

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

Worship Service from August 29, 2021



**Music # 647 (vv 1,3a/2b) Your Love O God**

**Music # 363 (vv 1,3,4) And Can it Be That I Should Gain**

**Theme** You may have guessed the theme already, so just a couple poems. The first is called "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus, written as part of a fund-raising project by artists and writers to build the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. The Old Colossus was a giant bronze statue of about the same size as the statue of liberty -- (except built about 200 BC) and was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It overlooked the harbor of the Greek city Rhodes, built in honor of defending against a year long siege by Macedonia's large army and navy and funded by the sale of the abandoned siege equipment. The New Colossus, the poem as well as the new statue coming to America, attempts to describe America's great policy and mission of compassion for all. Emma Lazarus wrote:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
with conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

That grand group policy can only happen when individuals believe and pick up the cause of compassion in their own lives; and depicted by "A Child's Prayer", a poem by M. Brentham-Edwards

God make my life a little light,  
Within the world to glow;  
a tiny flame that burneth bright  
Wherever I may go.

God make my life a little flower,  
That giveth joy to all,  
Content to bloom in native bower,  
Although its place be small.

God make my life a little song,  
That comforteth the sad;  
The helpeth others to be strong,  
and makes the singer glad.

God make my life a little staff,  
Whereon the weak may rest,  
That so what health and strength I have  
May serve my neighbors best.

**Responsive Reading** (LR - Lay Reader **C** - Congregation)

Now hear David describe God's love while Paul describes what true love is. Join me on the yellow font as Sherrie leads us with the white.

LR: The Lord has won us over with his great love. His kindness has melted our hearts. Let everyone everywhere sing praise to our God. He stands with us as our hero who rescues us. His loving faithfulness lasts forever.

**C: Love is incredibly patient.**

LR: He is the God of our life. We offer our lives in joyful sacrifice and loving praise to God, for he made his light to shine on us, bringing salvation in answer to our prayers.

**C: Love is gentle and consistently kind to all.**

LR: The One everyone else rejected became the head of the house of God. It is so much better to trust in God to save us than to put our confidence in anyone or anything else.

**C: Love does not envy the blessings of others, or brag about its own importance.**

LR: We have found the pathway to God's presence for all his devoted lovers. We will offer all our loving praise *to him* for answering our prayer and bringing our salvation!

**C: Love does not seek to shame and disrespect, nor seek its own praise.**

LR: We may be pushed right up to the edge and ready to fall, but together, God helps us overcome them all. He is our strength, our defense, and our champion.

**C: Love does not easily become angry, or easily provoked, or keep track of offenses.**

LR: When hard pressed, we pray our anguish and pain, and God helps us as a father helps a child.

**C: Love celebrates honesty and does not rejoice in wrong.**

LR: God comes to our rescue and opens the way into a beautiful, safe place. The joyful songs we sing will be sung again in the hearts and homes of all God's people. Loud shouts of victory will echo throughout the land. For the strength of the Lord will never fail.

**C: Love is a safe shelter. Believes the best for others. Doesn't take failure as a defeat, and never gives up.**

LR: When we know that the Lord is for us, we need not fear what people do.

**C: Love never stops loving.**

LR: Keep on giving thanks to God, for he is good. His constant, tender love lasts forever.

**C: Love surpasses all. So above all else, let love be the beautiful prize that we pursue. We will enter into God's presence to worship him.**

(Inspired and blended from Psalm 117, 118, and 1 Corinthians 13:4-8,13, NIV, TPT)

**Music O How I Love Jesus**

**Prayers**

**Pastor's** Lord, we do return our love for you for who you are and all you have done for us. We come to you in prayer and praise because we know you are for us. If you were not protecting us, supporting us, providing for us, lifting us up in challenging times, we would be overwhelmed, ripped apart and swept away. But you deliver us from the traps of life and won't let us be overcome. You break apart what would hold us captive. You are the Maker of the heavens and the earth -- and you are our help. Lord, we trust you to direct our lives, because in your direction we find wisdom and refreshing joy. Open our eyes to your will, for practicing your will is very rewarding. Staying connected with you and following your ways is more valuable than gold, and sweeter than honeycomb honey. But we don't always see

the way, so forgive the faults we don't recognize, and for those sins we do recognize but fail to avoid. In your forgiveness we are made blameless and innocent again. May all we do and say and pray be pleasing to you... and we ask you continue to work on our behalf. **Intercession** We pray for the recovery and healing of Pastor's friend, Fred Gaff, whose shoulder was replaced this week, and for Denny Lemon who is progressing well. We thank you that Keith Voigt came through emergency surgery amazingly well, and we pray you continue to bring healing to his body... We pray for Jan Martin's son's Brian and his family, we thank you for the good results we have heard with Sherrie's sister Jennifer and pray that continues to be the result for her in the future, we also pray for Gary White who is having tests, and for the family and friends of Jan's relative Pam Munro who passed away, and especially for her special needs son, Will, and we pray that Bruce Wright will have good test results this week. **Quilt** and finally Frank Guzowski requests we pray for Carolyn Greggright who broke her hip, and for whom we dedicate a quilt today.

Lord, today we ask from you a special blessing on Carolyn Greggright. 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 such as a quilt to radiate your love from us to the world. In quiet times, as she wraps this quilt around her, let your peace reign within her, and your spirit calm her. May your loving arms enfold her with your strength. Grant her trusting faith through this difficult journey. Throughout each day, let the love and prayers of this church bring comfort to her heart, and rest to her soul, reminding her that we are never alone, for you hold each one dear to your heart. May the power of the Holy Spirit live and breathe through this quilt to touch Carolyn's life in a special way, that you may be for her what you are for all of us -- our strength and our Savior, who taught us to pray **Lord's Prayer**

### **Bible Reading Intro and Reading**

**Intro** Our responsive reading described the characteristics of true love, especially as David found it in God, and Paul summarized it. John wrote that we know what love is because we see it in Jesus Christ who selflessly laid down his life for us. Then just a little later he comes back to the topic to state how that love can impact us when we experience it. Paul adds that it is this saving love of Christ that drives him to share the message with others -- because Christ died not just for us but for everyone. Listen:

We have come into an intimate experience with God's love, and we trust in the love he has for us. God is love! Those who are living in love are living in

God, and God lives through them. By living in God, love has been brought to its full expression in us so that we may fearlessly face the day of judgment, because all that Jesus now is, so are we in this world. Love never brings fear, for fear is always related to punishment. But love's perfection drives the fear of punishment far from our hearts. (TPT) [This great love of God in Christ] compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. [meaning that since Christ died for all people, it is all people that are dead in sin. But Jesus took our sin and paid sin's death penalty for us by dying on the cross for us] ... And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves [they die to their sinful way of living] but [they live] for him who died for them and was raised again. (NIV)

(1 John 4:16-18, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

## **Music Oh How He Love You and Me**

## **Sermon All Wrapped Up in Love**

Many years ago, Al Capone -- do you remember him? He entangled Chicago in racketeering, bootlegging booze, gambling rings, prostitution and murder. A wealthy lawyer Edgar Joseph, EJ, or Easy Eddie, moved from St. Louis and partnered with Capone as his attorney and business manager, setting up illegal and unethical schemes and used all his expertise to keep Capone out of jail. He and his son visited often in Chicago. But with all his wealth and influence, there were two things EJ couldn't give his son. He couldn't pass down a good name or a good example.

We can't read hearts and minds, especially of historical figures; so views are divided on why EJ did what he eventually did. Some say he had a change of heart and wanted to do the right thing as a loving example for his son, others say he saw the writing on the wall and knew he could no longer protect Capone (or himself) from jail. Whatever the reason, he decided to work with the authorities, perhaps negotiating his son's enlistment in Annapolis Naval Academy while providing tax fraud information that led to Capone's imprisonment and eventual failed health and retirement in Florida.


It is not proved, but evidence suggests Capone ordered his death and on Nov 8, 1939, EJ crashed his Mercury Zephyr at a Chicago intersection, the car riddled with bullets from a drive-by shooting, at least one or two that found their mark. As one version of the story puts it, the police found on him an unfired .32 semi-

automatic pistol, a rosary, a crucifix, a religious medallion and a poem by Robert H. Smith ripped from a magazine that read:

“The clock of life is wound but once,  
 And no man has the power  
 To tell just when the hands will stop  
 At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,  
 To lose one's health is more,  
 To lose one's soul is such a loss  
 That no man can restore.

The present only is our own,  
 So live, love, toil with a will,  
 Place no faith in "Tomorrow,"  
 For the Clock may then be still.”

 <p>Motivated by          a growing LOVE          for God          and his world,          we will form ever          widening circles of          people who are          committed          to moving:</p>	<p><b>Upward</b>          into an ever          deepening          relationship          with God.</p> <p><b>Outward</b>          to impact our          society by          godly living,          acts of mercy,          works for justice.</p> <p><b>Inward</b>          by inviting others          to join us on our          journey toward          spiritual maturity.</p>
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Over the past weeks, I've talked about the compass points of the Christian life -- moving upward into a deeper relationship with God (as he has already moved descended close to us), [the red arrow] reaching out to others by godly example, by acts of mercy, and by works for justice; [the yellow arrow] and an inward invitation for others to join us on our spiritual journey [the blue arrow]. These arrows grow and build on each other... Now we conclude by

getting to the heart of these matters. We don't move these compass point directions to fill an empty form, to complete a duty, by force of habit, or to earn our salvation.

There are many motivators to do what we do: fear, guilt, anger, pride, power, fame, money, duty, security, to name a few. Depending on the connotation, many of these may be helpful in their proper place, or maybe harmful if attempted in the wrong context. But our bible reading implies that ultimately, the primary and sustaining motivation for following compass points is the discipline of love in action, which is grounded in God's patient, compassionate, love for us in Christ -- a love which his Spirit kindles and burns within the depths

**Motivators**

of our being.

Every compass point is wrapped up in love for God and others. Knowing that, the danger is that we codify and legalize it and it ceases to be love, but detours into a lesser motivation that I may or may not have just named. In the book of Revelation, John writes to Ephesus that they are doing many things well, including working hard and not wearing out, enduring many hardships, but then he also warns the congregation:

... you have abandoned the passionate love you had for me at the beginning. Think about how far you have fallen! Repent and do the works of love you did at first. (Revelation 2:4b-5a (TPT)).

Similarly, Paul confronted the church in Galatia (and remember Paul is pretty aggressive in his speak:

I am shocked over how quickly you have strayed away from the Anointed One who called you to himself by his loving mercy. I'm frankly astounded that you now embrace a distorted gospel! ... Didn't God open your eyes to see the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion? ... Did the Holy Spirit come to you as a reward for keeping all the Jewish laws? No, you received him as a gift because you believed in the Messiah. Your new life in the Anointed One began with the Holy Spirit giving you a new birth. Why then would you so foolishly turn from living in the Spirit by trying to finish by your own works?

(From Galatians 1:6, 3:1-3 (TPT))

They had it right in their heads, they didn't fall to false teachings (well, the Galatians did, but not Ephesus), yet they persisted in the right motions and actions, but now that's all they were -- motions and words and actions and habits -- they had lost the love of what they were doing. We've all been there at points in our life. Things that used to thrill us become burdensome tasks. Even Psalmist expressed it. (See Psalm 73). Envious of the arrogant and the seemingly prosperous, carefree life of the self-centered wicked (people like Capone and Easy Eddie who gained power and wealth by exploiting others and yet, at least in the moment, seemed to suffer no consequences for their actions). The Psalmist wondered why he was even bothering to strive after God. But then he added that if he had proclaimed such frustrations to the people as a principle of life, he would have betrayed God's children. He stuck with it until he entered God's presence (in the Temple) and understood the final destiny -- remembering that nothing on earth compared to being near to God's powerful love. He rediscovered his passion, his purpose, his

motivation of why we do what we do.

Hear Methodism's founder, John Wesley, (in updated language):

When pure passionate love faded, some began to mistake the means for the end. Those external activities that were designed to help us experience God's gracious love were now used as a pitiful substitute for that love. They settled for outward forms and works and disciplines as their religion, forgetting that the entire purpose of every command, every ritual, every discipline is for a heart renewed after the image of God, enabling us to love God and our neighbor as ourselves.

If we separate religious activity from love for God and others -- then even the prophets and Psalmist (paraphrased and wrapped together) In essence they say that God says, "What is the point of all the sacrifices you offer me? I will not accept them. I refuse to pay attention to your vain and pointless sacred meetings. Take away the noise of your songs and speeches about goodness, they hurt my ears, they are a stench in my nose. What I desire is a humble spirit and contrite heart -- [that is, an integrity that connects faith and a life lived in love]. (See Amos 5:21-24, Psalm 51:16-17, Isaiah 1:11ff, 1 Samuel 15:22)

What God really wanted and wants, Easy Eddie could not give to the world, much less to his son. His skills at unethically accumulating things and protecting criminals by immorally participating in their acts is not the kind of legacy most of us with a conscience would want to leave our children.

We don't know if it is true, but it is nice to imagine as some speculated (based on the clues alleged to have been taken off his Easy Eddie's body), that out of his love (guilt, peer pressure, other motivators would have fallen flat) but out of his love for and desire to leave a better legacy for his son -- he had a change of heart and moved his life to a new compass point.

True or not for him, *it is love* that inspired Christ to allow himself to be nailed to the cross, in the hope that people would see and be transformed by that love. And it was the power of God's love that brought Him out of that tomb. And it is that same love that drives us to be more than we are. Love beckons us to climb the highest mountain, swim the deepest sea, to get off the couch and make a difference in the world (or should I say "pew"?). Love drives us to the ends of the earth to accomplish victory in response to experiencing God's love for us and for others.

Butch was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier Lexington in the South



Pacific. Each account seems to be a bit different, but the bottom line is that one day while most of the American fighter planes were out on a mission, Japanese squadrons were on their way to attack the Lexington. For reasons now uncertain, Butch was still on the ship. He flew out to intercept the formation, diving into the formation of Japanese planes firing his wing-mounted guns until his ammunition was exhausted, and then continued to attack them by trying to clip their wings. This 6-minute air-fight brought them so close to the ship that Butch may have even gotten hit by friendly fire from the Lexington. When it was over, he had taken down 3 to 5 enemy planes, and another 2 were critically damaged and finished off by others.

If it had not been for Butch's actions, the Lexington, critical for South Pacific operations, probably would have been severely damaged if not destroyed... He was the Navy's first Ace of WW II, and the first Naval aviator to win the Medal of Honor, which he accepted with great humility, saying any other flyer would have done the same thing. He later earned a Distinguished Flying Cross and a gold star. He was named Commander Air Group aboard the USS Enterprise. A year after the battle I described, on a mission to intercept enemy bombers, at the age of 29, he went down in the Pacific (why he went down is not known).

St. Louis was his hometown, but it was the city where he often visited his father that wanted to keep the memory of this hero alive. So, in Chicago's O'Hare international airport, you will find a large room devoted to him -- In it is a restored plane of the type he flew, his medals and memorabilia and pictures, and oh, they also named the airport after Edward Henry "Butch" O'Hare, who happens to be the son of Edgar Joseph, EJ, "Easy Eddie" O'Hare.

We can't say with certainty how much God was involved in the transformation of Easy Eddie (or if there even was one), or the radically different and victorious life of his son Butch O'Hare - despite the apparent early negative influences of his father. But it does paint a picture of what God has done again and again in the lives of people all over his world -- transforming people who are entrenched in a different way of life -- or of helping people overcome seemingly impossible backgrounds or circumstances.

Moses was an Old Testament example -- snatched out of the water by an Egyptian princess, raised in the palace but his people were the slaves. He was caught and torn between both worlds, and at one time or another rejected by both the Egyptian rulers and the Hebrew slaves. Yet God raised him up to lead his

people on a most long and difficult, complaint-filled journey to freedom.

The apostle Paul was one of the first Christian examples -- an aggressive persecutor of Christ-followers, approving their arrest and murder -- turned into a leading missionary, expanding God's reconciling work in Christ to the non-Jews, to us. It is the story God wants to create in each of us -- motivated by His love for us, we adjust our compass points, our life's direction, to move up to God, out to others, and inviting them to join us in God's family as we, by God's grace, journey together toward spiritual maturity. May we all be blessed to find within us the joy of transforming and overcoming love in our life and may God's love for us and others encompass everything we do.

**Prayer** Let's pray. Lord, it was your servant Paul who reminded us that as your children, *our* battle is not against flesh and blood, against people, but against the spiritual powers of evil who are in rebellion against you and spreading their hate-filled attacks throughout your creation. The battle continues, even within each of us each day. Merciful God, renew this weary world, renew us, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring your wholeness and peace through Christ Jesus, the living Lord of life.

As we continue the process of dying out to our sins and living for the one who died for us and was raised again; take our lives and gifts and help us to reach out with your love -- that people who are entangled in the world's forces can find the gift of your healing forgiveness and be reborn into your new creation in Christ by your faithful, strong, and enduring love.

**Music # 399 (all vv 1,2,3) Take My Life, and Let It Be**

**Blessing** And now, for the love of God, move "true north" to Jesus, drawing near to God so he will come near to you in his love, and you will find [as you turn your eyes upon him] full life in his direction.