Straight from the "Hart"

September 11, 2022



Welcome and Music

Welcome to the Hartland United Methodist service script. Let's sing the creedal song which also captures today's theme of resurrection and life...

We Believe

In this time of desperation when all we know is doubt and fear, There is only one foundation. We believe, we believe. In this broken generation, When all is dark, You help us see. There is only one salvation. We believe, we believe.

Chorus

We believe in God, the Father. We believe in Jesus Christ. We believe in the Holy Spirit, and He's given us new life. We believe in the Crucifixion. We believe that He conquered death. We believe in the Resurrection, and He's comin' back again.



We believe.

So, let our faith be more than anthems, greater than the songs we sing. And in our weakness and temptations, we believe, we believe. Chorus

Let the lost be found, let the dead be raised. In the here and now let love invade. Let the church live loud. Our God will say we believe, we believe. And the gates of hell will not prevail, for the power of God has torn the veil. Now, we know Your love will never fail. We believe, we believe. Chorus.

He's comin' back again. He's comin' back again.

Opening Prayer Great symphonies and small birds remind us of your majesty. Gifts large and small are both honored when given in love for your mercy. Receive our gifts as a sign that we marvel at your love for us. Now as we worship, deliver us from cold hearts and wandering thoughts, and pour out your Spirit of grace and love. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from Herb Mather © 2002 General Board of Discipleship and Ancient Collects and Other Prayers) in Worship & Song, Leader's Edition [W&S]

Call to Worship

Lay Reader: Come to praise our loving God with joy, for his grace is better than life. He sustains us through the darkness and blesses us with life in this new day. We've gathered under the shadow of his wings. Let's worship with joy and bless his holy name.

(Adapted from Richard Eslinger © 2006 Upper Room Books in W&S])

Theme

We heard last week Jesus saying he was the true good shepherd by laying down his life for his people, and by so doing, bringing life to those who believe. As far back as Genesis (3:15) the Bible begins predicting Jesus would be the seed, the offspring of Eve, that would battle evil, sin, and death, and though he would be stricken, he would crush its power... I see this story as a metaphor of that cosmic battle...

Once upon a time, seeds floated in the wind and came to rest in a barren, empty, jungle clearing. They dreamed of becoming big trees, shade trees, someday, bringing peace to all who came near. But there was a problem. A group of monkeys lived nearby. Whenever they saw a new plant blooming, they would throw bananas at it. The elders had taught them to play this game so that they could learn to throw stones accurately against enemies, and it would keep the clearing clear so it would be less inviting to others, thus they could keep the area under their own control.

One seed started growing but retreated under the barrage of wounding bananas and gave up. Almost all the seeds decided to stay under the ground until the monkeys decided to move on to a new location. All the seeds, that is, but one. It was committed to growing. As it grew the monkeys threw their bananas, and even stones. The blows from the speed and weight of the missiles bent the sprout over in pain. But it did not to give up and it continued to grow despite its rips and wounds and was becoming buried in bananas and rocks. Over time, the shoot's trunk, scarred and knotted from these harsh forces, finally became thick and hard enough that it was no longer bent over. The bananas simply bounced off, while the stones sometimes still cut, fell powerless around its trunk. It grew to become one of the most majestic trees of the jungle, and while some monkeys hated its presence (for now it encouraged other sprouts to fill in that clearing endangering the monkey clan's control over the area. But some of the other monkeys learned to appreciate its sturdy limbs and saw that a clearing flush with growth actually improved the lives of everyone, including the monkeys.

When the world was barren and empty from sin, Jesus came. Some tried to get rid of him right away, but he continued to grow... Opposition tried to drive him back into the ground; and thought they had killed him off, but their success was only temporary, he re-emerged and continued to grow. He did all this to take away our emptiness by filling us with his peace and love.



This series talks about the things his life offers to us. Jesus came as the **bread** of the world – the staple ingredient to the spiritual nourishment that brings a full life and eternal life. He came as the **light of the world**, so we can discover ever deepening insights into who Jesus is and following his will for our life. And Jesus came as "**the shepherd gate**" who establishes a close relationship with his people and leads them to full life by laying down his own.

At this point, the people were divided about Jesus -- some saying he was a demon possessed maniac. Others said people like that can't talk the way Jesus talks, and they certainly can't perform healings like he does (they were still talking about the blind man being healed – in our series, two weeks ago). The opposing officials confront him again demanding that he plainly tell them if he was or not -- the Messiah.

Jesus replies that he has told them plainly, but they didn't believe him because they were not his sheep. Therefore, they set out to stone him for claiming to be God. Jesus says, "Even if you don't believe in me, believe in the works I have done."

They again try to seize him, but he slips away. He stayed in the territory where John the Baptist had been active and baptized Jesus. Many people there remembered John's testimony about Jesus, realized it was all true, and became believers. And now we pick up the story.

Intro to Reading (1)

The Mary who anointed Jesus with an expensive perfume and wiped his feet with her hair lived in Bethany with her sister Martha and brother Lazarus. Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem, and many believe it is where Jesus lodged when he traveled to the holy city. They were very close friends. Lazarus got sick. The sisters sent word to Jesus. The math of the story tells us that Lazarus died almost immediately after the messenger left. The messenger reached Jesus the next day. And even though he knew Lazarus had died, he said that this illness is not meant to end in death, it is going to bring glory to God – for show the glory of the Son of God." Jesus stayed where he was for two more days, and then told the disciples that they were going to go to Judea.

The disciples protested because they had just tried to stone Jesus. Jesus replied that when there is work to be done, we must get it done while it is day. That is, waiting won't make the stoning situation any better, and we have got to be what we are and do what we must do while it is still day. The Jesus added, (sum of John 11:1-10)



Reading (1) (L – Lay Reader, P – Pastor)

L: "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up."

P: His disciples replied, "Lord, if he's sleeping, he will get better."

L: They thought he was referring to natural sleep. This made Jesus tell them quite plainly, "Lazarus is dead. I'm glad I wasn't there, for your benefit. It will help your faith. Now you may learn to believe. Now let us go to him."

P: Thomas then said to the rest of the disciples, "Come on then, let us all go and die with him!" (John 11:11-16) (NTE, PHILLIPS, NIRV)

Pastor: I love that last sentence. It seems like the only thing we ever remember about Thomas is that he didn't believe that Jesus was raised until he could see him in person and for that one event he is forever dubbed "the doubter". But here it was the others who were doubting Jesus' wisdom and trying to dissuade Jesus from going back to the area he was nearly stoned days earlier.

It is Thomas that heard Jesus talk about this trip bringing glory to God and to Jesus. Sometimes, glorification is a phrase describing that transition from life to eternal life. But whatever kind of glory it meant, Thomas was committed and ready

September 11, 2022 5

to go, and he declares to the others, even if it means death, then let's go die with him... that is what you call - commitment. And so they start on their way – back to the place where people accused Jesus of being demon-possessed and were finding a way to kill him. Yet as we will see, the one who says *I am* the bread who came from heaven, *I am* the light of the world, *I am* the good shepherd, now anticipates that he is moving to where he can also say, "I am the resurrection and the life" and he will demonstrate his presence means power over death and demons... Let's sing....



Great I Am

I want to be close, close to your side, so heaven is real and death is a lie. I want to hear voices of angels above, singing as one: Hallelujah, holy, holy, God Almighty, the great I AM; Who is worthy, none beside Thee, God Almighty, the great I AM.

I want to be near, near to your heart, loving the world and hating the dark. I want to see dry bones living again, singing as one: Hallelujah, holy, holy, God Almighty, the great I AM; Who is worthy, none beside Thee, God Almighty, the great I AM.

The mountains shake before you, the demons run and flee at the mention of the name, "King of Majesty," There is no pow'r in hell or any who can stand before the power and the presence of the great I AM, Hallelujah, holy, holy, God Almighty, the great I AM; Who is worthy, none beside Thee, God Almighty, the great I AM, the great I AM. the great I AM. the great I AM.

Intro to and Bible Responsive Reading (2)

(L – Lay Reader, P – Pastor, C – Congregation)

L: The story continues. When Jesus and the disciples arrive near the end of the day's trip, Lazarus has already been in the tomb four days. A good number of people had come to comfort Mary and Martha. When Martha heard Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him while Mary stayed at home.

(Sum of John 11:17-20)

- L: Martha said, "I wish you had been here! Then my brother would not have died. But even now I know God will give you whatever you ask of him."
- P: Jesus replied to her, "Your brother will rise again."
- L: Martha answered, "I know he'll rise again in the resurrection at the last day"

C: "I am the resurrection and the life,"

- P: Jesus told her. "Anyone who believes in me will live, even if they die. And whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"
- L "Yes Lord, replied Martha. "I do believe that you are Christ (the Messiah), the Son of God, the one who was to come into the world. (John 11: 21-27)
- P: Martha went back home, pulled Mary aside and said, "The Teacher is here and he is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up and went quickly to him.
- C: The people saw her go, assumed she was going to the grave to weep and followed her. (Sum of John 11:28-31)
- L: When Mary reached where Jesus was, she looked at him, and then fell down at his feet. She said, "Lord, I wish you had been here. Then my brother would not have died."
- P: When Jesus saw her crying, and the Judeans who had come with her crying, his spirit was deeply moved and visibly distressed. Where have you laid him? he asked.

C: "Lord, come and see." they replied.

L: Jesus burst into tears.

C: "Look how much he loved him!" said the Judeans.

L: But some of them said, "Well, yes, but he opened the eyes of a blind man, could he not have kept this man from dying?"

- P: Jesus was again deeply moved at these words and went on to the grave. It was a cave, with a stone placed in front of the entrance. "Take away the stone," Jesus said.
- L: "But master, said Martha...he has been dead four days. By this time he will be decaying... there'll be a bad smell.
- C: "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see God's glory?" (John 11:32-40)

Sermon (Part 1) I Am... The Resurrection/Life -- If Only He Were Here

I want to go over this section again with some comments. In grief, Martha, then Mary, as well as the group of comforters, all accuse Jesus of neglecting his duty: *If only you were here*... To Martha's credit, she does add that if Jesus asks God, God will give him whatever he asks. It is clear she isn't expecting a resurrection at this point. Exactly what she did hope for is not clear, but she felt Jesus could do something to make the situation better, perhaps remove the pain of her loss.

Jesus replies that her brother will rise again, which Martha takes as one of those empty non-helpful clichés that people utter when they don't know what else to say. She politely goes along with it. "Yes, he will rise in the in the last day."

Jesus says "I am the resurrection and the life; that is -- The one who believes in me will have resurrected life in the end, and spiritually: eternal life, beginning even now. *Jesus asks if we can believe this.*

Martha believes Jesus is the Messiah and the Son that God sends to the world. We get no elaboration on what she means, but at this point she is probably thinking along the same line as the disciples -- who expect Jesus will overthrow Rome and set up his heavenly kingdom on earth in its place. Jesus accepts the titles she gives but is about to demonstrate the deeper truths that lay behind them -- it means Jesus is the one who gives life itself to humanity (if we believe). (See John 20:31)

Then Jesus sent Martha to get Mary, and we almost get a replay just like we do after key play in a football game, they show it again and again and again. Well, it is almost a replay with Mary instead of Martha. Clearly this was a pivotal point of the story. Jesus is deeply moved, troubled, weeps and asks to be led to the grave. Some recognize how close Jesus and Lazarus must have been, but others went into attack mode. Jesus is once more deeply moved – but this time the word may include some anger.

Jesus is being attacked on three levels. **First**, he feels the pain of grief with the loss of one of his closest friends, as well as the pain of his other close friends, the

sisters Mary and Martha. Just because he knows the joy and glories of heaven, and knows what he is about to do with Lazarus, it does not mean he isn't present with us in our pain. **Second**, this pain is amplified by everyone blaming him, saying or implying the loss was his fault...but of course, he does understand the process of grief and the anger, and he can handle that...just we do for each other, and **finally**, he was preparing to battle the realm of the last enemy – the grave.

Jesus knew Lazarus was dead even before the messenger arrived with the news of him being sick. In a sense, Jesus may not have physically been there in his human flesh, but as the Son of God, he is always with us ...and he promises that if we believe we will see God in all of his glory – he will show one version in a moment – but ultimately, even though we did not deserve it, as the shepherd who lays down his life, and the sacrificial lamb that dies for us -- It is hard to comprehend that the Creator of all the world would bother to consider us, much less love us so deeply that he would ultimately reveal his glory in Jesus on the cross -- his sacrificial love conquering the power of sin and frees us from everything that binds us. In light of all that, in light of his presence with us, it seems so insignificant, but all we can do is offer ourselves to him.

Music

God With Us

Who are we that you would be mindful of us? What do you see that's worth looking our way? We are free in ways that we never should be. Sweet release from the grip of these chains.

Chorus

Like hinges straining from the weight, my heart no longer can keep from singing. All that is within me cries, for you alone be glorified. Emmanuel, God with us. My heart sings a brand new song, the debt is paid, these chains are gone. Emmanuel, God with us.

> Lord, you know our hearts don't deserve your glory. Still, you show a love we cannot afford. Chorus

Such a tiny offering compared to Calvary. Nevertheless we lay it at your feet. Such a tiny offering compared to Calvary. Nevertheless we lay it at your feet.

All that is within me cries, for you alone be glorified. Emmanuel, God with us. My heart sings a brand new song, the debt is paid, these chains are gone. Emmanuel, God with us.

Intro to and Bible Reading (3)

L: Take away the stone, Jesus says.... So they took away the stone. Jesus lifted his eyes and prayed, (Sum of John 11: 39,41a)

Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me. But I said this for the benefit of the people standing here. I said it so they will believe that you sent me."

Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus -- come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with graveclothes, with strips of linen, and his face muffled with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Now untie him and let him go home." Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary saw what Jesus did [and] they believed in him. (John 11:41b-45)

Pastor: Most graves back them were made for multiple people. They were made

out of a natural cave or one that was manually created. The stone walls were then chiseled to create shelves, and they would lay one body on one shelf and another on another shelf. And then the seal was only over the main entrance to the cave. We heard Jesus win the battle and Lazarus emerges from the tomb. This causes some to believe in Jesus and give glory to God and praise him. The critical piece of this story now comes to light.



In troubled times, many of us like to do much of the talking in our prayers, unloading our burdens and accusations, and requesting relief... and to be sure, he does want us to speak to him and just as we heard in the story, he listened carefully to what everyone was saying, and it moved him. Empathy, careful listening. But at the same time, when we realize we are in the presence of Jesus in all of his majesty – sometimes – it is important to also hear him empathize with us and hear the peace and love and hope and peaceful rest that he would say to us, especially in troubling times. Let's do our best to sing this song that we learned last month as we prepare ourselves for prayer...

Word of God Speak

I'm finding myself at a loss for words, and the funny thing is, it's okay. The last thing I need is to be heard, but to hear – what you would say.

Refrain

Word of God, speak; would you pour down like rain, washing my eyes to see your majesty? To be still and know that You're in this place; please let me stay and rest in your holiness. Word of God speak. I'm finding myself in the midst of you, beyond the music, beyond the noise.

All that I need is to be with you, and in the quiet, hear your voice.

Refrain 2 x

Pastor's Prayer Lord, throughout history, your people have gathered to worship you and to pray, longing for refreshment and hope for their souls and they faced their sometimes dry and wearisome world. Time and again, the Holy Spirit came upon them, restoring their joy of life eternal. Lord, you know what is best for us. Give us what we need and what brings you honor. Guide us by your wisdom. We place ourselves in your hands, available for your direction and command. May all of our giving and living be for you. Renew our strength. May we learn from those who went before us – and especially from the people we read about in Scriptures, that we may humbly avoid their mistakes and imitate their victories.

Now Jesus, remember us and come to us. Hear our intercessions, for your church around the world, we ask new life. For all who carry out ministries in your church, we ask grace and wisdom. For people who have accepted discipleship, we ask inspired spiritual disciplines. For Christians of every land, we ask for your divine blessing for unity in your name, guide us to your faithful love, that we in turn may love you and have love for each other. For people who suffer and who sorrow, we ask your healing peace,

(Portions of the prayer were adapted from ©1975 (alt.) 1993 Ateliers et Presses de Taize, Taize Community (France), admin. by GIA Publications, Inc.)

Praises and Petitions We lift up those who are hurting in some way today. We also give praises. Sherri Rice offers praise that she is able to be back in church and see you all, and Fran is back with us too today, and we give praise. We are also asked to remember the anniversary of a tragic event in the life of America, and pray that you continue to be with those who are deeply affected by that time, and continue to remember our country as we seek you. We continue to pray for * Jeff Gordonier's cousin Bob and the family and friends who grieve the loss of his daughter due to an accident, * for the family and friends who grieve the loss of Dennis Lemon, * for Cheri's friend Joyce, still healing after surgery, and for Cheri's

aunt in Alabama with health concerns. There are others on our hearts and minds and situations that we have not named out loud, but we know that you know what they are, and will intercede in your will and in your way and in your timing.

Now we pray your protection and preservation for our families, our state, our nation, and our world, that it be governed by your watchful eye. We pray we may be faithful to the legacy you need us to keep, and can discern and dissolve those things in our life which misrepresent you. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray **Lord's Prayer**

Intro to and Bible Reading (4)

Some saw Jesus at work and believed, but others went off to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. (Sum of John 11:45-46)

Consequently, the Pharisees and chief priests called a meeting of the Sanhedrin (the council), "What are we going to do? This man is performing lots of remarkable signs. If we let him keep on doing this everyone is going to believe in him. Then we shall have the Romans coming and that will be the end of our holy place and our very existence as a nation. But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, addressed the meeting: "You plainly don't understand what is involved here. You do not realize that it would be a good thing for us if one man should die for the people than the whole nation being destroyed. He didn't say this of his own accord. Since he was high priest that year, he was in fact inspired [to prophecy] that Jesus would die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but to bring together into one family all the children of God. So from that day on they plotted how to kill Jesus. (John 11:47-53)

Music In other words, they concluded it was time for Jesus to be glorified (in the sense of a transition that takes place between life and eternal life) The high priest and his fellow leaders took the prophecy to mean something completely different than how we read it. They thought killing Jesus would help them stay complicit with Rome and preserve their national status, while we are meant to hear it as Jesus, the Son of God laying down his life for the salvation of the people (for the nation) – and we are moving one step closer to the fulfillment of God's plan to save us through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and return. What a glorious day that will be. We're ready to sing that whole story now....

Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)

One day when heaven was filled with his praises, One day when sin was as black as could be, Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin, dwelt among men, my example is he! The Word became flesh, and the Light shined among us – his glory revealed!

Refrain

Living, he loved me; dying, he saved me; and buried, he carried my sins far away; Rising, he justified freely forever: One day he's coming – O glorious day! O glorious day!

One day they led him up Calvary's mountain, one day they nailed him to die on a tree; Suffering anguish, despised and rejected: bearing our sins, my Redeemer is he! The hands that healed nations stretched out on a tree and took the nails for me. Refrain

One day the grave could conceal him no longer, one day the stone rolled away from the door; then he arose over death he had conquered; now is ascended, my Lord evermore! Death could not hold him; the grave could not keep him from rising again! Refrain Glorious day ---- !

One day the trumpet will sound for his coming, one day the skies with his glories will shine; Wonderful day, my beloved One bringing; My Savior, Jesus is mine! Refrain

Glorious day ---- ! O glorious day! O glorious day!

Sermon (Part 2) I Am... the Resurrection/Life "If only he were here"

One of the commentators on this passage makes note of all the IAM statements of Jesus. They are said in the context of what Jesus is offering to humanity, to us:

he gives us the nourishment of bread, the guidance of light, the rich pastures of protection and provision; and today -- life eternal via physical resurrection, and spiritual eternal life even now. That word eternal doesn't only mean duration, but quality of life. How do we make that live out for us?

Professor Joan Meyers-Levy went on a plane trip. She was inspired by the high ceiling spaciousness of the terminal -- just like churches – always have these high, high ceilings --- so we can pay bigger bills () No, that's not why we have them... they are high because they encourage us to reach up toward God, and it gives that spaciousness.

And then she went into the plane, which has very limited head room. It inspired her to create a study. She theorized about her discoveries: Students in high ceiling rooms subconsciously got a sense of freedom and spaciousness and therefore did consistently better when they had to envision the relationships between things, they could more easily see the big picture; while those in lower ceiling rooms unconsciously sensed confinement and limitation and therefore performed better on detail-oriented work. [where the focus was much narrower.

In our story today, when Jesus prayed, he looked up to the sky --- while Lazarus didn't have any head room at all. You don't need much when you aren't out there living. Daily details of life are a necessary and important part of life, so let's not get caught up in that but let's set that aside for now -- and use this story not as a metaphor for that, but as a metaphor for this "low ceiling life-style" that gets us so bogged down and distracted by the nitty gritty of the mundane that it drains life of its vision and vitality; while the high ceiling metaphor envisions the spiritual picture of life. Paul tells us that if we have been raised with Christ, we should set out minds on things above and not on earthly things. For our lives are now with Christ in God. I like the way The Message puts this in Colossians: If you are serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. [that's low ceiling stuff] Look up and be alert to what is going on around Christ – that's where the action is. See things from his perspective. (Colossians 3:1-2)

So Jesus told them to roll the stone away, looks up into the high sky (no limits there!) and prays, and he calls on Lazarus -- and some people joke that if he didn't say his name, everyone would have come out, so he had to call him by name. So he calls on Lazarus, and he calls on us to leave the low-ceiling, inside the box

September 11, 2022 14

perspectives and rediscover the high ceiling of outside the box thinking that is true, full, quality of life eternal.

Prayer Let's pray. Lord, as our resurrection and life, we ask forgiveness when we receive this gift of life and waste it in foolish ways, when we do not live in all things as if we were living all for you. In your life on earth, you were deeply compassionate for our pains and losses, and so we pray you forgive us when we are dispassionate about human sorrow. Forgive us when we get so overly caught up -- *overly caught up* -- in the needful important details of this life that we forget to lift our eyes to the sky and to that higher plane of living.

Forgive us when we become indifferent to life in the Spirit and to peace. Heal us, revive us with life and what is really living. Teach us to hear your voice, so that we may believe - and be confident that, by your grace and forgiveness, that as we turn to you, we will live and then live again, in Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Music Our final song could be sung through the eyes of Lazarus who is brought back to life... of course the assumption is he eventually died again – and then he went to heaven... But the song also conveys the image of all of us who are dead in sin no longer need to be because Christ died and rose again, therefore we not only have eternal life, it impacts the way we live each and every day... Let's sing

Because He Lives (Amen)

I believe in the Son. I believe in the risen One. I believe I overcome by the power of His blood.

Amen, amen. I'm alive, I'm alive because He lives. Amen, amen. Let my song join the one that never ends, because He lives!

I was dead in the grave. I was covered in sin and shame. I heard mercy call my name. He rolled the stone away.

Amen, amen. I'm alive, I'm alive because He lives. Amen, amen. Let my song join the one that never ends.

> Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, every fear is gone. I know He holds my life, my future in His hands.

Amen, amen. I'm alive, I'm alive because He lives. Amen, amen. Let my song join the one that never ends, because He lives.

Amen, amen. Let my song join the one that never ends, because He lives! because He lives!

September 11, 2022 15

Blessing As we leave, let us claim the freedom Christ gives us by his self-giving on the cross and live each day in the peace of serving the Lord in faith, hope, and love. Be strengthened by his love to share our love with others. May the Son who shared his life grant us grace to share our lives. And may the Holy Spirit dwelling with us empower us to be only and always for others. Amen.

(Adaped no author listed) in [W & S]

* Note: All music lyrics: CCLI # 2561297

All Scripture readings are a blend of NTE, PHILLIPS, NIRV unless otherwise indicated