

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

October 23, 2022



## **Welcome**

Welcome to the Hartland United Methodist Church service manuscript. We are happy you are reading!

## **Apostle's Creed**

**Opening Prayer** Lord, we have come to receive your mercy and blessing. Look down on us with beaming joy. We want to join people all over the world to give our offerings of thanks to you, may our gifts be used that the nations will be glad and shout for joy with thanksgiving for and in the name of Jesus Christ.

(Inspired by Psalm 67:1,3-4a,5)

## **Call to Worship**

Lay Reader: Come, you who are soaring in the heights or are finding yourself in the depths. No one could stand if God tracked our sins, but he freely forgives. Let's honor the Lord as we wait on him with worship, learning to trust in his promises of help. Come, let's put our hope in his grace, loving kindness, and unlimited salvation.

(Inspired by Psalm 130)



**Review** Previously on "Walking in Paradise", we discovered that our destiny is played out through a) the purpose of God's work, b) the freedom and provision of God's resources, c) and is accomplished within the parameters, the limitations, created out of God's compassionate wisdom. That destiny is to reveal what God is like, what humanity is supposed to be like, and for us, the closest we can experience that is to remain in a close connection with God – by living as Jesus lived. **Music** So let's move into the Garden again and through his wonderful, beautifully created world, experience joy with the Creator as we sing.

## **This is My Father's World**

1. This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears  
all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought  
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.

2. This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,  
 the morning light, the lily white, declare their maker's praise.  
 This is my Father's world: he shines in all that's fair;  
 in the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me everywhere.

3. This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget  
 that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.  
 This is my Father's world: why should my heart be sad?  
 The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!

**Theme** That last verse hints at where we are at. We strolled in the garden and we goofed up. Unfortunately, rather than to trustingly walking and talking with God, humanity preferred to skeptically talk *about* God and found their connection shamefully broken, and that put humanity outside of Paradise. What are the consequences, and how will humanity get back on the right journey? (Pause)

Many people enjoy boating, fishing, sailing, rafting, canoeing, kayaking... the list goes on and on -- on lakes, rivers, and streams. Have you ever gone out in a boat? [nearly everybody.] What kind of safety things do you have in case a storm comes up, or the ship gets a leak and sinks, or topple it over (if it is a canoe, for example), or you accidentally fall out of the boat? [Lifeboats, life jackets/vests, lifesavers.] Lifesavers. You all got one this morning. {Lift up a candy lifesaver}. I'm not sure how this is going to help ;D. They may save you from bad breath, especially the minty kind as I got you all. When they first made these candies, they had a picture of an old seaman throwing a life preserver to a young woman in the water and the slogan was "For that Stormy Breath".



Well, the Bible tells us that Jesus so loved us that he came to save us from the sin that tries to "drown our lives". So Jesus is our life saver. Acts 16:31 says, Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. **Repeat it with me...** Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

It is smart to go out on the water with some sort of real life saver with us. And it is smart to sail the sea of life with Jesus. The author to Hebrews gives us an example. If we take an oath, it is in the name someone greater than ourselves who will force us to fulfill our promise or punish us for failing. (We do that in court, don't we, we swear on the -- ? [Bible]. The Bible, yes, something greater than us). God had no one greater than himself to swear by, nevertheless he bound himself with an oath so that those he promised to help would never have to wonder

whether he would change his mind. We can completely count on both his promise and oath, for it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, all who flee to him for salvation will know without a doubt that he will save just as he promises. The author of Hebrews concludes it this way: “***This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy (a firm and secure) anchor for ourselves, connecting us with God himself***” behind the inner curtains of heaven, where Christ has entered ahead of us on our behalf. (Hebrews 6:13-20, esp. 19)

**Special Music Intro** God’s oath and promise leads us to our salvation even while we live outside Paradise in this broken world. We’ve talked about Jesus as the lifesaver, another way to withstand the storms on the sea of life is to be anchored into something solid. Different metaphor, same meaning. Jesus comes with power to save us and as we sail upon the sea of life, as we live each day, we will know that Jesus is with us, and we can hang on to him as he stills the water and brings peace to our troubles.



## Special Music

### I’ve Anchored in Jesus

1. Upon life's boundless ocean where mighty billows roll,  
I've fixed my hope in Jesus, blest anchor of my soul;  
When trials fierce assail me as storms are gath'ring o'er,  
I rest upon His mercy and trust Him more.

#### Refrain

I've anchored in Jesus, The storms of life I'll brave,  
I've anchored in Jesus, I fear no wind or wave,  
I've anchored in Jesus for he hath pow'r to save,  
I've anchored in the Rock of Ages.

2. He keeps my soul from evil and gives me blessed peace,  
His voice hath stilled the waters and bid their tumult cease;  
My Pilot and Deliv'rer, to Him I all confide,  
For always when I need Him, He's at my side.

#### Refrain

3. He is my Friend and Savior, in him my anchor's cast.  
 He drives away my sorrows and shields me from the blast;  
 By faith I'm looking upward beyond life's troubled sea,  
 There I behold a haven prepared for me.  
 Refrain

### Intro to Responsive Bible Reading

Lay Reader: So hear the story of a man who was certainly experiencing a stormy life, and needed an anchor of stability to come by his side and lift him up. Jesus entered Jerusalem for a festival and went by a pool that was surrounded by many sick and disabled people. They were there because there was a legend that when the waters stirred, the first one to enter the pool would be healed. One man lying there had been sick for 38 years.

(Summary of John 5:1-5)



### Bible Reading (LR: Lay Reader, PC: Pastor with Congregation)

LR: Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been sick for a very long time.  
 So he asked him,

**PC: “Do you want to be well?”**

LR: “I can’t. for there is no one to help me get into the pool when the water starts moving. While I am trying to get there, someone else always goes in before I can.”

**PC: “Stand up! Roll up your sleeping mat and walk.”**

LR: Immediately the man was healed.

**PC: He rolled up his mat and started walking.** (John 5:6-9, ERV, CJB, TLB)

### Theme (continued)

Did you notice the question that Jesus asks the man? [Yes} Do you really want to be healed? Do you really want to be different? Jesus knew that he had been in his condition for a very long time – a habitual pattern of life – does he *really* want to change? Stand-up comedian Josh Blue has cerebral palsy, around which much of his humor revolves. He told of a time when someone noticed he had one of those copper bracelets on his wrist and they asked him if it was a healing bracelet... I’ll skip his instant joke response and go to the one relevant for us: he joked that he better be careful he doesn’t heal too much, or he’ll mess up his gig.

New patterns of life can be hard to accomplish and with unknown results, so some people may well be reluctant to try -- even if the old, entrenched pattern is a miserable pattern.

**Music** But for those who choose to seek a new pattern of life designed by God and put their hope in the Lord will renew their strength and soar on wings like eagles, just as God lifted up his people from the slavery of Egypt and brought them to himself on eagle's wings, (See Isaiah 40:31, Exodus 19:4) and he will do the same for us – let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing

### **On Eagle's Wings**

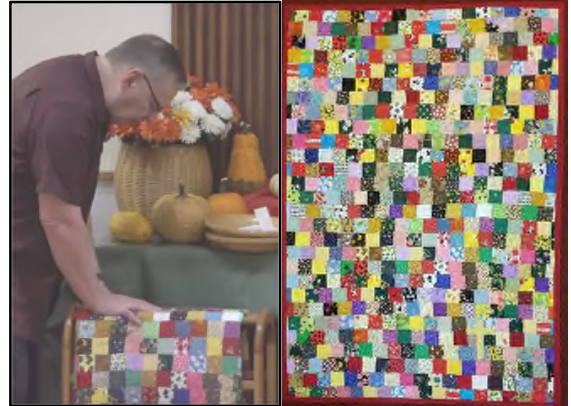
Words and Music: Michael Joncas, 1979  
harm. by Carlton R. Young, 1988  
(with alternate pronoun (us for you))

And God will lift us up on eagle's wings,  
bear us on the breath of dawn, make us to shine like the sun,  
and hold us in the palm of God's hands.

(Repeat)

**Pastor's Prayer** Almighty Lord, from beginning to end, we are built to rest in your embrace, You are a wonderful God, we are awed when we are truly aware of you. You embrace us into new life, yet so often we fail to even recognize your presence. Nevertheless, you insist, as much as we allow, on traveling with us each of our days. Sometimes you come in what feels like an unavoidable shout. More often, a quiet whisper, or even that silent nudge in our gut. You heal our spiritual aches and pains and give us visions of soaring like eagles. Like a long-time friend, you know us, so we bring to you our whole life, our joy and our grief, our patience (or impatience) and our worry, our dreams and our despair. **Praises and Petitions** Today especially we pray for – Jan Martin's brother's friend Everett Ramsy who has cancer, \* and her friend Don McDonald who has had a stroke, \* we pray for Jo Campbell who is having some heart issues and is in the hospital, but hopefully coming home today, \* and also for Fran Warthman, who is going through some undetermined issues as well. \* We continue to pray for Beckie Wren and she continues to recover,\* for Joyce's sister in law Lynne, \* for young Brantley Call, for Karen Tabaka's friend, Denise, with cancer, and for Jan Martin's neighbor, Charlie Meyer, who has been in a battle with cancer for a while now, and for whom we now dedicate this quilt, which was made from material that he donated to our prayers

and squares quilting ministry. **Quilt** God of love and comfort, we do celebrate the quilting ministry of Hartland UMC, for it gives us the opportunity – out of love and concern for others - to share a tangible gift with those in need, for while we know that you are always present in our lives and that your love transcends all tragedy, illness and pain, we also know that sometimes a physical reminder can bring hope, peace, and even healing. We pray that this quilt will bring comfort to Charlie Meyer, whom we lift before you today.



We ask that through this quilt, he may find new energy for his faith. May he sense the love and assurance offered by this congregation and especially by you. As he wraps this quilt around him, give him the confidence that no matter what we face, the promise of your presence in his life is real. Give him strength when he feels weak and your understanding when he falters. May he sense in each new day an abundance of possibilities. We pray this blessing in the name of the one who celebrates with us all our joys, and endures with us all of our sorrows.

Now in your compassionate care, continue to patiently and persistently help all of us follow the call that you have placed on our lives. Guide us from within and shape us toward what we are becoming in you, living as you teach us to pray. **Lord's Prayer**

### **Intro to Bible Reading**

Lay Reader: The healing by the pool happened on the Sabbath. Jewish leaders saw the man walking with his mat and said, "It is not lawful for you to work by carrying your mat on Shabbat!" The man replied, "The person who healed me told me to." They asked, "Who told you such a thing?" The man did not know and could not point him out because Jesus had disappeared into the crowd. But he found out later and identified Jesus to his questioners, and so they started harassing Jesus because he was a Sabbath breaker. Jesus replied that his Father never stops doing good and he was following his example. This made them want to kill him all the more – not only for breaking Sabbath laws, for claiming what for them was an inappropriately equal connection with God. (Summary of John 5:9-18), Therefore, Jesus said this about himself to them:

**Bible Reading** “I assure you that the Son can do nothing on his own. He does only what he sees his Father doing, and in the same way. The Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does. This [paralyzed man who lay by the pool] was healed. But the Father will show the Son greater things than this to do. Then you will all be amazed. The Father raises the dead and gives them life. In the same way, the Son gives life to those he wants to....

“I say emphatically that anyone who listens to my message and believes in God who sent me has eternal life... They have already crossed over from death and have entered into life... Life comes from the Father himself, and has granted his Son to give life. And the Father has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

“I can do nothing alone. I judge as I am told. And my judgment is absolutely fair and just, for it is according to the will of God who sent me. I don’t seek my own desire. I want only to please the one who sent me.” (John 5:19-21,24,26-27,30)

**Music** One point this story makes clear is that because of Jesus’ relationship with his heavenly Father, those seeking to reconnect with God will find that Jesus comes, calls, strengthening, healing, and leading us home. Before the next reading and sermon and sing...

### **You Are Mine**

Words and Music: David Haas © 1991 GIA Publications

1. I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fear  
You will hear My voice, I claim you as My choice, Be still, and know I am here.---

2. I am hope for all who are hopeless, I am eyes for all who long to see.  
In the shadows of the night, I will be your light, come and rest in me---

Refrain

Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you each by name.  
Come and follow me, I will bring you home; I love you and you are mine.

3. I am strength for all the despairing, healing for the ones who dwell in shame.  
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free, and all will know my name---

Refrain

4. I am the Word that leads all to freedom, I am the peace the world cannot give.  
I will call your name, embracing all your pain, stand up, now walk, and live---!

Refrain

## Intro to Bible Reading

Pastor: He is reaching to us, but we have to ask the question again – Do we really want to reconnect with God? We ask because not only did Jesus feel the need to ask the man if he really wanted to be restored, we see religious leaders threatened by the possibilities of a close connection with God, especially as it was seen in Jesus. And if you were here last week, and we mentioned earlier in this service too, you know that humanity, including each one of us began in an innocent and close relationship with God but chose to give it up. We'll talk about that in a minute, but first hear the highlights of the results of that choice.

Lay Reader: In the Garden of Eden, the man and woman had eaten the forbidden fruit, heard the Lord coming, and hid among the trees, and God calls him out. And now the man replies,

### **Bible Reading (Dialogue) (P-Pastor, L – Lay Reader)**

P: "I heard you coming, and I was afraid because I didn't want you to see me naked, so I hid."

L: "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree I warned you about?"

P: "It was the woman you gave to be with me – she gave me some and I ate it."

L: Then the Lord asked the woman, "How could you do such a thing?"

P: "The serpent tricked me, so I ate."

L: So the Lord said to the serpent, "This is your punishment: ... you and the woman will be enemies, as will your offspring and hers. You will strike his heel, but he will crush your head." To the woman he said, "You will bring forth children in pain. Your desire will be for your husband's affection, but he will rule over you." And to the man, "You will now have to struggle to extract a living from the land until you return to it -- for I used the dust to make you, and to the dust you will return."

P: Then Adam named his wife Eve (life) because she was the mother of all the living.

L: Then God used animal skins to clothe them. And now knowing good and evil, to prevent them eating from the Tree of Life and living forever, God banished them from the garden and placed powerful angels with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life.



## Sermon Walking in Paradise: Rediscovered

With God – Jesus sees and does what God does; such as bringing hope and healing, such as being given life after death, and granting eternal life now to anyone who believes. The Father is the source of life, and the Son also gives life. And the Son does only what the Father wants -- because Paradise is being with and pleasing the Creator who always desires to be with us and continues to gift us with the joy of his work, equipped with his powerful resources to do it, and to do it within his wise, compassionate limits. Apart from this, apart from God, Jesus says, he can do nothing, so logically, if Jesus Christ himself can't do anything without him, where does that leave us? We can't do anything either.

**Paradise is:**  
**with God, having**  
**1) Purposeful Work**  
**2) Powerful Provision**  
**3) Loving Limitations**

Ideally, when we are at one in a deep mutual relationship, we can hear and say and ask anything and it will be received and given in the loving compassion that comes with that kind of trusting intimacy. Right? [Yes.] And yet, as we left our story last week, humanity had just violated God's loving limitations, and when the love connection breaks down, it changes everything. They have crudely clothed and hidden themselves. God asks questions, "Where are you, how did you lose you innocence? What did you do? We've all done that as parents, haven't we? And our goal is not to destroy our children, is it? But rather to bring them back. God knows the answers to all these questions, but by asking, it forces us to face what is happening in our lives so it can be deal with it properly.

For at this point in our story our connection with God is severed like the extension cord on my bush trimmer is after almost every use – the only thing holding the plug on the cord is one side of the rubber casing that usually wraps around and protects the wires. We are severed, under cover, cowering humans. Therefore, we receive caring questions – but we *hear* them as children often hear parents most often in those situations -- not as the gentle probing, "come back, let's get this worked out." But as threatening, as probing – more than they want to be proved, and overly personal. They don't *feel* God's concern, they *feel* they are under the trial of a prosecutor's cross examination, and they become defensive. This is what failing others – in this case, God – does to us.

**From Failure Follows (FFF): (1) Fear of God** The conversation is revealing. The first thing Adam says is, "I was afraid". And for the first time, unhealthy fear and anxiety has entered the picture. It is a fear of God -- but it is not the fear of God

that is the beginning of wisdom. It is not the Old English word “fear” than means a healthy, loving awesome respect for the Creator commands by his position in the Universe.

No, this is the paralyzing fear that is rooted in our awareness that we are designed to thrive by the life of God within; but instead we have thrown ourselves away from God and are floundering in a world that is beyond our ability to control, flopping about like a fish out of water, flailing without purpose, or resources or the boundaries that give us life.

This is the fear the causes most Bible conversations with God or his angelic messengers to begin with the phrase “Don’t be afraid”. It is one of the most common phrases in the Bible. Because we sense in ourselves a terror of his presence that makes us want to hide under the covers (because we are not in Paradise anymore). He has to calm us down before we can hear him. No wonder people like to talk *about* God more than with him. No wonder people like to talk to him more than listen to him.

**FFF: Fear of Others** From failure also follows a fear of others. That broken relationship that leads us to be afraid of God easily bleeds into our human-to-human relationships as well. Even Adam and Eve started right off by switching to blame – and that is not something that “puts you together”, is it? [No] Abraham and Isaac both, on separate occasions, while traveling in a foreign land, were filled with fearful assumptions about what might be done to them by people they assumed to be godless. They lied, thinking it would preserve their life. Instead, it muddied the waters and built even stronger barriers of mistrust with others -- and as a result, nearly brought disaster on everyone. (See Genesis 20:1-11, 26:6-11)



**FFF: Inordinate Self Focus and Defense of Self** From failure also follows an inordinate focus and defense of the self, just like our children often respond when we get after them. This is what happens when we worry more about ourselves than about what God has called us to be and to do and to not do. The answers to God’s questions in the garden indicate this change of focus.

“I heard (you coming)... I was afraid... I was naked... I hid... I ate...” You get the pattern? I... I... I... It is all about me now. The focus on God and his three life-giving gifts is replaced by a life that revolves around how everything impacts – me,

and only me. Humanity has elevated self to king of the Universe. King Self has taken over. King Self can do no wrong and so we defend that king - that self - by excusing and rationalizing and blaming others and blaming God (he didn't only blame Eve, he blamed God for giving him Eve), for any and every failure that King Self has committed. It is always somebody else that has done it to them. So, the man blames the woman and God who put her with him, and the woman blames the serpent.

**FFF: "Knowledge" which turns the 3 gifts upside down** From failure follows also a "*knowledge*" which turns the three gifts upside down. Humanity does not man up and woman up to their failure and denies the reality of the situation and fantasizes that they actually do have an elevated god-like knowledge that the serpent had promised them; a knowledge that will give them the power and resources and control that they need for a different true life that is apart from God – that was the deception that they fell for. Let me make it clear, we are not talking about the pursuit of learning in informal or formal education, or in any other ways. We are talking about a kind of knowledge that pridefully puffs ourselves up against God and at the expense of others, and it turns the 3 gifts of vocation/purpose, of permission/provision, and of prohibition upside down.

It is when in our "new knowledge" -- we fool ourselves into thinking that it is just as good or even better to have God bless our agenda rather than for us to find our purpose in his work that he has given us.

It is when in our "new knowledge" -- we delude ourselves into thinking it is better to not trust God's provision to accomplish great works, but to use our own knowledge of good – and evil especially – to manipulate others and events to gain our own provision and if possible, to hoard to ourselves the provision meant for others too.

It is when in our "knowledge" -- we imagine the boundaries of paradise as unnecessary restrictions and that the self can easily ignore them without facing any consequences for that neglect.

Let's illustrate this upside-down knowledge at work. King David was appointed and anointed to fulfill God's purpose of protecting and leading God's people. That is gift one (he has a purpose). God provided him with all the personal skills, all the personnel, and all the other resources to make God's people prosper. That is gift two (he has the resources). And God gave him the boundaries – boundaries that David said revived the soul, gave joy to the heart, light to the eyes, were altogether righteous, more valuable than gold and sweeter than honey from the comb, and in

following them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:7ff) That is gift number three. He had it all.

In 2 Samuel 11, King David, with all those gifts, is on the palace roof one night overlooking that great holy city. He looks down, and he sees someone else's wife innocently bathing on the rooftop. Something clicked within his mind -- via the Genesis story, it was taking a bite of the forbidden fruit -- he thought he knew better than God did, and selfishness took over. He forgot all about God's purpose and provision and prohibitions; and he used his knowledge to manipulate circumstances to create a world according to king self.

Suddenly, it was okay to exchange the purpose of protecting the dignity and welfare of his people into his own purpose of bringing to himself this particular woman who belonged to another. It was okay to take this human being who was called to be a major resource and benefit to her family and rip her away to make her little more than one more greedily hoarded possession of the king. Suddenly, all those valuable, sweet, life-giving boundaries -- Do not lust, do not commit adultery, do not covet (want something/someone that doesn't belong to you), Do not murder -- were excused and rationalized and he got her pregnant. He tried to cover it up by bringing her soldier husband home from the war. But that didn't work because he refused, when his friends were at war, to be home with his wife, so he stayed outside of his house. So when that didn't work, David gave orders to relocate him to the fierce battle front, and then have his fellow soldiers withdraw to leave him there to die alone. This military action left not only the husband but several other soldiers dead. When David received the report, he wrote back to the commander at the front lines to not worry about the losses but to keep pressing forward because he needed to - he didn't say this in the letter, but he needed to keep covering up what he had done.

**FFF: Loss of Compassion** And so from failure also follows a lack of compassion. You need to understand that these written orders were not characteristic of King David. When David was got it right as being God's king for God's people, he mourned deeply even over the deaths of spirited rivals like King Saul and Saul's military commander Abner who was trying to chase David down to kill him. This is another tragic side effect of rationalizing, excusing and blaming to protect king self. We forget how to care about anyone but ourselves, and become experts in covering up and hiding the dubious actions that the self makes. David thought he got what he wanted, and then he thought he got away with it -- but God was

displeased with the thing he had done and sent Nathan the prophet to get him back on track. Did you hear that? He sent Nathan the prophet *to get him back on track!* Today, or at least a couple decades ago, we'd probably be calling for judgment and impeachment and everything else. But this is an utterly amazing God who can't seem to stop surprising us with his unstoppable grace. He asks questions in the garden to draw us out, he sends prophets to correct our course, and ultimately Jesus to draw us back to him -- even as we endure the consequences of our errant actions.

**FFF: Anxiety** From failure also follows anxiety. So, this is what Paradise teaches us: Unhealthy anxiety comes because humanity has tried to get around the reality of God's purposeful calling on our life. Stress comes because we try to find relief from our anxiety through possessions, through appearance, through rebellion, through actions good or bad, or through a multitude of other strategies that are completely separated from the reality of God and trusting in his provision. We are worried because we try to feel free by violating the normal boundaries of life; but instead, it only leaves us vulnerable and unprotected. And anxiety reigns because we can't own up to the fact that without God -- or maybe it is that we realize that we are without God - and without God, it is all vanity -- a chasing after the wind. (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

So, humanity felt like it was in court -- questioned by God. Now the sentence is given. The consequences of choosing to live disconnected from God are harsh -- but it is not instant death as we thought it might have been. This is an utterly amazing God who can't seem to stop surprising us with his unstoppable grace. Yes, there will be an ongoing fight between good and evil. Bringing children into this world will be painful because those we love are born only to grow up in a harsh broken world, and relationships with partners became competitive and are thrown out of the balance of true partnerships as they were intended to be. Work becomes burdensome because we refused God's ample provision only to struggle for a never-ending "little bit more". And with the sentencing, the natural consequences of our own decision pronounced, you know what God did then?

He graciously did what we needed in our new situation. He crafted garments and clothed them, and sent them out of Paradise, lest they live forever in this broken world -- which my Old Testament professor said was "an act of grace" because no one could stand to live forever in a broken world. Too much to bear.

Paradise is not about a physical place -- it is about God who continues to adjust and reach out and accommodate to our situation so that he can pull us back into a trusting relationship with him. It is about how honoring his boundaries, depending on his provision, and following his call is --- life as it is meant to be. This is why Jesus said to stop being anxious but to rely on his provision by putting his kingdom – his call and his guidelines, as most important in our lives (Matthew 6:25-33).

Major Ian Thomas says humanity can only function properly when -- in our intimate love for him, we allow him to teach the mind, control the emotions and direct the will. It is only in total dependence and un-questioning obedience that allows God to be God-in-action within us; fulfilling his work in his world and restoring us into his image so that others see him through us.

Hear Jesus again: We cannot be godly without God. If we are with God, we do only what we see God doing, and *everything* we do is to please him. Without him, we can do nothing. We are totally dependent upon God's grace within our lives. There is no Christian without Christ -- There is no Paradise without connecting with the Creator. We no longer need to stubbornly defend and stick to our failures, which leads to terror of God and fear of others, and inflated view and defense of self, of false kind of knowledge that turns God's gifts upside down, forfeits compassion and increases anxiety... but we can move beyond all this -- by owning up to our mistakes, and returning to our connection with God.

God, in his compassionate grace, accommodated and adjusted to love us in this new dysfunctional reality we have created outside of paradise. We can't live in ivory towers. We can't pretend it didn't happen. We can't live in denial of the consequences. We can't pretend that before Christ returns that we can return to Eden in this present world. We must recognize the reality that we will always be living in the consequences of a broken, disconnected world. All the more, then, do we need God's guiding grace to understand how to best represent him – to “knit the garments that can clothe us and others together in mutual love -- in as much wholeness and holiness as we can possibly gain when we are outside of Eden, living in the realities of our world. Let's pray.

**Prayer** Lord, that was a mouthful that was said pretty quick. Help us to hear what we need to hear, and live it out. You made it clear that we cannot rediscover Eden as a physical place, but we can rediscover our relationship with you, your purpose for us, your provision for that purpose, and your guidance as we move out to show your life. Lord, we began by asking what were our consequences and how we can

get back on the right journey. One clue you teach us is that when our connection is broken, when we are weak and when we are worn, the everlasting, untiring God is willing to defend, comfort, and lift us up on wings like eagles, and of course another is that we need to take time to be holy – to separate ourselves from our own agenda, and begin to be with – *with* -- and talk *with* you again, and return to your purpose, your provision, and to stay within your limits – your command to do what is the loving thing to do in the name of Jesus, we pray this. Amen.

**Music** So, let's stand and sing about our need and desire to make that connection to God and his mission for us.

### **Take Time to be Holy**

1. Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;  
abide in him always, and feed on his word.

Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,  
forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.

2. Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.

By looking to Jesus, like him thou shalt be;  
thy friends in thy conduct his likeness shall see.

4. Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,  
each thought and each motive beneath his control.

Thus led by his spirit to fountains of love,  
thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

**Blessing** Now as we move out into this world to face our daily tasks, may the seeds of Paradise blossom in love and caring action for God and for all, so that all who are living – with praise and thanksgiving – will give honor to Christ for it is his name that live. Amen.

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Some ideas in this sermon were gleaned from

~ *Genesis*, by Walter Brueggemann.

~ *The Indwelling Life of Christ: All of Him in All of Me*, by Major W. Ian Thomas.

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