not only in heart, but in word: not only in word but in writing; and that you should with all possible reverence spread the writing before the Lord, as if you would present it to him as your act and deed: and when you have done this, set your hand to it: keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.

Opening Prayer

People: O most holy God, for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves to you as prodigals at your doorstep. We have fallen short because of our sins and are prone to wickedness and evil in the world. But you have promised mercy to us in Christ, and you call us to turn to you with all of our hearts. Therefore, by the call of your gospel, we come now, without reluctance, to submit ourselves to your mercy. Amen.

Scripture Reading 1:

1st Peter 1: 13-25 – A Call to Holy Living

¹³ Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. ¹⁴ Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. ¹⁵ Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; ¹⁶ for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." ¹⁷ If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. ²² Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. ²³ You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever." That word is the good news that was announced to you.

Hymn #413: "A Charge to Keep I Have" (8:30 – God You Reign)

Confiding in God

Leader: Having a full, life-giving relationship with God means putting away our idols, and being against that which God is against. Therefore, renounce those things from the bottom of your hearts, and in full covenant, use all the means that you know to refuse sin and corruption in your lives.

People: O God, though we were once of the world, we now resign our hearts to you, humbly bowing before your majesty, with firm resolution in our hearts. Amen.

Scripture Reading 2:

Jeremiah 31: 31-34 - A New Covenant

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Let us pray...

People: O God, we wholeheartedly desire your grace, so that we might follow your call with resolve, forsake the world, turn away from sin, and turn to you. We will guard against all temptations, in good times and bad, lest they draw us away from you. We acknowledge our own powerlessness against such forces and rely on your righteousness and strength. Amen.

Leader: And now I invite you to a silent prayer of confession...

Scripture Reading 3: Luke 9: 18-27 - Peter's Declaration and Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" ¹⁹ They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen." ²⁰ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God." ²¹ He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, ²² saying, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." ²³ Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ What does it profit them if they gain the whole

world, but lose or forfeit themselves? ²⁶ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

Leader: God is boundless in mercy and great grace and offers us again to be our God through Christ. Therefore, we solemnly pledge ourselves to God, bowing before God’s majesty.

People: We take you as our Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We yield our whole selves, body and soul, for your service, promising and vowing to serve you in holiness and righteousness every day of our lives.

Passing of the Peace

Hymn #606: “Come Let Us Use the Divine Grace” (8:30 – Blessed Assurance)

Scripture Reading 4: Colossians 3: 1-14 - The New Life in Christ

³ So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³ for you have died, and your life is

hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. ⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. ⁷ These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. ⁸ But now you must get rid of all such things — anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. ¹¹ In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! ¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Homily – “Clothing Ourselves Well”

We are often concerned with what we wear. We like to look good or at least be presentable! If our hair is a little wild or our make-up a little smudged, we neaten it up a bit. Many will give themselves a quick once over in the mirror before walking out the door just to make sure they can be seen in public.

In our reading from Colossians, we are also instructed to put on more than clothes each day. We are also called to put on compassion and kindness and humility. These traits help us to see others as God sees them and to treat all as worthy of God's love and of our love. They help us to see the person and not their circumstances.

Our passage for today begins with Paul encouraging us to set our sights on Christ and on the things that are above the earth – in heaven. In order to do so, Paul tells us that we must die to our old self. Paul calls for a transformation from our old self that is of the world into a new self that is made in Christ's image. To accomplish this change we need the help of the Holy Spirit. We cannot make this transition on our own. It can be something we desire and even something we feel led to, but the power to transform human lives into eternal lives rests in God's hands alone.

God's love and grace are always reaching out to us, ever seeking to draw us closer to that love and grace. We are born with an innate sense of God and good in us, with a spark of the divine, so to speak. As we naturally see God's love in the world, we do so through the spark of the divine that is within all humanity.

Early on life, God's grace begins working in our lives. John Wesley would call this prevenient grace, the grace that comes before. It's that grace on the doorstep of our life, inviting us into a relationship with God. As we step through that door and begin to grow in our faith, this grace becomes justifying

grace – that grace that helps us see the world as God sees it and to live our lives by God’s ways and will. As we mature in our faith, God’s sanctifying grace begins to work in our lives, drawing us ever closer to Jesus, ever closer to perfection. Although we never reach perfection in our earthly bodies, it is ever the goal. As we seek to recommit ourselves into a covenant relationship with our God today, we are seeking to step closer to perfection.

To accomplish all this, Paul calls us to “put to death” all that is inside of us that does not draw us closer to God. It is emotions, desires, drives, idols, friends, places, habits, ... all that stands between us and God. It is through faith in God and through the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives that we continue on our journey of faith, step by step, ever drawing closer to our Lord.

We are also called to put on gentleness and patience. These two traits help us to treat people as God would treat them. When we are gentle and patient we understand that some people require more time and attention than others and we are willing to offer this. They help us to invest both deeply and long term in others so we can build relationships.

And we are called to forgive as God forgives us. This encompasses two main components: there is no limit to how many times to forgive and it is a gift freely given with no strings attached. People who are in need often walk a hard path in life. It is easy to stumble along this path. Clothing ourselves with forgiveness allows us to give mercy and encouragement over and over and over. This shows we are in it for the long haul.

Lastly, we are called to cover all of these traits in love. It binds the other traits together in the perfect unity of the love of Jesus Christ. This love of Christ must be what motivates all the others as well. We cannot be compassionate, kind, ... without the love of Christ being the driving force. Without love the other traits will falter and fail. May we clothe ourselves well this day so that all we meet can see Jesus Christ within us and experience His love shining forth from inside of us.

Silent Prayer of Commitment

Leader: Since God has given Jesus as the only way to God, solemnly accept Jesus as the only new and living way, by which sinners may come to God. I call you to join in covenant with God. As we make this covenant together with God, please repeat each phrase after me:

People: O blessed Jesus, I come to you hungry... wretched, miserable, blind, and naked... I am tarnished by sin... my uncleanness makes me unable to be in relationship with you... But your love for me is unparalleled... so with all my heart I accept you... and take you to be my Lord... for richer and for poorer... for all times and conditions... to love, honor, and obey before all others... until my death... I embrace you in every way... renouncing my sinfulness... my wisdom and my will... offering myself fully to you... taking your will to govern my life... And since you told me that I will suffer... if I try to do this alone... I enter into a covenant with you... come what may...

Your grace will assist me when I run into trouble... and I know that nothing in life or death... will separate me from you.

Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together this covenant prayer in the Wesleyan tradition.

People: I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Leader: Come to the Lord's Table, all you who love him. Come to the Lord's Table, confess your sin. Come to the Lord's Table, be at peace.

Confession of Sin

Leader: We have not believed you or trusted in your power.

People: Lord, help our unbelief. ... *Brief time of silence.*

Leader: We have stained our souls by our action and inaction.

People: Cleanse us, Lord. ... *Brief time of silence.*

Leader: We are broken by disease, bruised by the sins of others, weakened and unable to repair ourselves.

People: Heal us, Lord. ... *Brief time of silence.*

Leader: We ignore your call to center our lives in you, and so are deaf to the hopes and cries of the poor, the sick, the needy, and the earth.

People: Ground us, Lord! ... *Brief time of silence.*

Leader: When we confess our sinful ways, God abundantly pardons. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

People: In the name of Jesus Christ, we are all forgiven. Glory to God!

Leader: By one Spirit we are all baptized into the one body.

People: Let us then pursue the things that make for peace and build up our common life.

Leader: The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you!

People: And also with you.

Thanksgiving and Communion – Instructions...

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to you, Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to praise you, Lord.

Leader: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Holy Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From the rising of the sun to its setting your name is praised among all peoples. Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with your people on earth and all the company of heaven who forever sing this hymn to the glory of your name:

People: Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full... Full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in the highest!

Leader: You are holy, Almighty One! Blessed are you, Jesus Christ! In the power of the Spirit you created all things, blessed them, and called them good.

You called to yourself a people, you make your mercy and truth known in all the world. We betrayed your calling;

People: You were faithful.

Leader: We wandered from the way;

People: You called us to return and led us home.

Leader: And still we turned from your ways, abused your creatures, and made ourselves slaves to sin and death. At the right time you came and dwelt among us, as one of us, bringing good news to the poor, healing the sick, raising the dead, sharing table with the unrighteous, and teaching the way that leads to life. By your incarnation, life, suffering, execution and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery and made a new covenant with us by water and the Spirit.

Leader: On the night of your betrayal, Lord Jesus, you took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to your disciples and said, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Leader: You did the same with the cup after the supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out is the new covenant in my blood."

Leader: Blessed Trinity, in remembrance of all you have done to save us, we offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

People: Christ has come among us. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ abides with us. Christ will come again.

Leader: Pour out your Spirit on us

People: Pour out your Spirit on us

Leader: Pour out your Spirit on these gifts

People: Pour out your Spirit on these gifts

Leader: Make these gifts the body and blood of Christ

People: Make us, through them, Christ's body alive in the world.

Sharing in the bread and cup...

Pray of Commitment

Leader: Please join me in this unison prayer.

People: O God, because you have been pleased to give your holy law as the rule of my life and the way I should walk in your kingdom, I willingly submit myself to you, set my shoulder to your burden, and subscribe in all your laws as holy, just, and good. I solemnly take them, as the rule of my words, thoughts, and actions, promising that though my flesh might contradict and rebel, I will try to order and govern my whole life according to your direction, and will not allow myself to neglect any of my duties to you. Now, Almighty God, searcher of hearts, you know that I make this covenant with you today without deceit or reservation, asking you, that is you see any

flaw or falsehood in me, that you should reveal it to me and help me to get right with you. Amen.

Hymn #561: "Jesus, United by Thy Grace" (8:30 – All Who Are Thirsty)

Closing Pledge

Leader: And now, glory be to you, O God the Father.

People: From this day forward, I look upon you as my God and Father, knowing that you are always looking for ways to recover sinners like me.

Leader: Glory be to you, O God the Son.

People: You have loved me and washed me from my sins in your own blood, and you are my Savior and Redeemer.

Leader: Glory be to you, O God the Holy Spirit. By the power of your hand, you have turned my heart away from sin and back to you.

ALL: O holy and powerful God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are now my covenant-friend, and through your infinite grace, I am your covenant-servant. Amen. So be it. And the covenant I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Benediction

Go now as those raised with Christ, wondering at God's great love and telling the story of your salvation. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed and set your minds on the ways of heaven.

And may God reach out to you and nourish you; may Christ Jesus renew you in the image of your creator; and may the Holy Spirit lead you with cords of kindness and love. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ. Amen.