

Straight from the "Hart"

February 12, 2023



Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve

Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the 'Hart'". We are glad you are participating in today's time of worship by reading this service script.

Affirmation

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



P: This is the Good News that we have accepted, and in which we stand, and if we remain faithful, is our salvation. This is most important:

C: Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised to life on the third day.

P: He appeared first to the women, then to Peter and the disciples, and then to many faithful witnesses.

C: We believe in Jesus Christ. He is the visible expression of the invisible God.

P: He existed before creation. Through him all things were made, maintained, and held together.

C: He is the head of the church, the head of life, the head of life from death. He is Lord of all.

P: God was pleased for his full nature live in Christ.

C: By virtue of the blood of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, God reconciles, (makes peace), with all things on heaven and earth.

Based on 1 Corinthians 15:1-6, Colossians 1:15-20 (ICB, PHILLIPS, UM Hymnal # 888)

Opening Prayer

Father, personal and community struggles envelop people around the world. Multiply these gifts for ministries that empower people to sustain their trust in you and your promises. We have gathered to receive your grace that constantly flows to us. Now accept our worship as we unite through songs and prayers and Bible as a sign of our desire to do well in your name. Unify us around our trust in your saving power. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Call to Worship

Lay Reader: Each of us has unique challenges and obstacles, burdens and brokenness. Come to receive God's healing touch, knowing that our compassionate God freely offers abundant grace for our lives. As we worship, let's open our hearts that we might be renewed, restored, and reenergized for joyful service -- to each other and the world -- and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Music We heard in the affirmation that through Jesus we have creation, life, and the possibility of a return to peace with God. Let's give him his due and celebrate the victory that he has won for us.



Crown Him with Many Crowns

Words: Matthew Bridges, 1857, and Godfrey Thring, 1874

Music: George J. Elvey, 1868

1. Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne,
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.
2. Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing, who died, and rose on high,
who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.
4. Crown him the Lord of love; behold his hands and side,
those wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.

Theme

Two days before Valentine's Day, we are reminded of God's love for us, and the love he wants us to have for him and for each other -- but how do we express it? There are a variety of ways: words are one way, gifts are another, time spent is another, acts of service is another -- of course, we learned last week that many things can be said or given, or done -- without love and it makes them empty. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't bother to take the time to say the words or give the gifts or do the helpful actions. Someone wrote a poem that tries to express that while words and intentions may be important, in this case, actions are what speaks

loudest....

Which Loved Best?

“I love you, mother,” said little John;
then, for getting his work, his cap went on,
and he was off to the garden swing,
and left her the water and wood to bring.

“I love you, mother,” said rosy Nell ---
“I love you better than tongue can tell”;
then she teased and pouted for half the day,
till her mother rejoiced when she went to play.

“I love you, mother,” said little Fan;
“today I'll help you all I can;
how glad I am that school doesn't keep!”
so she rocked the babe till it fell asleep.

Then, stepping softly, she fetched the broom,
and swept the floor and tidied the room;

Busy and happy all day was she,
helpful and happiest child could be.

“I love you, mother,” again they said,
three little children going to bed;
how do you think that mother guessed
which of them really loved her best?

“Which Loved Best?”

by Joy Allison in *The Book of Virtues*
ed with commentary by William J Bennett

The topic today isn't really who loves the most, but that if all love well, *as each is able to contribute*; it increases the success of the family or the group. If all the children on that day had loved in action, it would have created even more harmony in the home, and one child -- though doing it happily this day -- if it was a continual pattern day after day, I'm not sure what feelings might have started to brew in that child toward her siblings... or even just plain become overwhelmed and burned out because she was doing tasks that were meant to be shared among the group...

In the basketball world -- you may old enough to remember Michael Jordan? (silly question to ask here 😊) -- who alone began to carry the Chicago Bulls to several respectable seasons, but it wasn't until the coaches, the other starters, and the bench became meaningfully involved in the game that they were able to elevate to championships.

In football a long time ago, two commentators of a perpetually bad football team

wondered why several players who had played poorly for their team were now excelling as starts on different teams, better teams. People asked them why. The essence of the answer was very consistent. The weak teams spend most of their time blaming the offense, blaming the defense, blaming the special teams and/or blaming the coaches that failed them that week, and how *those* people had to improve. But on the teams that excelled, from the top management to the equipment workers and ticket salespeople: It was never about who let down, but how they could all step up and work together and support each other to become a better, more successful organizations.

Paul tells us how the actions of Jesus not only carried humanity on his shoulders, it made possible the ability of humanity to unite together and elevate their level of living as well.

Intro to and Responsive Reading (P – Pastor, C – Congregation with Lay Reader)

Lay Reader: We heard in the affirmation that through Jesus creation, life, and a return to peace with God are possible. Now we hear what Paul writes what this means as a practical application to our lives.

PC: When Jesus died, he died to break the power of sin; and now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. You have been initiated into Jesus.

LC: We consider ourselves dead to sin's power and influence -- and alive to God through Jesus.

PC: Do not let sin control the way you live so that you won't become obedient to its destructive desires.

LC: We offer ourselves completely to God, for we were dead in sin but now we have new life.

PC: Use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for goodness in this world and for the glory of God.

LC: Sin is no longer our master... we live under the freedom of God's grace.

PC: Your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit -- who is given by God to dwell within you. You are not your own, your freedom was bought at a great price –

LC: In view of God's mercies, we will honor God with our bodies – offering them as living, sacred sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, for this is the way we truly worship him.

PC: As you do, do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought, thinking you are better than you really are.

LC: We will not allow the world to conform us into its [self-seeking] image and patterns.

PC: Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves according to the faith God has given to each of you. Let God transform you from the inside out, into new persons, by the renewing of your minds.

LC: Then we will learn to discern what is, for us, God's good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Romans 6:10-14, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Romans 12:1-3 (NIV, VOICE, NLT)

Music We live in a way that Jesus can work through us and continue his mission in our world – and we are amazed at how we see him work in and through us and in people all around us...

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, Music: Carl G. Glaser; arr. by Lowell Mason, 1839

1. O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!
2. My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of thy name.
3. Jesus! the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life, and health, and peace.
4. He breaks the power of canceled sin, he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean; his blood availed for me.
5. He speaks, and listening to his voice, new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.

Music When we look at the life of Jesus and know that as his people we are called to continue his work, it can be a bit intimidating when we realize how wonderfully he fulfilled his mission and how challenging it is to live out the task. We must confess that at times that our human efforts don't live up to what we would hope they would be. So let's sing this short song of confession and plea for help as we prepare our hearts for prayer...

Dear Jesus, in Whose Life I See

Words: John Hunter 1889

Music: Katholisches Gesangbuch; 1774 adapt. from Metrical Psalter 1855

1. Dear Jesus, in whose life I see all that I would, but fail to be,
let thy clear light forever shine, to shame and guide this life of mine.

2. Though what I dream and what I do in my weak days are always two,
 help me, oppressed by things undone,
 O thou whose deeds and dreams were one!

Pastor's Prayer

Let's pray. Lord, even if our circumstances sometimes make us feel dry and isolated, you nourish us with your presence in our prayers by your sustaining love and grace. Allow us to let go of the stresses of each day and find the safety of your peace each night. Search our hearts. Release us from what the burden of disease and the power of evil, and what it attempts to do to us. Continue to guide us in your truth, that we may find the blessing of new life through the power of Christ. May we even now sense the reassurance of your presence as you hear our hearts casting our joys and cares on you. **Praises and Petitions** * Pat Schleh's sister-in-law Marianne is recovering from hip replacement surgery last Thursday, * Vivian Lemon says thank you for the prayers – Gar's eye infection is healing slowly, and nephew Andy (58) died Saturday (11th), * we pray for those impacted by the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria and the UM Committee on Relief as they work to bring your healing touch there, * We continue to pray for Jeff Gordonier's brother Jay, * Cheri Holt's daughter-in-law's family as they mourn her aunt, * for 5 year old Brantley Call, * for travelers, * for Jan Martin's brother Reese, * for Karen's cousin Jenny, * for all those who were named in the past but not today, or who have never been named but are on our hearts and minds who are recovering from illness or injury or facing other types of challenges in their lives. We pause to lift these up to you as well. [Pause]

Lord, we know you listen when we call. You speak to us in so many ways. May we listen when you call. Fill us with the joy of your abundance that you may light up with joy over us -- as we learn more and more how to listen, how to respond, and how to live in love, just as you taught us to pray **LORD's PRAYER**

Intro to and Bible Reading

Lay Reader: It has been God's strategy from the beginning. Even Moses was told to do it. Leaders and officials, men, children and women, natives and foreigners and servants -- all pulled together into one assembly as one people to enter into one covenant with the one God. Paul also talks to us about how it is God's plan to bless and gift people differently in order for them to come together under Christ to serve his mission. He writes



I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling God has graciously extended to you. Be humble. Be gentle. Be patient. Make allowance for each other's faults in an atmosphere of love. Make every effort to preserve the unity the Spirit has already created through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to pursue one glorious hope. There is one Lord, one living faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. This God has given to each of us grace, a special gift, through the generosity of Christ as he apportioned it.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are many different ways to serve, but they are all directed by the same Lord that we serve. God works in different ways, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work who energizes them all. Each believer has received a spiritual gift that is given for the good of the whole community, so that we can help each other... It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all of these gifts individually as he sees fit. Just as the human body is one whole made up of many different parts, so it is with the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:1b-7, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11-12 (NLT, NIV, VOICE)

Music – The reading reminds us once again that we come in a vast array of personalities, skills and roles, but we are still united under the one Lord.

Many Gifts, One Spirit

Words: Al Carmines, 1973 Music: Al Carmines, 1973 © 1974 Al Carmines

1. God of change and glory, God of time and space,
When we fear the future, give to us your grace.
In the midst of changing ways give us still the grace to praise.

Refrain

Many gifts, one Spirit, one love known in many ways.
In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise
one Giver, one Lord, one Spirit, one Word
known in many ways, hallowing our days.
For the Giver, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!

2. God of many colors, God of many signs,
you have made us different, blessing many kinds.
As the old ways disappear, let your love cast out our fear.

Refrain

3. Freshness of the morning, newness of each night,
you are still creating endless love and light.

This we see, as shadows part, many gifts from one great heart.

Refrain

Sermon Adding to the Whole

It is an easy concept to understand – in our heads. That unique abilities lead to unique ways of thinking and speaking and serving, but it is the same unifying Spirit of God who puts all these varieties together and places them just as he wishes, and it was the plan that all these differences to make us stronger and broader and better. In fact, in the days of Jesus and shortly after, one of the miraculous signs validating the legitimacy of the church (at least it was supposed to be) was that how people that were so vastly different – even in their faith backgrounds -- Paul mentions here as examples: Jew, Gentile, slave, free, and elsewhere he adds other varieties -- male and female, barbarian, Scythian, circumcised or uncircumcised) (See Colossians 3:11, Galatians 3:28) all these different backgrounds, different (current) stations in life, different genetics and personalities and gifts and abilities could unite under the banner of God's love in Christ who is all and is in all. And the fact that they could do that with those kinds of differences was a sign that God was truly at work among them.

Of course, from the earliest days, we discover it didn't come automatically which is why Paul has to write it to several of the churches. For what we know in our heads doesn't play out in our living, and sometimes, some of us, at different times in our life, might find it difficult to accept, much less embrace people who don't have the same feathers flocking together as our feathers.

I don't know if you ever have scrolled through videos, I do it on Facebook once in a while, I try to catch up on family and friends and these videos keep popping up and I'll watch some of them once in a while – they can become kind of addictive... sometimes they are the initial video, sometimes they are videos of people reacting to those videos or various chats or tweets or comments on social media -- but on many of the platforms, at least from what I have been seeing, it seems many people in our culture are going out of their way to capture our differences that we have, and mock and degrade those who are different than them -- some adding commentary, sound effects, or editing videos to exaggerate the alleged peculiarity or offense, thus strengthening the ridicule. Sometimes some used these technical techniques to create an impression of someone or some situation that is blown way out of proportion or not even true. Why do they do it? Usually, it is to get people

to click on their particular video and get them to “like” them, or feel supportive of them and get good comments and increase their personal popularity at the expense of people who are, in my opinion, very often innocent bystanders in their game-playing tactics. Some people are now starting to see through this and push back at those deceiving attention-seekers.

If you’ve been here or heard our services over the past few weeks, beginning with Terri’s sermon; you know that the people of Corinth, while obviously not as able to use the safety cushion of a technology buffer (a buffer that makes it easy for people to jump to conclusions — I’m just amazed at how fast people can make up their minds about what is in somebody else’s mind as they see a 30 second clip of something, and say *anything* that they’d probably never think of doing in someone’s face. --- But they had their ways back then as well. Face to face or behind backs, or through letters, they fell into this same unfortunate pattern. They knew from Paul what was supposed to happen, but instead they used their differences and unique backgrounds, and talents, and giftings as fodder for selfish one-upmanship – often created by the attempt of “everyone else-downmanship” (the way you get up is by pushing everyone else down) – the exact opposite of what variety is meant to be and do, especially in the church.

Today we look at Paul’s attempts to deal with their divisions. First, he speaks to

To those who say, “I am not needed”

those who feel – or were made to feel – that they were not important or needed. I can’t improve on his imagery of the human body as a metaphor for the body of Christ. We all make up different parts – and just because there are parts we don’t usually think about unless we somehow hurt it. I don’t ever think about my big toe – unless I happen to hit it on something – then I think about it a lot! But we don’t think about it and they get overlooked but they are still important to the function of the body. Paul’s example includes: If the ear says, “I am not an eye, so I don’t belong to the body” – it is still there, listening! It is still a part. What would the body be if it were all an eye? How could it hear?” or smell? But God has placed all the parts just where he wanted them to be. (See 1 Corinthians 12:15-18)

Rabbi David Wolpe explains how we fit into our body, the body of Christ, by looking at the first two questions of the Bible: The first question is God’s question of Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) a question he says must always be before us ... It is [not as much] a question of location [as] a question of where we are spiritually, where are we with our relationship with God. If we are a part of

God's people, we should always be aware of our connection with him for he is the one who calls us to participate in his family [and places us where he wants us to be]... so we need to be connected to him.

The second question nails this down. God asks of Cain, "Where is your brother?" (Genesis 4:9) If we want to be right with God (question one), then we also need to know how significant and important God believes is our impact on others. He's calling us out to be responsible, accountable, for how we treat others because of that potential influence we may have on them. We need to be intentional about offering care and support to others so that we can build a better world wherever we are, rather than tearing it down so we can look better in our own eyes. All are important, and each of us needs to creatively dream how God is calling and placing us to use our gifts and talents to make opportunities and fill roles that can make our community a better place.

For those who feel they have nothing of importance to offer, who think they don't belong, or aren't worthy to be added, or feel like others might think that way about them, Paul does not say that these people are also welcome, he does not say that they are important; he says that they are absolutely indispensable to the function of the body of Christ, and as a part of the group, together with others they are God's important gift and blessing to the world. (1 Cor 12:20-24) That means every one of us.

Then Paul turns his attention to those who take it too far -- thinking

To those who say, "You are not needed"

they alone were "God's gift to the world" in that worst sense of the phrase. Full of themselves and thinking they need no one else. Paul says "the eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you. The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." And then he talks about how who we might think is weak are indispensable and those we might think are less important is given special honor...everything kind of balances out.

A reporter asked conductor Leonard Bernstein [I had to think about that because my high school band director was Benstein. Actually, when we went to MSU to play the Star Spangled Banner before a basketball game, the announced him as Mr. Bernstern, which made him roll his eyes before we played.... 😊] But it was Leonard Berstein that was the famous conductor that they asked for his expert opinion on what was the most difficult instrument in the orchestra to play. Any guesses? [Bassoon] Last time I asked this question, I got bassoon and French

horn] His instant response was “second fiddle”. He explained that everyone is eager to be the first chair instrument. But it is hard to find one who plays second chair with that kind much enthusiasm -- yet without it, we have no harmony.

There is a novel to that effect. In the novel, there is a musical competition. The ultimate winner would win freedom and riches. At one point, the hero of the novel is matched against a world class musician. The contest is a duet, and though the hero can play well, he is no match for this master musician. The music featured parts where both played equally, and other parts where each would support the other’s lead play. The hero, knowing he was no match with this musician, determined he would just enjoy the experience of being able to play with the best he’s ever played with. It was one of the best performances in history. The judges and crowd were in awe. When the scores were tallied, the hero is announced the winner. The master agrees, the hero is confused, and the crowd is angry, for certainly he didn’t play as well as the master musician. The hero asks for an explanation, and it is the master who gives the answer. He said, “The judges were tasked to judge on who added more to the entire presentation of the piece. My support of your lead was solid, but your enthusiastic support of my lead allowed me to play as I have never played before. Therefore, you added more to the whole, and you were the better musician.”

There is a story about a great jazz musician. Early in his career, he would have his whole band exit the stage leaving their instruments behind. Then this star would spend 25 minutes going from instrument to instrument performing solos on the piano, the trumpet, the trombone, the sax, the upright bass, the electric bass, the electric guitar, the whammy organ, and finally conclude on the drums. Over time he adjusted his show. Now, there are still many solos, but only a couple by him on the piano. He’d go off stage, call the name of one of the band members who would then perform a solo and he would celebrate their abilities, clapping and dancing in the shadows, encouraging them in their spotlight moment. He left the spotlight so that they could shine and created a musical celebration in which all could participate. It wasn’t all about him anymore.

To people who were either beating themselves up as not being spiritual enough to join God’s kingdom, or to

To the body as whole

people who were beating others up as insignificant because they were not as “spiritual” as they thought of themselves -- Paul pens and answer that redefines spirituality. He moves spirituality away from the mistaken perception of an

“individualistic super pray-er, super miracle worker, super gifted, super talented, super -- showy kind of a person – to spirituality being an ability to participate with others in building up the community through cooperative service in a way that *God* is honored. So instead of picking and choosing and competing and winning and losing against each other, Paul reminds these people who felt they did not need others the same thing that he reminded the people who felt unneeded, that

“God has put the body together... so that there should be no division in the body, and that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share [in] its happiness. All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it.”
(1 Corinthians 12:24b-27)

We are in all this together. An individual's spiritual gifts only come to true fruition if they are used in the building up of others... we celebrate and encourage the gifts of others, we offer support and healing comfort in the pains of others. Spiritual maturity leads to cooperation. Virginia Burden put it this way: Cooperation is the thorough conviction that nobody can get there unless everybody gets there.

A man is on a boat. He is not alone but acts as if he were. One night, without warning, he suddenly begins to cut a hole under his seat. The other people on the boat shout at him: "Have you gone crazy? Do you want to sink us all? Are you trying to destroy us?" The man answers: "I don't understand what you want. What I'm doing is none of your business. I paid my way. I'm not cutting under your seat. Leave me alone!"

The person who thinks they are not important enough to be a part of the group, and the person who thinks they are too important to be a part of the group -- what they don't realize -- but should never forget -- is that all of us are in the same boat. If we want to sink ourselves, we may well sink others along the way; and if we want to sink others, we may well sink ourselves along the way.

On the other hand, if we help hoist the sails and power the motor, then we may well help others move forward in positive ways too. (That is what we should be shooting for). When individuals collect themselves up and move in a direction together, it will have more influence than any individual could do on their own, even more than the sum of all the parts put together, -- you can put all my body parts together and it won't do anything until they all start to work together,



but when it does, then it will do even more than any body could do on its own, more than we could dream or imagine.

What is each of us doing with our gifts, talents, and potential influences -- are we using it to create something negative for the group and ourself, or to create something positive for the group and ourself? It is up to each of us, with the help of each other, to find our productive place and give it our best for the Lord in the building of his community.

Prayer Let's pray. Lord, you have brought us together to be your people, to represent Jesus to those around us, forgiving, encouraging, building up. Remind us that you designed us to need each other, to work together with the blessings you have given each of us. As your Spirit uses us to re-create the body of Christ, may we know the powerful love of the One who created us, the touching grace of the One who redeems us, and the indwelling of the One who gives us life. May you use us and our experiences to give each other strength and comfort, to inspire hopeful dreams through which we will unite in praise of you. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Music Let stand and sing this new song that celebrates how throughout the generations, Christians have gathered to encourage each other by reminding each other how God sustains us all...

In Unity We Lift Our Song

Words: Ken Medema, Music: Martin Luther, [tune of A Mighty Fortress is Our God] harm. from The New Hymnal for American Youth Words © 1994 Brier Patch Music

1. In unity we lift our song of grateful adoration,
for brothers brave and sisters strong. What cause for celebration!
For those whose faithfulness has kept us through distress,
who've shared with us our plight, who've held us in the night,
the blessed congregation.
2. For stories told and told again to every generation,
to give us strength in times of pain, to give us consolation.
Our spirits to revive to keep our dreams alive,
when we are far from home and evil seasons come;
how firm is our foundation.
4. For God our way, our bread, our rest, of all these gifts the Giver.
Our strength, our guide, our nurturing breast whose hand will yet deliver.
Who keeps us till the day when night shall pass away,

when hate and fear are gone and all our work is done,
and we shall sing forever.

Blessing And now, from the One who is the giver of all good gifts: go and share what God has given you in service to him and to others - that his name may be glorified. Amen.

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