

Straight from the "Hart"

Worship Service from May 2, 2021



Act of Centering (... = silent pause for reflection)

Psalm 24 begins, "The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord. The world and all its people belong to him. He built it on the waters. He set it on the rivers. Who may go up on the mountain of the Lord?" (Psalm 24:1-3) (ICB) Today's imagery for our act of centering. I am reminded of the Old Testament story (See 1 Kings 19:8ff) of a depressed, frightened, and hiding Elijah who had traveled to Mt Sinai, God's mountain. God told him to stand in front it and he would pass by. A strong wind blew that cause large rocks to break off, and then there was an earthquake, and then a fire. But God was in none of those. Then Elijah heard a quiet gentle voice. Most, including me, would call what we are about to do as an act of centering. To get past the winds of the past week, the moments that have shaken us, the challenges that make us feel burned, to settle and still our souls so we can hear God's soft gentle voice who is eager to encourage us this day.

So inspired by the imagery and words of Psalm 24 and Elijah, I invite you to close your eyes and breathe deeply. Slowing the pace of your heart and mind. (soft underscoring music begins) Some of us have not had the opportunity to experience this imagery personally, so we may need to recall images we have seen through media, or conjured up by what we have read, or use our imagination. Let's begin by seeing the earth as that green, brown, and blue marble set against the black blanket of space dotted with pin lights of stars... the angle changes slightly and we see the small bright disc of the sun peering over the edge of the earth.... all of this is God's handiwork... we can't see the challenges on the surface of this marble, only to marvel at the magnificence of it all... Begin to telescope in -- the marble we call earth now fills the screen of our mind, closer and closer -- see the tops of the clouds clearly now, obediently moving along the weather fronts bringing rain and life to the land... now pass through them, and now they are above us, and we see churning seas, shores ascending into mountain ranges, ranges we have pass through the clouds -- moving closer and closer... we see the great blue water lapping the shores of the coasts, rising into the grand mountain ranges, and we rejoice at the splendor of all God has made -- or perhaps, like Elijah, we are at a moment in our life where the motions of life are calming, but startling and unsettling -- we see move closer to see the seas are churning, violently crashing against the

rocks of the coast, The clouds that looks so peaceful from the heavens, on this earthly side now seem so dark and menacing.... Like Elijah we do our best to follow God.... we look to him for our help..... waiting for God's gentle voice to break through..... waiting for his salvation..... waiting to be declared right..... waiting for his assurances that we are not alone.... waiting for his blessings..... waiting for our strong and powerful Lord and king to come to us.... The clouds are parting, the gates are opening, the Lord is descending on the hills and across the plains and upon us.... hear his soft, encouraging voice.... what is he saying?.... What do you need to hear from him today?....What does our loving Lord want to say to you?.... Meditate on this in the next moments of silence. **SILENCE** (while the music becomes a song). Let's open the doors of our hearts and let our glorious king come in again today..... Amen. Now lets stand as comfortable and sing together...

Music # 73 vv 1,4,5 O Worship the King

Call to Worship (R2 = Reader 2, R1 = Reader 1, C = Congregation)

R2: That hymn used many descriptive names of our king to remind us how glorious God is and how we, his children, so vulnerable to life, can trust how much he wants to help and be in relationship with us. (Brief Pause) This is what the Lord who created you says:

R1: "Don't be afraid, for I have paid for your rescue. I called you by name and you are mine. When you pass through deep waters of trouble, when you wade through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown in overwhelming hardships."

C: He will be with us, for we are precious, honored, and loved by him.

R1: Don't be afraid. He is with you. He will gather us from every direction. All who claim him as their God will come to him, for he formed them. He chose us to be his witnesses and servants and to know and believe that he alone has always been and will always be the only true God.

C: When we turn to him, no one can stand in the way of his power.

Theme

It is a power he never abuses. He always honors our freedom to choose, sometimes even if we choose badly and have to suffer the natural consequences of those poor choices. There is a children's story about a king's two young princes. (Power by position). Once upon a time, they were playing in a forest. As they played, they happened across some others, one after another in sequence. (1) The first had a headache and asked them not to shout so loudly. (2) The second was painting a landscape, and he asked them to move away because they were

blocking the lighting he was trying to find. (3) The third was doing a giant puzzle in an open, hard-surfaced area and he asked them not to tread on it, and (4) the fourth was watching a butterfly and he asked them not to frighten it away.

The first prince humbly respected others and did as these people asked, and he went elsewhere to play each time, while the second prince played on his power. He ignored their requests and went out of his way to move from one to the next, continuing to bother all of them all day long, until he got bored and moved on to some other place to play. These movements separated both boys from each other and further away from the beaten paths. When evening fell, they both realized they had to get back to the palace quickly, but it also dawned on them that they had no idea where they were.

At different times, each other them happened across the four people that they had met earlier. They had no desire to help the disrespectful prince, but for the prince who humbly respected them by honoring their requests, they were more than eager to help, guiding them down even some secret tracks that got him back to the palace easily, quickly --- and on time. Meanwhile, the mean prince arrived very late, and not only had to endure the frustration and fear of the night woods, he had to face an unhappy king who punished him. Hopefully, he began to learn that it is much better to respect others and be helpful if you want to have friends and receive help when you need it. (Adapted from *The Respectful Prince and the Dwarves* by Pedro Pablo Sacristán.)

Peter says it in the Bible as well: Live as servants of God. Show respect for all people. *Treat everyone you meet with dignity.* Love your spiritual brothers and sisters of God's family. Respect Revere God... 1 Peter 2:16b-17a (ICB, MSG)

Prayers

And so we come back to the idea that when we respect God we bring honor to his name, his reputation, and like the princes -- our honor to the king is demonstrated by how we treat others. As we prepare our hearts for prayer, let's remind ourselves that our worship and adoration is expressed by glorifying God's holy name by recognizing the great things has done....

Prayer Music *Bless His Holy Name*

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Repeat

He has done great things, he has done great things, bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Repeat

Pastoral Prayer Lord, we sing because you have done marvelous things, working your salvation and making it known to the nations. You remember your love and faithfulness to your people, and that is why we shout and sing with joy before you. We hear waves lapping the shore, rivers rippling over its beds, the splashing of fish leaping with life. The mountains too, stand as a joyful testimony to your majestic and decisive righteousness. You invite the sea, the earth, and everything that lives in it to sing before you.

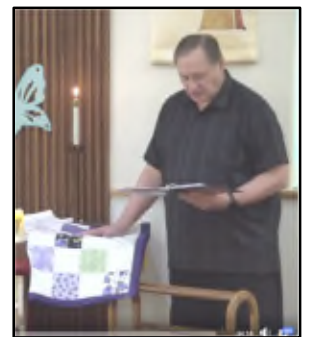
We love you, and your Son Jesus. That is why we desire to do what he taught, and what he taught is not burdensome because we can overcome through our trust in you. Strengthen our many talents and skills and instill in us a confidence in your plans for our future, where energies can be gathered up and used for the good of all people in your name.

We also ask you to undertake also for those that we are concerned about in our hearts and minds. Since last Sunday we have heard of these:

* For David Campbell who has covid, * or continued prayers for Terri's friend Hugh Jameson who has covid related pneumonia, * For Terri's neighbors Jack and Nancy Kelly who were both put in a nursing home this week * For David and Carolyn Lynch's son Mike Brier, who has covid * and for Bruce and Pat's daughter-in-law Elizabeth Harton, who is having spinal surgery, and for whom we will dedicate this quilt.

Lord, today we ask from you a special blessing on our Elizabeth Harton as she faces surgery and recovery. There is no way for us to imagine the power and effect an act of love can have on a person's life—how you can use something as tangible as a quilt to radiate your love through us to another.

As she wraps this quilt around her, may she recognize that she is not facing the days ahead alone. May she feel the warmth of your loving arms and your healing strength throughout this difficult journey. May your Spirit comfort her and your peace reign within her. Throughout each day, let the love and prayers of the church family lift her heart and give rest to her body. We pray this prayer, this quilt's blessing for Elizabeth, to the One who walks with us through every joy and sorrow. (Pause) Now open our minds and hearts to your Word, helping us to live as Jesus teaches us to pray, and this week we will sing the prayer **Lord's Prayer**



Bible Reading From Malachi 1:2-14

Intro: These ancient people lived in a day when they had returned home from exile and rebuilt the Temple, yet they remained just a small province under the rule of the Persian Empire. It became painfully evident that their predicted glorious future was still a long way off. God's anointed Messiah-king hadn't yet come to the Temple with majesty and power and a kingdom that all nations would notice. Their hope in God was giving way to doubts about his love. They stopped taking seriously their covenant code, and their worship devolved into an empty repetition of carelessly performed rituals. The animals they gave were supposed to be the best they had to offer as a sign of their loving, obedient commitment to their God and his covenant with them. But they had devolved into offering the worst they had.

The prophet Malachi uses a unique teaching method. He quotes God laying a charge where they were falling short of God's hopes for them. Then the prophet puts in the mouths of the people a question indicating that the people don't even understand what God has done for them or how they are committing a crime against God. (R2 is going to read those lines...) Then the errant actions and attitudes are explained, and the teaching concludes with a call to return to their God. In today's text, Malachi teaches us through a negative moment in history -- how God's name was not loved or being kept holy. Listen: (Brief Pause)

(R1= Reader 1, R2 = Reader 2)

R1 The Lord says to his people, "I have always loved you."

R2 But you say, "How *and* in what way have you shown your love for us?"

R1 {God explains that in his love for them, they were able to return home to their own land and inherit it; but others he left stuck, unsuccessfully trying to rebuild desolate places. When they finally recognize this, they will say}



R2 "The Lord is mighty even outside the border of Israel!"

R1 {Malachi continues with God's second charge. These are directed to the priests who were responsible for presenting the offerings on the altar, but in our context, the principles could be applied more broadly.} The Lord Almighty says... "Children honor their parents, and servants honor their masters. I am your father— where is My honor? I am your master— where is the [reverent] fear and respect due Me?" says the Lord Almighty... You despise My name.

R2 But you ask, 'How *and* in what way have we despised Your name?'

R1 You are presenting defiled food upon My altar.

R2 Then you ask, ‘How have we failed to respect you? How have we defiled You?’

R1 ... By showing contempt for my altar. You bring {offerings that are less than your best}. Do you think there is nothing wrong with that? Try giving {an offering like you have been presenting to me} to your {Persian} governor [as a gift or as payment for your taxes]. Would he be pleased with you or grant you any favors?

“Now,... try asking God to be good to us {with such defective offerings from your hand.} Will He show any favor to any of you? The Lord Almighty says, “I wish one of you would close the Temple doors so as to prevent you from lighting useless fires on my altar [with an empty, worthless pretense]! I am not pleased with you; I will not accept the offerings you bring me.”

From the rising of the sun, even to its setting, people from one end of the world to the other honor me. Everywhere they burn incense to me and offer acceptable offerings. All of them honor me! My name shall be great among the nations...{but you profane it when you get tired of giving and you offer ill-gotten gains and sub-par gifts when you could do better}. Should I receive it with pleasure from your hand? For I am a great King... and My name is to be [reverently and greatly] feared among the people of all nations.”

(GNT, AMP blended) { } Summarizing/Explanatory edits rather than quoted}

Music # 2016 *Glorify Thy Name*

Let’s stand and get are heart flowing again by singing *Glorify Thy Name* -- this is a positive example of what they were *not* experiencing in Malachi’s time.

Father, We Love you, we worship and adore you,
glorify your name in all the earth.

Glorify your name, glorify your name,
glorify your name in all the earth.

(v 2 -- Father is replaced by Jesus)

(v 3 -- Father is replaced by Spirit)

Sermon *The Hallowed Name*

C.S. Lewis commented on a high school English textbook, whose authors quote a story about the English poet Samuel Coleridge, who was at a waterfall. He observed two tourists there. One said, “The waterfall is sublime. The other said, “It is pretty.” Coleridge mentally endorsed the word “pretty” but rejected the word “sublime”.

The textbook authors explain that when we say, “the waterfall is sublime”, it *sounds* like we are talking about the waterfall, but are really commenting on is our

own emotions. He might as well have said, “I have sublime feelings”. The textbook goes on to say that “This is a common way we confuse language. We appear to be saying something very important about something else (the waterfall), but in reality, we are *only* talking about our own feelings.”

C.S. Lewis argued that their explanation was not true, and even if it were true, it'd be wrong. The conclusion that something is sublime is not based on feelings of sublimity, but on feelings of veneration (of awe, of respect, of reverence). If the statement were really about the speaker's feelings, it would be – “In view of this great waterfall, I feel humbled”.

But worse yet, Lewis went on, the student who reads that “we think we are saying something important but are *only* talking about our own feelings” may cause the student to believe 1) that all statements proposing a value are merely statements about the speaker's personal emotional state... 2) and because they wrote “only”, all such statements are not important. The student thinks he is doing English and has no thought that ethics, theology, and politics are all at stake. Ten years later, he will never realize from where came his rejection of objective values and the insignificance of feelings.

(Ideas extracted and adapted from *The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis)

If we adopt the thinking of these textbook writers, we will hear the prayer that God's name is hallowed, holy, sacred, revered, honored; and we will see it not as a declaration about God, but about the pray-er's unimportant feelings.

Jesus tries to help us to both validate our feelings as important, and state an objective value when he taught us to pray: Hallowed by thy name. Say it with me.

C: Hallowed be thy name (Matthew 5:9)

“Hallowed be thy name” is not a meaningless subjective opinion of the of the one who prays it, or at least it is not supposed to be. When we think about the phrase, it is both an objective statement that God's name, his personality, his reputation is in fact powerful, wise, holy, just, above and beyond ourselves – he is more than us, and yet also fills us with a sense of intimate presence and mercy – and that is an important feeling.

It is not only a statement, it is also a request -- that we *feel* that reverence of his name, his person -- to experience him as the sublime being that he is -- rather than profanely dismissing it, as is so often the case today...

I like the way monk J. Augustine Wetta puts it in his book. While at a church in line for communion, he noticed a boy wearing a shirt that communicated in that boy's casual vernacular, in slang, a friendship with Jesus. He appreciated the

message that breaks down barriers helping us to discover or rediscover our dignity as a brother or sister of Christ... That's a big thing. We like, [even need] to think of Jesus as a [close, personal friend]... Genuine self-esteem, self-respect, because we are made in the image of God, begins by respecting God. [Therefore, in our valiant effort to draw close to Jesus as a companion] we also must never forget that he is the Lord who sits at the right hand of God the Father – enthroned over the world, ruling as Judge of the nations, the Lord of lords and the King of kings. While his love drives out fear, we must also be careful that in our movement toward comfortable intimacy, we do not drive out our respect...

(Ideas extracted and adapted from “Humility Rules: Saint Benedict’s Twelve-Step Guide to Genuine Self-Esteem” by J. Augustine Wetta, O.S.B.)

The people and priests of Malachi’s day were so beat up by the unrelenting circumstances (can anyone relate to that?) that they began to lose their fearful (respectful) reverence for God but continued to go through the motions of the rituals that God had commanded. I don’t know if they lost respect for themselves or for God first, but I think both played into their apathy, and their apathetic attempts to worship. So profane, so irreverent, so irreligious, so unhallowed was their worship that God would have preferred they would not worship at all. Sara read that he wished somebody would just close the doors.

In the play “Our Town”, young Emily has just died and now speaks: "Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you. Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?..." The answer comes: "No." (Pause). “The saints and poets, maybe -- they do some." Then Emily says, "... we blindly go through life, never grasping how great it is.”

Like those in the days of Malachi, sometimes it is easy to go through the motions of religion by habit or routine, and never grasp how powerful and how wonderful our life is, and how wonderful our God is. Recapture the grandeur of God and heaven and earth and life. More specifically for today, How do we avoid profaning God’s name and continue to honor him?

1) First, God’s name is profaned (misused, despised, disdained; made common or vulgar) when people use God’s name in an effort to add his clout to teaching things that are false and misleading, to manipulate others into or to justify our own actions and attitudes that are less than honorable -- things that may be selfish and sinful and have nothing to do with God’s true will. We honor his name when we lovingly speak and teach and guide others deeper into God’s love.

2) God's name is profaned when people throw his name around nonchalantly, or even abusively, calling on him to do bad things to others to satisfy our momentary disappointments in them. His name is honored when his name is called on to express his forgiveness and acceptance and grace, not only for ourselves, but for others too.

3) God's name is profaned if we insist on living in a way that misrepresents God's character. I mentioned last week that we who believe in Jesus are granted the privilege of being called the children of God, and it means we take on his characteristics.

His name is honored when people see our lives, our good deeds, our acceptable attitudes, our encouraging words, and praise God for it. The purpose of our existence as God's people is nothing more and nothing less than to glorify God. (See Mt 5:15-16, Isaiah 43:7, 1 Peter 2:11, 4:11, 1 Corinthians 10:31). This is what we mean when we pray "hallowed be thy name" – that by our words, our attitudes, and our actions, our life choices, we do not take God's name in vain but strive to keep it as revered and as holy as is God.

The best story I ever read illustrating this point came from a book by Max Lucado, who got the story from a rabbi. I think they were on an airplane and he overheard the rabbi talking about doing or not doing the third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain". It caught his attention because when we think about taking God's name in vain, we almost always think about what we say or don't say; not about something we "do" or "don't do." So he struck up a conversation with the rabbi, and the rabbi illustrated his meaning for Lucado through a long story, which I've shortened for us... a little bit, at least.

Imagine a skyscraper. Everyone in the building works for the CEO, whose office was in the pent house, top floor. Most workers never see the CEO, but they have seen his daughter. She works in the building -- and she selfishly exploits her family connection at every opportunity. She approaches Bert, the guard. "I'm hungry, go down the street and buy me a Danish." Bert is on duty, and he is the only guard. Leaving to fulfill that task puts the building at risk. But his boss's daughter insists. What option does he have? He leaves. He says nothing but thinks, "If the daughter is like this, then what is that CEO like, what does that say about the father?"

Munching on her danish, the daughter bumps into a paper-laden secretary. "Where are you going?" "I have to get all these bound for an important meeting this afternoon." "Forget about that. Come vacuum my office." The woman has no choice. This is the boss's daughter speaking, and the result is the secretary

questions the wisdom of the boss.

And so it goes. The daughter makes demands. Calls the shots. Interrupts schedules. Manipulates lives. She may never leverage the name of her dad. “My dad said so, so you must...” There is no need. She is the boss’s child. Doesn’t the child speak for the father? Therefore, Bert abandons his post. An assistant fails to finish an important task. And more than one employee questions the wisdom of the man upstairs... “Does he know what he is doing?”

This child dishonors the name of her father with insensitive living. Keep this up and the whole building will second-guess the CEO.

“But what if the daughter acted differently?” What if, rather than demanding Bert leave his post to retrieve a danish for her, what if she gifts him with a pastry because of what he does for the company? What if she helps the assistant bind the armful of documents? What if she engages with the people, and asks about their families, and offers to bring them coffee. New workers are welcomed, hard workers are applauded. Through kindness and concern, she raises the morale of the entire skyscraper.

She does not necessarily mention her father’s name, “My father says so and that’s why I do this...” There is no need to. Is she not his child? Does she not speak on his behalf and reflect his heart? When she speaks, they assume she speaks for him. And because they think highly of her, they think highly of her father. They’ve not seen him. They’ve not met him. But they know his child, so they know his heart... [She has honored his name].

The rabbi concludes -- “Do you know how the story ends? The daughter takes the elevator up to the top floor to see her father. When she arrives, he is waiting in the doorway. He is aware of her good works and has seen her kind acts. People think more highly of him because of her and he knows it. As she approaches, he greets her with six words we hear from Jesus. “Well done, good and faithful servant.” (Abridged and adapted from: God’s Mirror: A Modern Parable by Max Lucado).

Communion

Intro We remind ourselves of the depth of the relationship we have as children of God at the Communion table. That he treasures us and all he died for, and we represent him and his love to everyone we meet. As said earlier, you don’t need to be a member of this church or of Methodism. Jesus Christ invites to his table **all** who desire to honor him and his name by their life and words, not that we do it perfectly, but if that is your desire, then the table is open for you -- living worshipfully

for all of the wonderful things he has done for us. Let's prepare our hearts by singing...

Music *His Name is Wonderful*

His name is wonderful, his name is wonderful, Jesus my Lord.

He is the mighty King, master of everything;

his name is wonderful, Jesus my Lord.

He's the great Shepherd,

the Rock of all ages,

almighty God is he.

Bow down before him, love and adored him,

his name is wonderful, Jesus my Lord.

Confession Let's continue to prepare our hearts by a time of confessional prayer

Dear Lord, Father, Holy Creator, Mighty God... When we pray, it reminds us that you are both our dear Father and reigning ruler of all life, including our own -- and that you call us to live in a way that brings glory to your name and builds your reputation. We are called to exhibit your characteristics. By your mercy, forgive us when we let down the name by which we are called, when we let you down by our actions or inactions, our speech or our silence.

Assurance Remind us how much we love your presence, how inviting you are, how willing you are to see the good in us, how much you are willing to protect us, and care for us, and remind us that Your promises have been given to us, and that we are, or can be, or can again be -- more than are conquerors by your holy name, by you who is in us, and is greater than anything we face on this earth. In the name of Jesus Christ that we are forgiven.

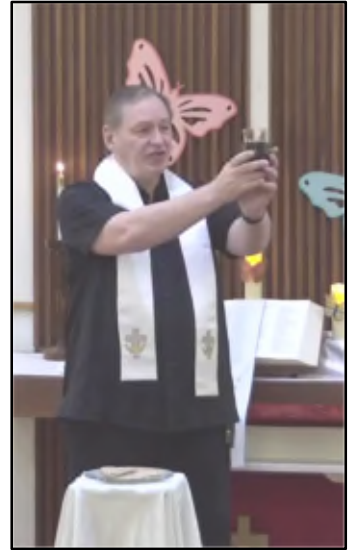
Remember that the Lord is with us, so lift up and open up your hearts to him with thanksgiving. For it is always right -- always and everywhere to joyfully give our thanks and praise to you, Father Almighty, Creator of all that is. You gave us life. We turned from you, but your love never fails, and began the mission of saving us and putting before us the way of new life through your Son Jesus Christ. So we join all in heaven and earth in proclaiming your power and might and recognizing the one who comes in your name.

It is through Jesus that you offer a new and eternal covenant that leads to everlasting life. We receive the promises of your presence with us always through the authority and power of your Son and Holy Spirit...who is poured out on us gathered here and at home and on these gifts of bread and cup, and whatever might be being used at home. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,

that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood, and empowered to live in a way that brings glory to his name.

On the night the Lord gave himself up for us, he gathered his disciples into an upper room where he took the bread, lifted it up, gave thanks for it, and offered it to his disciples, saying, "This is my body broken for you, and often as you eat it, eat it in remembrance of me." Take and eat your bread

And when the supper was over, he took the cup, and he lifted it up and gave thanks and he offered it to his disciples saying, "this is my blood, the blood of the new covenant which is given for the forgiveness of you sins and for the sins of the world. As often as you drink it, drink it in remembrance of me. ... take and drink from your cup.



Prayer

John Ellerton wrote a hymn, and some of the lyrics have been adapted to form our closing prayer. Savior, again to your dear name we raise with one accord our parting hymn or praise. Guard our lips from sin, our hearts from shame, that in this house have called upon your name. Grant us peace upon our homeward way, with you we have begun and end each day. Grant us peace throughout our earthly life, peace from error, and from strife, peace from the fruit of truth and love, peace in each heart from your Spirit above. Amen. So, as you are comfortable, let's stand and give God the glory for all the things he has done, especially the salvation he offers us through Jesus Christ.

Music vv 1,2 *To God Be the Glory*

Blessing Go in the name of the God who does not withhold his love, but faithfully listens to the prayers of those who reverently worship him in awe and call out to him in praise. Go in the name of God, our great guard and defender -- whose tender mercies are firm forever. Amen.