

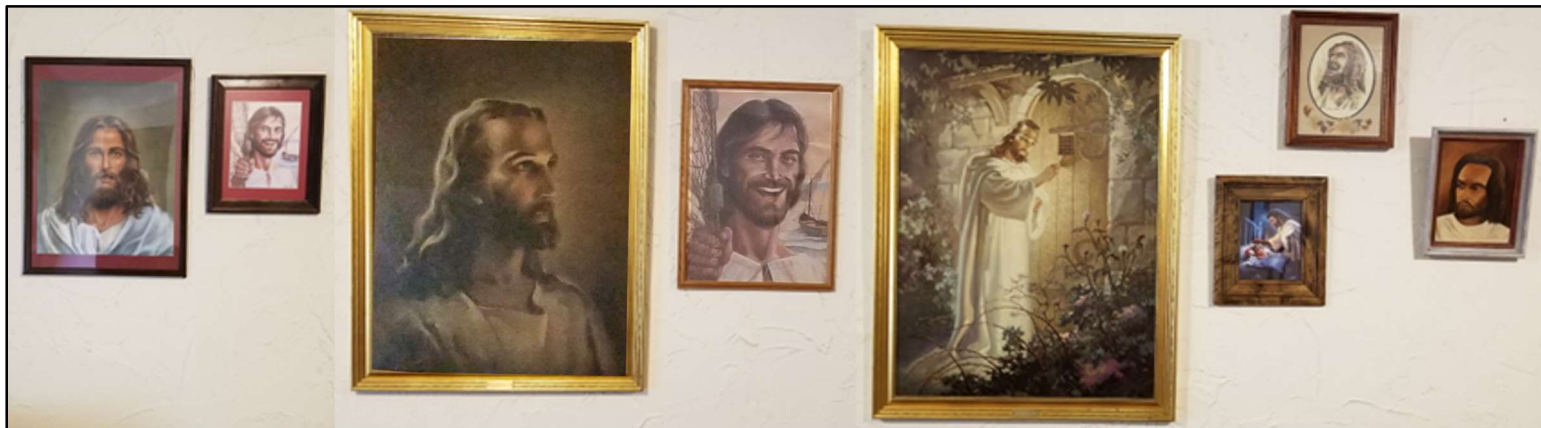
Straight from the "Hart"

July 10, 2022

 **HARTLAND**

Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve God.

For our "Covenant Living" Series, we are filling the parlor (sanctuary entry way) wall with pictures of Jesus (who established the new covenant with his followers). This is what we have so far... (Photo was edited to make them easier to see).



Apostle's Creed

Opening Prayer Almighty Lord, we gather because you are the source of all good things. We come to have your love grafted into our hearts, that we may experience true faith and goodness. We come and we give of ourselves and our resources that we and others may experience your presence. And we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Call to Worship

Lay Reader: God shaped us from earth matter, but it wasn't until he breathed into us that life was given. We have come to find a fresh breath – until we become completely his, to be filled with life anew, to be so in tune with his love that we cannot help but love what God loves and do what pleases him.

(From Genesis 2:7 and inspired by some lyrics of
Breathe on Me, Breath of God by Edwin Hatch)



Music Let's worship through song by singing 10,000 reasons.

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Refrain

Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul, worship His holy name.
Sing like never before, oh my soul, I'll worship Your holy name.

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning;
it's time to sing Your song again,
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me,
let me be singing when the ev'ning comes.

Refrain

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger,
Your name is great and Your heart is kind;
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing,
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.

Refrain

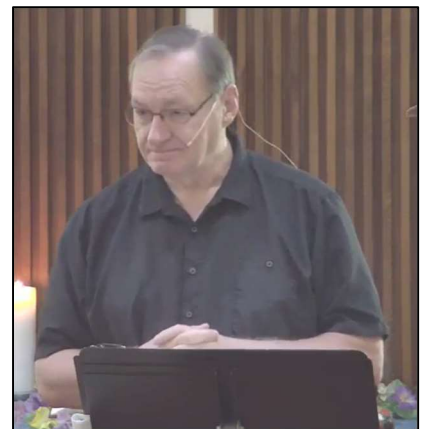
And on that day when my strength is failing,
the end draws near and my time has come;
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending,
ten thousand years and then forevermore.

Refrain 2x

I'll worship Your holy name. Lord, I'll worship Your holy name.
Sing like never before, oh my soul, I'll worship Your holy name.

Theme Our hearts will sing in worship to him daily the whole of our life because he is rich in love, slow to anger, kind hearted and good. He established a covenant with us to be our holy God and never lets us down. We are in a series called "Covenant Living". Covenant is not a word that is as popular in our culture as it used to be. It still comes up in the context of weddings and marriages once in a while -- but that is about it. So maybe it is good illustrate the word. And the easiest way for me to do that is to compare it to what is popular in our culture – the contract – which is sometimes written and sometimes oral.

In a simple contract, two parties agree that they will behave toward each other in a certain way. I go to a grocery store. They give me food, I give them money. Very simple, right? As long as both sides do their part –



the contract is maintained. But if either side doesn't do their side – if food is not provided, then I don't pay them money, or I get my money back, right? Or, if I take food, and don't pay, then I've broken my side of the contract and there are consequences when you break the contract, aren't there, especially on our side of it – I could get fined, have to reimburse, and maybe even go to jail.

A covenant enters into a commitment that strives to go beyond the simple conditional contract. The commitment to each other is not as easily broken just because someone fails to uphold their side of it. It is a commitment that goes beyond setbacks and failure. That is why traditional wedding vows do not only say, for better, for richer, for healthier, for just the good things – it also has the opposites because it includes a commitment that trusts that the relationship can endure in unfulfilled expectations, through difficult circumstances and beyond hidden challenges. Maybe this following story about a child who saw family as a contract while his mother saw family as a covenant may help us see the difference....

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Bradley. When he was about eight years old, he fell into the habit of thinking of everything in terms of money. If it cost a lot, it was worth a lot. If it didn't cost much, it wasn't worth anything. One morning Bradley came down to breakfast and put a little piece of neatly folded paper on his mother's plate. She opened it and it read:

Mother owes Bradley:

For running errands	3 dollars
For taking out the trash	2 dollars
For sweeping the floor	2 dollars
Extras	<u>1 dollar</u>
Total that mother owes Bradley	8 dollars

Mother smiled but said nothing. When lunchtime came, she put the Bradley's neatly folded bill on his plate with 8 dollars tucked inside. Bradley opened it up and his eyes lit up when he saw the money and got excited and started dreaming about what he would buy as he stuffed the money into his pocket. Then as he started eating he noticed another piece of paper neatly folded beside his plate. He opened it up hoping to find a bonus – but instead this is what he read

Bradley owes his mother:

For being good to him	nothing
For nursing him through his chicken pox	nothing
For shirts and shoes and toys	nothing
For his meals and beautiful room	<u>nothing</u>
Total that Bradley owes mother	nothing

Bradley stared at this bill without saying a word. After a few minutes, he pulled the 8 dollars and gave it back to his mother. [Now I've seen some posts where some kids would have said "bout time too" when they got the 9 dollars" but Bradley had enough sense in him that he realized he was in the wrong.] He realized that there are many things money cannot buy and some of them are the best things in the world. And after that, he helped his mother for love.

Adapted from William J Bennett, edited with commentary,
The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey,
"What Bradley Owed" adapted from Hugh T. Kerr.

An unknown author poses a question that probes whether we are filling our side of our covenant with God, which could be summed as a motivation of loving God with all that we are -- and expressed by how we treat others. And this is "The Question"

Were the whole world good as you – not an atom better –

Were it just as pure and true,
Just as pure and true as you;
Just as strong in faith and works;
Just as free from crafty quirks;
All extortion, all deceit;
Schemes its neighbors to defeat;
Schemes its neighbors to defraud;
Schemes some culprit to applaud –

[If all the world were only as good as you,] Would the world be better?

If the whole world followed you – followed to the letter –

Would it be a nobler world,
All deceit and falsehood hurled
From it altogether;
Malice, selfishness, and lust,
banished from beneath the crust,
covering human hearts from view –
Tell me, if it followed you,

Would the world be better?

From William J. Bennett, edited with commentary,
The Book of Virtues, "The Question" no author given.

The covenant commitment that is supposed to be expressed in family and in marriage commitments is one of the better living illustrations of what a covenant is supposed to be, and so it is not surprising that our relationship with God is often compared to a family relationship – God as parent and we as the children – or,

God as groom in the Old Testament, or in the New Testament, Jesus as groom, and his people are the bride. Some background on wedding in those days so you know a little bit because we'll need to know it later. A wedding was [most often] a community wide celebration that lasted 5 to 7 days (not counting the honeymoon – they didn't have that – that was in the middle of this 5-7 days and they stayed local). It included the groom processing in grand fashion to the bride's home and then processing back to his parents' home where blessings are given – the bride and her bridesmaids (usually 10 of them) and friends retreat while the day continues with feasts and games and dancing. The next day the village is on holiday. Separate feasts are given for all the men and all the women. At some unknown time, the groom arrives and meets the bride. At that point all the men and women all join together and there is dialog between the couple and blessings are given by the religious leaders. There is a unified feast that night, and the party goes on for several more days... that is the minimal nutshell of it... but most importantly for our context today – throughout this whole process is a friend of the groom who is the official messenger -- we'd call him the best man but with the role that is much more entailed than we have today. He stands by the groom and listens to him, is the intermediary between the couple because they are not allowed contact during this time – He is the one that makes sure everything and everyone is prepared and ready for when the groom arrives at an unknown time.

John the Baptist presents himself to his disciples as this “best man” for Jesus. He clearly understood his role at the wedding, that Jesus was the groom who was entering the covenant between Jesus and his people. John's disciples, however, were confused and concerned because they felt their rabbi, John the Baptist, was to be a competing groom for the exclusive loyalty for the same bride – the same people – and Jesus was winning. Let's read responsively.

Responsive Reading (L – Lay Reader, **C: Pastor with Congregation**)

L: John's disciples came to John and said, “Rabbi, you know the one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, the one you authorized by your testimony?”

C: Look, he is baptizing too, and everyone is going to him instead of us!”

L: John answered, “A man cannot receive a single thing, unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves are witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent ahead of him to get things ready.’”

C: At a wedding, by definition, the groom is the one who gets married to the bride.

L: The friend of the bridegroom, his “best man” – that’s me -- is just happy to be there. He stands by and listens for him, and stands in place at his side where he can hear every word –

C: and he is genuinely overjoyed when he hears the bridegroom’s voice.

L: How can the best man be jealous when he knows the wedding is finished and the marriage is off to a good start?

C: That’s why my cup is running over, and my joy is now complete.

L: This is the assigned moment for him to move to the center while I slip off to the sidelines. God’s Son, the one who comes from above is far above all. Earthborn messengers are earthbound and speak in a way that belongs to earth.

C: The One who is heavenborn, who comes from heaven, is in a league of his own, superior to everyone.

Based on John 3:26-31 (blended from EHV, NIV, MSG, CEV)

Music This superior groom, at whose name, the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord – this groom has come to gather his bride – his people -- and we are proud to take on his name (Christian) and be in a covenant relationship with him – a covenant that he fiercely defends to the end and beyond -- not even death (his or ours) would slow him down or break that covenant... Let’s sing – today we will call it a wedding song – about our groom, What a Beautiful Name..

What a Beautiful Name it is

You were the Word at the beginning, one with God the Lord Most High.
Your hidden glory in creation, now revealed in You, our Christ.
What a beautiful name it is, What a beautiful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a beautiful name it is, nothing compares to this.
What a beautiful name it is, the name of Jesus.

You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, You brought heaven down.
My sin was great, Your love was greater. What could separate us now?
What a wonderful name it is, what a wonderful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a wonderful name it is, nothing compares to this
What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus. (2x)

Death could not hold You, the veil tore before You,
You silence the boast of sin and grave.

The heavens are roarin', the praise of Your glory,
for You are raised to life again.

You have no rival, You have no equal. Now and forever, God You reign.
Yours is the kingdom, Yours is the glory, Yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is, what a powerful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against.

What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus

You have no rival, You have no equal. Now and forever, God You reign.
Yours is the kingdom, Yours is the glory, Yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is, what a powerful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against.

What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus. (3x)

Pastor's Prayer Let's pray. Beautiful, wondrous, powerful God, our hearts are full of praise for all of the glorious things you have done for us and given to us because of your gracious relationship with us. When we look at your creation, we realize that it all reflects your glory. When we experience the gift of a parent's or spouse's love, we are reminded of your tender love for us. When we worship in the great congregation of all who name you as Lord, we are blessed to be counted among your children, as a part of your collective "bride". We are blessed, and we remember all your benefits. You forgive. You heal our spirits as you pour out your love and mercy on us, always slow to anger and abounding in faithful love. Hear our prayers of joy and thanksgiving, as well as our needs and concerns. **Praises and Petitions** There are many needs among us and beyond us. We lift to you just a sampling of those needs, knowing you will compassionately act on behalf of *all* who are on our hearts and minds. Today we name * the friends and family of Gary White whose celebration of life was yesterday, We continue to pray * for Marty Hansen, * for Sheila Daniel (heart bypass), * for Jeff Paulson, * for Tina Dixon, * and for Mike Sharlow's nephew Angelo Sharlow, who was critically injured after falling off of a roof. * We also pray for Joan who is recovering from covid and Chris

who is caring for her, * and Jewel, who has health concerns, * and for those others we think of but we have not name out loud today; for our church, for our nation, and for our world. Sustain us with grateful hearts, renewing us so that we can soar like eagles, enabling us to live as you taught us to pray. **LORD'S PRAYER**

Music We introduced this new to us song a couple weeks ago. I like to repeat new songs at least once to help us get more familiar and comfortable with them and makes it a little more of one of our songs. We will also see how nicely it fits with what we are talking about today – how God graciously lifts us up and empowers us to a new start -- even when experience consequences for failing our side of the covenant. Let's sing



What Faith Can Do

Ev'rybody falls sometimes. Gotta find the strength to rise
 from the ashes and make a new beginning.
 Anyone can feel the ache. You think it's more than you can take,
 but you're stronger, stronger than you know.
 Don't you give up now; the sun will soon be shining.
 You gotta face the clouds to find the silver lining.

Refrain

I've seen dreams that move the mountains,
 hope that doesn't ever end, even when the sky is falling.
 I've seen miracles just happen, silent prayers get answered,
 broken hearts become brand new. That's what faith can do.
 It doesn't matter what you've heard, "impossible" is not a word;
 it's just a reason for someone not to try.
 Ev'rybody's scared to death
 when they decide to take that step out on the water,
 but it'll be alright. Life is so much more than what your eyes are seeing.
 You will find your way if you keep believing.

Refrain

Overcome the odds when you do have a chance.
When the world says you can't, it'll tell you that you can!

Refrain

That's what faith can do!
Even if you fall sometimes, you will have the strength to rise.

Introduction to Bible Reading

It is easy to fall sometimes, to imagine that when things don't go well that repentance doesn't work, that God doesn't care about what is fair and right living, that living with integrity doesn't work in this culture, and to give up and even give in to the values of sinful living. This is what was happening in the days of Malachi. Under the pressures of difficult times, when their empty religious motions didn't work, they gave up on God, but God had a covenant message of his strength for those who dared to step out in faith.



Bible Reading

The Lord says, "You said cruel things to me." But you ask, "What did we say about you?" You said, "It is useless to worship God. We did what the Lord All-Powerful told us, but we didn't gain anything. We cried like people at a funeral to show we were sorry for our sins, but it didn't help. [Now] We think proud people are happy. Evil people succeed. They do evil things to test God's patience, and God does not punish them."

Then the Lord's followers spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to them... The Lord said, "They belong to me... Parents are very kind to their children who obey them. In the same way I will be kind to my followers. You people will come back to me, and you will learn the difference between good and evil. You will learn the difference between someone who follows God and someone who does not.

Malachi 3:13-18 (ERV)

Sermon Covenant Living Care

Note: Translation of Isaiah 5:1-6,7b is by John D.W. Watts in the Word Biblical Commentary; 5:7a is NIRV.

Tuck that reading away for a little later. Let's first talk about John the Baptist – the "best man". One role we did not mention that this dear friend of the groom has -- is finalizing any negotiations between the two families, for it was not just about two

individuals romantically in love, but two families that were coming together for survival and benefit in a hard to live time. They came together to mutually support each other as extended families living in a harsh world, and the best man helped negotiate what that would look like. He also represented the groom if any issues arose with the bride to be.

This prepares us for Isaiah 5. The imagery begins with a man standing to address the gathered community. He draws them in with what sounds like a light musical toast to the marriage couple. Can you imagine yourself at the reception?

Now let me sing for my friend a song of my friend for his vineyard, a vineyard belonging to my friend in a very fruitful hill. (Isaiah 5:1)

We might wonder how the vineyard got in there. In poetry and music in those days, it wasn't unusual to describe a bride in those terms, NOT because she was "property", not that negative connotation; but as comparative to the traits of great value, and striking beauty, and nurture, and great promise... (See Song of Songs 4:12, 4:4, 7:4,8,9). The best man toasts that this is how this groom – (with his rose-colored glasses on – aren't most grooms?) it is how he saw her. And this vineyard is equated to the promised land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey.

*He proceeded to **dig it**, then to **clear it** (of stones) then to **plant it** (with) choice vines. Then to **build a watch-tower** in it and even **a winepress** he hewed out in it, (Isaiah 5:2a **emphasis added**)*

The best man's song moves fully into the vineyard image. He sings that the groom dug the ground, meaning a most thorough working of the field, breaking the hard ground necessary to receive young and tender plants. He removed all the stones that would prevent growth, and used them to create walls around the field, protecting it from sheep and other grazing animals. Then he planted the highest quality vines. On top of that, he built (rather than the ordinary shelter) the better, taller stone tower with thatched palm branches for the roof to better watch over the rich field. And not only that, he carved out an on-site winepress as well. In other words, no expense saved, no labor spared, no corners cut. This was a top-notch, highest quality of lavishing care and investment of energy. Got it? Now we are talking about a bride.

*He **waited** for it to produce grapes, (Isaiah 5:2b **emphasis added**)*

Have you ever noticed how in the Bible when they say wait, how much activity is going on? All of this diligent cultivating, weeding, irrigating, washing and pruning