

Straight from the "Heart"

October 9, 2022



Welcome to the Hartland UMC worship script. We are glad you are reading. Our affirmation of faith comes is adapted from what became one of the United Methodist hymns, the prompting questions were added...

Affirmation of Faith (P – Pastor, C – Lay Reader with Congregation)

P: Do you believe in the triune God?

C: We believe in one true God. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, an ever-present help in need. Praised by all the heavenly host; through whose mighty power everything is made, works, and provides.

P: Do believe in Jesus Christ?

C: We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Mary's son, who left his throne to bear our load and lead us toward heaven. By his cross and death, he won our salvation and we are rescued from sin's misery.

P: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

C: We believe the Holy Ghost, who forever flows from both Father and Son. He comforts and supports us in all our trials, fears, and needs. Holy Trinity, praise forever be to thee!

(Ad. from a blending of several translations of "We Believe in One True God" by Tobias Clausnitzer posted in umcdiscipleship.org)

Opening Prayer

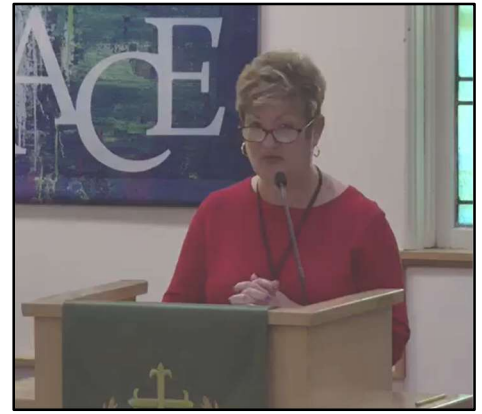
O God, we are amazed at the variety of people in your creation. Many appearances, many gifts, many lifestyles, cultures, and languages are represented in the mosaic of your global community. We praise you that amid our differences, you are a constant, ever-present Spirit. We place the variety of our gifts on this one altar of our God, our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. Bless these gifts for the cause of Jesus Christ and it is in his name that we pray. **Amen.**

David Bell © 2007 General Board of Discipleship in Worship & Song, Leaders Edition

Call to Worship

Lay Reader: Come let's enter worship today. Holiness adorns God's house. Let's praise our God and reigning King. He is clothed with honor and majesty and covers

himself with light. He is armed with strength. His greatness is unsearchable. Nevertheless, let's meditate on his glory and wondrous works. He stretches out the heavens. He is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great loving kindness. God is great and greatly to be praised. Let our meditations please him as we sing praises to him now and as long as we shall live.



(Inspired by intermix of Psalms 95:1,5; 104:1-2, 33-34; 145:1,3,5,8 (WEB))

Music So let's begin our praise by recognizing just How great our Creator Redeemer and Sustainer is

How Great is Our God

The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light, and darkness tries to hide;
it trembles at his voice, it trembles at his voice.
How great is our God! Sing with me, "How great is our God!"
And all will see how great, how great is our God!

Age to age he stands, and time is in his hands;
Beginning and the End, Beginning and the End.
The Godhead, three in one, Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb.
How great is our God! Sing with me, "How great is our God!"
And all will see how great, how great is our God!

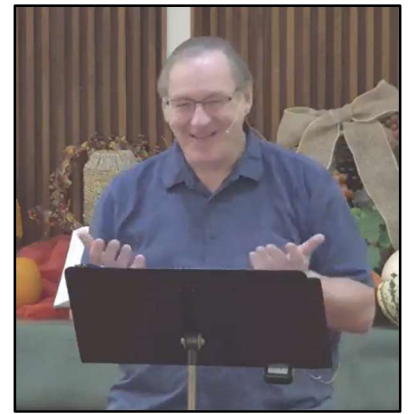
Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing, "How great is our God!"
Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing, "How great is our God!"
How great is our God! Sing with me, "How great is our God!"
And all will see how great, how great is our God!

Theme One way that I think about the greatness of God is to look at the night sky that he created. At our current level of spacecraft technology, it would take about 8 years to get the 1.2 billion miles to Saturn's moon Titan (they are planning on starting that journey in a couple years, (not with people). It is the only moon that we know of that has an atmosphere. But by space distances, is a quite short

distance. When we think about how vast it all is, it could make us feel pretty small and unimportant, couldn't it?

King David saw the stars, and wonders that at first. What are we humans, Lord, that you pay any attention to us at all? But then he goes on to say that he has made us really special, crowning us with glory and honor, and put us in charge of taking care of his creation. (See Psalm 8) Jesus says the same. He tells us that God knows every sparrow that falls to the ground, and we are much more important than them. God has even numbered all the hairs on your head. (For some of us that is not as critical as it used to be 😊) (Matthew 10:30) But it is still there, and he knows every one. He cares about every little detail of our lives, is what Jesus is trying to say. Look at your hands. We most often take them for granted until they hurt or don't function the way we want them too – but think about how incredibly complicated they are to make them work the way they work; and yet when they are reasonably healthy, we can manipulate them to do what we want them to do without even giving a thought to all the different bones, muscles and ligaments and joints that have to move in an exact sequential order and apply the exact amount of pressure – and that is just the hand itself, not even talking about what it is connected to the arm and shoulder -- to go to pick up an egg. It is incredible – and it is just the hand – think about from the tip of our head to the bottom of our toes. He makes us with respect and with wonder (Psalm 139) and he thinks about us constantly. David goes on and on about how great it is that God cares for and values us so much, about how important we are to him and how proud he is of each of us. (See for example, Zephaniah 3:17 and Isaiah 62:3-5) We are thankful that He loves us so much and is proud of us his children. And we too, should be constantly amazed by our great God and his creation of everything near and far and how he has constructed us as well.

When David goes on about God, and God goes on about us; it is like parents or grandparents talking about their children and grandchildren -- that is called "gushing" – they can't stop, they must go on and on and on and it is a great thing. It is a great thing. Think about that with our relationship with God as our father and we as his children. He gushes over us, he sings over us the Bible says. He reminds us how much he loves us with his care and all his wonderful deeds, and how much we will want to make it easy for him to be proud and pleased with us as well.



Intro to Bible Reading

Lay Reader: From beginning to end, God has created us, gifted us with purpose, and wanted to enjoy each other's presence. In Leviticus, this unity was captured in what the prophets would make the popular mantra of covenant keeping. It is even described in Genesis, but we often do not recognize it because of its surrounding verses. Pastor has lifted out just a few verses to highlight God's hope with humanity. First, God's promise of covenant keeping, then the positive highlights of the garden...

Bible Reading

"I will keep my covenant with you. I will live among you. I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people."

Then the Lord God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life, and the man became a living person. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in Eden... The Lord God placed the man [there] as its gardener, to work it and care for it... When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking about in the garden... Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Leviticus 26:9b,11a,12; Genesis 2:7-8a,15,3:8a,9.

Music The theme and the reading both imply that the great God of grandeur that we are talking about has always loved to live, to walk, with his people, and we know the great lengths to which he went so that he could continue to be us, through Jesus, and us with him. Let's sing together

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.

Music And that is the longing of our hearts, whether it was in the garden of Eden or today: to be in God's presence. And he being with us is critical for our salvation and for life itself, for it is his Spirit, (sometimes referred to as God's breath) that brings us to life and sustains our life... Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing

Breathe

This is the air I breathe, This is the air I breathe;
Your holy presence living in me.

This is my daily bread, This is my daily bread;
Your very Word spoken to me.

And I --- , I'm desp'rate for You. And I --- , I'm lost without You.

(Repeat)

And I --- , I'm desp'rate for You.

And I --- , I'm lost without You. –]– (3x)

Pastor's Prayer Imagine Adam in the garden. After he failed and he went and hid and God was there walking, calling – he knew where he was, but calling for him. I imagind that is the sentiment that was going on in both of their heads – lost and desperate. A friend of mine wrote this and shared it with me, and with her permission, I share it with you as a meditation with which to begin our time of prayer. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. (Pause) Imagine a crisp fall morning walking along a deserted country road with trees lining each side. The leaves are beginning to turn from green to beautiful hues of gold, orange, red and burgundy. You feel as if God has painted this masterpiece just for you as you breathe in the fresh clear air into your lungs. You stop to take in the beauty that fills your space. You watch as some of the leaves slowly drift to the ground. You think of your own life...ever changing... sometimes in the season of beautiful color all around you...and other times, slowly spiraling downward. You are mesmerized by the scene before you, and you realize that soon, all the trees will be bare and cold. But then you remember...and you are inspired...because you know, that in the spring, once again, there will be new growth...with leaves of green, coming to

life, changing to their beautiful colors and following the pattern that God has chosen. So too, as the trees go through their constant new buds to bare bark, we can be renewed each and every day. So whether you are just budding...you are green or you are full of color right at this moment...God promises a new season for each of us, no matter where we are in our walk with Him in our lives. [Pause]

So now God of grace, how thankful we are for the glory of this day. Keep us aware of the small pleasures that make our days good. The sparkle of the sun on the sea, the dew on a delicate spider web, the warmth of a friend's handshake or fist bump, the sound of music and even the renewal of sleep.

Help us to take delight -- as children do -- in the world around us. To see the journey of a ladybug as we walk to the mailbox; the scent of fresh baking, the smell of wood as it is crafted in the workshop; the joy of playing for the sake of play instead of for the sake of winning; the wonder of a bird's nest, brilliantly made.

We know that circumstances sometimes make it hard for us to experience these joys. So we give you thanks for the comfort that comes through the care and a thoughts and prayers of our friends and church family

Praises and Petitions Therefore we pray for a request from Pat Schleh Carl and Patti Didomizio with blood pressure issues, * we continue to pray for Joyce's sister-in-law Lynne and her heart issues, a continued need for healing and recovery for her; *for young Brantley Call and his seizures, that people can figure out what is going on and why and can help him; for those affected by the hurricane in Florida. For others that might be on our minds and hearts but have not been named specifically out loud...Lord, how comforting and precious it is to realize how often you think of us throughout the day and night -- you know our every need, you know our every joy.... and you bless us with your mighty hand, and teach us how to pray to you, saying, **Lord's Prayer**

Intro to Bible Reading

Lay Reader: We have already heard that from the beginning and throughout history, God's desire was to live *with* humanity. It is often expressed in the imagery of walking together. He walked with them in Eden, He promised to walk with them as they kept the covenant. We know things happened to disrupt that desired unity. John writes that we can once again walk with God just as he and the disciples did...



Bible Reading

We proclaim to you that Christ existed when the world began in the beginning. Yet we have seen him with our own eyes, and listened to him speak, and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life from God was revealed to us and we have seen him. He is eternal life. He was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard -- so that you may share the fellowship we have with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy. This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is Light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with God and yet walk in spiritual darkness, we are not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:1-7 (NIV, NLT, TLB)

Music God is light, and he comes to us to lighten our dark world and give us an opportunity to enjoy the light of his presence again. For all he has done to reconnect with us, it is only fitting that we make ourselves available to him in worship in the light of his presence and that we praise him for all he has done. Let's sing before the sermon

Here I Am to Worship

Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness, Open my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You, hope of a life spent with You.

Chorus

And here I am to worship, Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You're my God.
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days, oh, so highly exalted, glorious in heaven above.
Humbly You came to the earth You created, all for love's sake became poor.

Chorus (2 x)

I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross.
(Repeat)

Chorus

You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

Sermon Walking in Paradise: The Double Challenge

Our destiny begins, in the beginning, in the garden. It is, to sum it up -- to live in God's world with God's other creatures on God's terms. To do this, God gave us three things:

Our destiny is given in Purpose, or some might call it vocation. In Eden, it was described as gardener and shepherd. To cultivate crops and care for animals. Purpose and vocation have widened considerably since those first days, but the point remains the same. From the very beginning, God entrusts his creation to us, and expects us to share in his work in his world. So consider, **Of all the various works God is doing in his world, in what way might he be calling you to participate?** Our destiny is given in purpose.

Our destiny is also given in Permission If you remember the Eden story in Genesis – of all the trees (there was one exception) *everything* else was permissible. Free. We celebrate and give thanksgiving for the goodness of God's creation (Psalm 24:1 ff) from which he has given us blessings to work and to sustain us. **Do we freely participate in what God has given us?** And are we grateful? Or do we sometimes forget, or even worse, we cut ourselves off from his sustaining grace by ignoring the blessings and going after what does *not* belong to us. And that leads to the third thing.

Our destiny is finally given in Prohibition We will save that topic for next week. This week our focus will be on what was intended, not on what happened.

And so, the Lord is in the garden, walking in the cool of the day. Even though it is only mentioned at this time when

The Garden tells us

Adam and Eve had already sinned and went into hiding, and we got the rhetorical question, "Where are you?" God knew where he was, but he was calling him out. Most believe this was intended to be presented as a normal pattern. This wasn't the first time God went walking in the garden in the cool of the day. It was a normal pattern that he would walk with them, in his creation, with those he had assigned to care for it. In my imagination, there may have been *some* business – "name the animals, do this to make the garden grow, etc..." but I don't think it was as much a committee meeting as much as it was just being together.

William Barry wrote that God created us, not because he was lonely and *needs* our friendship, but because

God wants connection

his divinity is so richly relational that he desired humanity into existence for the sake of being friends with us. **Knowing God wants to relate to us, what do we do to put ourselves in a place where we can connect with God and he with**

us, and we can experience his presence -- together?

What must it have been like to meet with the Lord in the cool of the day in the garden. To trust him completely, to be open and innocent before him. The best I can come up with to give it some sort of a comparison, is doing your very favorite thing with your very best friend. A friend who knows you inside and out, and amazingly still likes you anyway. A friend with whom you can share all things, and you can hear from them all things; and when the time is up -- you can't wait to do it all over again. That's what it must have been like.

To have that kind of relationship with God begins with a healthy fascination with who God is. An awe-inspiring Mystery who offers us his friendship; and we accept that offer even though it may be a daunting, challenging, and even a bit frightening; especially when that prohibition failure thing comes into play.

But God so craves connection with his human creatures that it captivates the center of his attention -- so that when the time was right, Christ came in the flesh to offer a way back to fellowship and friendship with the Creator. And so we heard what John wrote --

John writes that right from the beginning -- and in most versions that is all it says -- from the beginning -- and we don't know what the beginning is. The translation we read today made it pretty clear that they think the beginning was the beginning of time, of existence, the beginning of creation. The original language isn't so clear. Most probably would not say that it is the beginning of humanity, of Eden; although if you look at it from God's perspective, sentimentally, that that is where the whole idea of God's relationship of walking with his people started) but more likely, from John's perspective, it was from the beginning of his encounter with Jesus, when with all their senses the disciples witnessed; heard, saw, and touched Jesus. In him they witnessed God communing with them; and they testified to it so that others could experience that connection too, and in doing so, it makes their joy complete and allows them to have fellowship with each other. Therefore, ***How do we help ourselves and others connect with God? And, how do we connect with each other?*** Not easy answers in a culture where everyone is driven with busy-ness.

There is a double challenge to experiencing and helping others (including ourselves) experience the presence of God and connecting in that kind of "garden-like fellowship". .

The Double Challenge

The first challenge is that, unlike us, those people in the original garden were able

to walk and converse with God without any - *any* - barriers. The disciples and those in 1st century Jerusalem could see God in the person of Christ in personal and physical ways that we don't see today.

Some may dismiss physical presence as unimportant. An episode of *Star Trek Next Generation* explored this topic a little bit in their storyline of the ancient history of the Klingon Empire, (it is just another alien race, son't get caught up in that if you don't know anything about Star Trek). Kahless was messianic type founder of the Klingon Empire whose life shaped the cornerstone of their religion and their culture. And now he is rumored to have returned to restore the empire to its former glory.

Long story short, they found out the person was a clone, a fraud – and it was suggested that maybe the actual physical presence of Kahless is not so important as his teachings that they followed. (Star Trek Next Generation: Rightful Heir S 6 Ep 21)

Put that into the context of our faith: some argue that Jesus Christ's life and actions on earth are not as important as living out his message of truth and love. Hmmmm. I heard a lady once say, I understand love and morality and all the good things the church does in the world. But I don't understand all this stuff about sacrifice and dying and personal relationship. In other words, she saw the relevance of Christ's message, but not of Christ himself. Christianity is separated from Christ – in *this* line of thinking.

Ian Thomas wrote that detaching Christianity from Christ reduces faith to an impersonal, dead religion -- a mere intellectual exercise [a collection of doctrines] or a sentimental formula...[to get what we want]... [But] Christianity *is Christ*, and pulsates with [his] divine energy. It may or may not be sensationalistic (emotional or whatever box we may want to put it in), but it is essentially supernatural – for it is nothing less than the indwelling presence of the risen Son of God within us. If you don't have Christ, you can't do that, if all it is is his teachings. You can't separate them.

He goes on to say that our Creator always intended to be seen and heard in those that he created. That the design of humanity is that God

Challenge 1) To reveal, by containing, God's presence

would dwell in us and act through us; and that by what we do and what we say and what we become, we would be a physical, visible expression of the invisible God on this earth. So the first of this double challenge is to reveal, by containing, God's

presence. He's in us, now everyone is supposed to see that. That's the first challenge.

For people to see it, to sense it, to experience that connection with God's presence in us -- as they would in Adam and Eve and as the

Challenge 2) To walk in the light as Jesus walked in the light

disciples did; John goes on to say that because God is light and in him there is *no* darkness *at all*; and so the second challenge is – if they are going to see God in us, we 've got to walk in the light – in God's presence -- as Jesus walked in the light, and it is in doing that that we are purified from darkness and sin. It is only then that we can contain and express his presence as we were designed to do.

It is important to understand that walking in the light is not as much about the perfection of our walk as it is letting his walk shine through us – It is about him, not us. We just have to keep it from getting under a bushel or getting blown out. (as the children's song says). It is about being transparent and honest about what we are allowing God to do in and through our life. We are here to shine Jesus' light into our dark, broken world so that people can see -- God. Got to keep the mud off.

When I was young, we would go up to the UP – Brimley (Dafter, really); we stayed at my uncle's in a house by Dad had built, and then my uncle bought and added onto because he had 13 kids, so they had to have a really big house, and then there was this field, and then there was this other – house that was no longer a house. It was run down, barely standing up – you've seen them. And they converted the front part of that house into a sauna, as good Finnish people are wont to do. And so every weekend that we were up there, We all went to the Link's house, and then we took turns, first the women, and then the men; or sometimes the other way around – and we'd walk through the woods to go to the dilapidated house to have our sauna to get ready for church in the morning. The only thing was that it was dark when we went, and there was woods between the two, and it was often a fairly muddy path – in fact they had put some planks down to keep us above the worst slimy water bogs of mud. But in the dark, how do you see? Not everybody got a flashlight, maybe half of us – so it was important for those who had them to shine their lights in a way that ALL could see the way. Otherwise our feet would get muddy. Not such a big deal on the way TO the sauna, but on the way back it was because getting muddy ruins what you were trying to accomplish. We are here to shine Jesus' light so that we can ALL see and make our way on Jesus' way.

It isn't about us as the lamps, but about his light. and that is what is critical... They are all powered and automatic now, we know that because in our own parking lot we've had to change out bulbs and other parts, but they automatically come on and automatically go off when they are working the way they are supposed to. The same with streetlights, they are automatic now, they come on when it starts to get dark, and go off when it becomes light. But back probably before my time but maybe not before all of yours 😊 I don't know when the transition took place.

They had people called lamplighters. Each morning they would get up and walk the streets and put all the streetlights out. And as dusk was falling, they would walk the streets and turn every light on individually, and it wasn't flicking a switch, it was more complicated than that. I don't know what the process was.

In the deep dark dusk one night, a man was sitting on a street bench when the lamplighter passed by. He lit a lamp and moved on to the next. The man on the bench watched as he went. The lamplighter started pretty bright because the light was right above them both, but as he moved on he became an ever darkening shadow as he moved further into the distance – until finally he could not see where he was at all. But he still knew exactly where he was because he could see the string of lights as each one turned on as the lamplighter walked. The lamplighter's job was not to light himself up, to make himself be seen. The lamplighter's job was to light the street until it was a safe and a beautiful avenue for everyone else.

The important thing for us is not to make people take notice of us or our deeds, but for them to see God alive and well and reaching out to connect and re-connect with the people of this world.

None of us, in our own strength, or even in our combined strengths; can shine brilliantly enough to reveal God within. Think of it this way: if we are a flashlight, we are not the bulb (the light), we are not the battery (the power), maybe we are the casing – but especially critical in today's context -- we are that little plastic lens that is at the end of the flashlight. And the less devoted we are to God's presence within, the more scratched and cloudier and muddier and dirtier that lens gets, and less of God's light is going to get through. But the more devoted to God we are the cleaner and more open and transparent becomes the lens, and God's light shines even more brightly for people to see. Our focus is on staying clean before the bulb, and then the people see what is going on from the other side.

The critical idea is that it is God within us -- that is the source of this life we are becoming, that he is the source of his presentation of his image in which we are

created, he is the source of the inner call to comply to our vocation, our purpose, whatever it may be. He is the source what he has permitted us to possess -- our godly blessings, and the power to resist violating those prohibitions we'll talk about later. Let's pray.

Prayer Lord, we confess that the challenge of revealing you within us by walking as Jesus walks is beyond our ability. But what we can do is simply open ourselves to your presence and power and grace. As Paul puts it -- so that it is no longer I who live, but you who lives in each of us -- by our faith in you who can do all things. And it is in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.

Music Christ can do all things *in* and *through* us because God is always faithful, his love never fails. His strength and grace carries us through. Let's stand and sing about his faithfulness to us,

Forever

Give thanks to the Lord, Our God and King. His love endures forever.

For he is good, he is above all things. His love endures forever.

Sing praise, sing praise!

With a mighty hand and outstretched arm, His love endures forever.

For the life that's been reborn; His love endures forever.

Sing praise, sing praise,

sing praise, sing praise.

Forever God is faithful, forever God is strong,

forever God is with us, forever, forever.

From the rising to the setting sun, His love endures forever.

And by the grace of God we will carry on; His love endures forever.

Sing praise, sing praise! Sing praise, sing praise!

Forever God is faithful, forever God is strong, forever God is with us, forever.

Forever God is faithful, forever God is strong, forever God is with us, forever.

forever, forever.

Blessing Now allow the light of God's blessing of ever-faithful love flood your heart as you go out into his creation -- knowing the joy and fellowship of him walking with us and we walking with him in the light of his glory. Amen.

* Note: All music lyrics: CCLI # 2561297

All Scripture readings are a blend of NLT, NIV, TLB unless otherwise indicated

