

Straight from the "Hart"

February 19, 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. This is the end of the Epiphany Season and Transfiguration Sunday, the day Jesus took his inner circle up into the mountain where his divine nature and was revealed more fully. We'll be talking about that in more detail as we go forward. For now, join in a Transfiguration inspired reading.



Transfiguration Reading (L - Lay Reader, **C** – **Congregation**)

L: Move beyond the busy-ness. Move across the cold winter ground. Move above the gray surfaces to the summit.

C: We see there that a glory is rising.

L: This glory is born of heaven, belongs to heaven, and reaches out to us.

C: It shines through the clouds, inviting us to a more profound way of seeing.

L: It is a sight that transfigures our world, that transforms darkness into hope.

C: For it points to a cross, where the old life ends, and new life is born.

L: The glorious light of Jesus Christ meets us here, raising us from the depths of dark valleys to the heights of bright mountains. With new insight, we are called to listen to God's Chosen, his Son.

C: And his Son, Jesus Christ, covered in the dust of the world, carries the weight of humanity into the heights of heaven's glory.

Blended and adapted from Rev. Roddy Hamilton,
posted on Listening to the Stones.

<http://newkilpatrickblog.typepad.com/> and Rev. Rob Smith,
Spirit of Life Presbyterian Church, Apple Valley, MN

Opening Prayer Dear Lord, help us serve until it blesses the broken, to love until it heals the hurting, and give until it helps those in need. Use our gifts of tithe, time, talent, and testimony to accomplish acts of compassion in your name. and it is in your name, Jesus that we pray, Amen.

Call to Worship

Come to the mountaintop to be covered in God's presence. Be comforted by the glow of his holiness. Be encouraged by the hope of the heights, where God is close and accessible, where there is no doubt of his glory.

The mountaintop reminds us why we worship. We witness his radiant power. We hear his plan for the nations. As we worship, let God bring us to the mountain top; that we may be inspired to do his work in the valley below.

adapted from General Commission on the Status and Role of Women of the UMC.
@ www.gcsr.org/Portals/4/WHM.worship%20March%202.pdf

Music Today we worship Jesus as he continues to reveal himself through his love for us. Let's sing Jesus Shall Reign.

Jesus Shall Reign

Words: Isaac Watts, 1719 Music: John Hatton, 1793

1. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does its successive journeys run;
his kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.
2. To Jesus endless prayer be made, and endless praises crown his head;
his name like sweet perfume shall rise with every morning sacrifice.
3. People and realms of every tongue dwell on his love with sweetest song;
and infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on his name.
4. Blessings abound where'er he reigns; all prisoners leap and loose their chains;
the weary find eternal rest, and all who suffer want are blest.
5. Let every creature rise and bring honors peculiar to our King;
angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen!



Theme

We come to the end of a season today... Whether it be “The Championship Season of the [fill in team and sport and year of your choice]”, or it could even be the Theater Season of theatrical productions, or the Concert season of an orchestra, or even a long-lasting show that creates a plot enabling its creators to go back and recall previous events. Whether it is written, filmed, or spoken, we know that the season is usually recapped with the best highlights that happened during that time, right? I recall one TV series whose last episode of every season, they would have an oversight committee who would be grilling somebody to which

he would have to answer, and the process allowed them to flashback to the best clips of the episodes of that season, which could have been really challenging for them because this particular show did not have the same characters from episode to episode and there was no sequential plot tying the episodes together, so it was really interesting to see how they tried to do that. But I digress. The whole point is that seasons are normally re-capped with the best highlights and climax with something powerful at the end of it.

The Epiphany season is no exception. It began on the first Sunday of its season by broadening the impact of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem from Jews only to all people of all nations with the coming of the wise men. Then it jumps over to the Jordan River about 30 years later where this king's ministry officially begins with his baptism. And in this highlight, we see the heavens opened and hear God declaring Jesus as his beloved Son. We'll hear that again today. If they didn't know it before, they are now at least beginning to see, to understand that this great delivering king is not just a special human who is chosen by God -- but is himself the divine in human flesh. As we follow the season, we get highlight after highlight and gain a growing understanding of who Jesus is, the heavenly Father he represents, his sacred mission on earth, and this year the emphasis was on how his people live that out *together in unity* in the body of Christ, and how it is our love for him and his love for us that allows us to see Christ more clearly and in others and love them as well.

And today we reach the final episode of the season when Jesus goes with his inner circle of disciples up a mountain -- traditionally believed to be Mt. Tabor (pronounced TAY-bore, TAY-burr, or tah BOH) depending upon who you are listening to. This mountain is our imagery on the front of the bulletin and in the background of our slides today... This climatic, awe-inspiring event was not yet enough for them to fully understand the impact that Christ was creating in their lives and world -- they still had a long way to go before they would understand the implications of this mountainous event and life-changing season, but even so, it went way beyond all they could hope, grasp, or imagine.

Intro to and Bible Reading

On the mountain, they see Christ with Moses and Elijah -- (representing the Law and the prophets -- the full known revelation of God in the Old Testament Scripture).

They are discussing the nature of his “exodus” – the word connects God’s great physical deliverance and salvation of his people in the Old Testament with God’s plans for the great spiritual deliverance and salvation for his people through Jesus. Hear the story:



Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on a high mountain to pray. And as he was praying, and the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them.

Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus. They were glorious to see. And they were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. Peter and the others had fallen asleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus’ glory and the two men standing with him.

As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, exclaimed, “Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here! Let’s make three shelters as memorials – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He said this because he didn’t really know what to say, for they were all terrified.

But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son, my Chosen One, who brings me great joy. Listen to him.” The disciples were terrified and fell down on the ground.

When the voice finished, Jesus came over and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” And when they looked up and around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them. As they went back down the mountain, Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead. So they kept it to themselves and didn’t tell anyone at that time what they had seen. But they often asked each other what he meant by “rising from the dead.”

Blend of Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:28-36 (NLT)

Special Music Even though they didn’t yet understand everything about Jesus or what was to come, this insightful vision of Jesus allowed them to understand more than most in their culture -- who had very different opinions about Jesus. That

situation hasn't changed. We are always needing to learn more -- but we know enough to know who he is to us. Listen to Charles and Mary Jo sing

Words to "Who You Are to Me"

Words and Music: Chris Tomlin, Hillary Scott, Charles Kelley, Dave Haywood
© 2020 S.D.G Publishing [(...) means echo, or pre-echo between the two singers)

Some people think you're distant,
just some words on a page,
that you're nothing more than fables
handed down along the way.
But I've seen you part the waters
when no one else
could pull me from the deep.
That's who you are to me.



Some people think you just live in cathedrals made of stone.
But I know you live inside my heart, I know that it's your home.
And I've seen you in a sunset and in the eyes of a stranger on the street.
That's who you are to me.

Chorus

You're amazing, faithful, love's open door.
When I'm empty, you fill me with hunger for more --
of your mercy, your goodness, Lord, you're the air that I breathe.
That's who you are to me, who you are to me.
You're forever holy. You're the Lamb who is worthy.
My forgiveness (My forgiveness), my healer (My healer),
the Messiah, my Redeemer.

Sometimes I have my doubts, I'm sure that everybody does;
and I wonder when I stumble if I'm still worthy of your love.
I know that I get stronger when I'm talking to you down on my knees.
You're everything I need.

Chorus

You're amazing, faithful, love's open door.
When I'm empty, you fill me with hunger for more --
of your mercy, your goodness,
Lord, you're the air that I breathe. (Lord, you're the air that I breathe.)
That's who you are,

You are greater, higher, over it all.
In your presence, Jesus, I stand in awe --

of your mercy, your goodness,
Lord, you're the air that I breathe.
That's who you are to me.
(Who You are) That's who You are to me.
(That's who You are) That's who You are to me.
(Who You are) That's who You are to me.
(That's who You are) That's who You are to me.

God Moments (testimonies from the congregation were not scripted)

Music: If that is who God is to us, then we certainly want him to shape and guide our lives, let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

Words: Adelaide A. Pollard, 1902 Music: George C. Stebbins, 1907

1. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after thy will,
while I am waiting, yielded and still.
3. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me I pray!
Power, all power, surely is thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine!
4. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me!

Pastor's Prayer Lord, we know that our lives do not blossom unless we invest it, but even more so if we invest it in what you desire us to become. Reveal to us the gifts and graces that you have given us, and grow the seeds of the fruit of your Spirit that you have planted within.

As we leave season with the glory of the mountain and begin to examine our response to your glory through the season of Lent, teach us to not beat ourselves up, but to look at ourselves honestly, to accept your forgiveness and resolve to do better, moving from our sin to your glory, from our worldliness to your spirituality, from our weakness to your strength. May your work continue to bring healing even as we lift our joys and sorrows to you.

Praises and Petitions We pray for * Dick and Sandy Sandula, former members

of our church who are living in TN and are both recovering from Covid. * for all those impacted by the shooting at MSU last week, * close calls – we’ve heard them in the testimonies how you provide, and we ask that you provide comfort and strength to the families that did suffer loss and injury and are still fighting for their lives in the hospital. * We also pray for Pat Schleh’s sister-in-law Marianne, * for Gar Lemon as he continues to heal, for the family and friends of the Lemon’s nephew Andy who passed away last week, * for those impacted by the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria and all those places in the world troubled by natural disasters or human conflict and violence; and for the UM Committee on Relief as they carry out their work among the hurting, sometimes risking danger to themselves... * and for all those unnamed who are recovering from illness or injury or facing other types of challenges or setbacks in their lives, for these and others on our hearts and minds, we pause to silently lift our prayers. [Pause]. Now Lord, we thank you for hearing our hearts through Jesus Christ who came from heaven so that we can be restored into your image and inherit a place in your kingdom, through faith in the grace of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray. **LORD’S PRAYER**

Music On the mountain, the three disciples gained a pre-vision of the glory we will experience with Jesus and his love. It was an experience that they couldn’t stop talking about. Let’s stand if comfortable and sing Blessed Assurance.

Blessed Assurance

Words: Fanny J. Crosby, 1873 Music: Phoebe P. Knapp, 1873

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain

This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

2. Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Refrain

3. Perfect submission, all is at rest; I in my Savior am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

Refrain

Intro to and Bible Reading

On the mountain, three disciples received a powerful assurance of faith by getting a glorious glimpse into the reality of who Jesus was and what his mission was on this earth. After the resurrection, Paul is able to write about how the mystery of God's work through Jesus is now even more clearly known to everyone, and how he hopes that will play out in our hearts and lives. He writes:

This mystery has been kept in the dark for a long time, but now it's out in the open. God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. The mystery in a nutshell is just this: **Christ is in you**, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory...

We preach Christ... We teach in a spirit of profound common sense so that we can bring each person to maturity...

I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else. And we've been shown the mystery! I'm telling you this because I don't want anyone leading you off on some wild-goose chase, after other so-called mysteries...

From Colossians 1:26-28, 2:2-4 (MSG) (**emphasis added**)

... I really do understand the mystery about Christ... And the mystery is this: Because of Christ Jesus, the good news has given the Gentiles a share in the promises that ... **has also let the Gentiles be part of the same body**... God did this according to his eternal plan. And he was able to do what he had planned because of all that Christ Jesus our Lord had done. Christ now gives us courage and confidence, so that we can come to God by faith.

From Ephesians 3:3-6, 11-12 (CEV) (**emphasis added**)

Sermon God's Mystery Revealed

In the classic novel, *Treasure Island*, Jim Hawkins boards the good ship *Hispaniola* in quest of buried treasure. He finds a map with a red "X" containing the words -- "Bulk of treasure here", and it inspires the crew to press onward in search of buried treasures and riches. In our spiritual quest, the Bible becomes the map, and Paul has scribbled the "red X treasure here"



location in the verses we just heard in the reading. the red X treasure is here – **Christ is in you.**

On the other side of the resurrection, with reports from the disciples and others and a first-hand encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road, Paul declares the privilege to which he has been appointed -- to announce the full revelation of the mystery of God in Christ.

And we've seen in print for nearly 2000 years. It is easy for us to grasp the basic concept. We even put it in mottos like "I may not be perfect, but Jesus thinks I'm to die for" (I think that is an awful one). and "Jesus is the answer". Sometimes we've stolen secular slogans to make the point, such as, "Jesus is the real thing" "Got Jesus?" and "Yo Quiero Jesus".

But even if we experienced the truth of these simple sayings, and are moving to maturity as Paul hopes, we can still spend our entire lives and never capture the depth and width of the tapestry of God's love who has placed the treasure of Jesus' life within us, and how that mystery is to be made known to all people as he works through us.

Paul tells his close friends in Philippi that he knew enough to know that there is nothing more valuable than knowing Christ, and he has given up everything to gain Christ and be found in him, and he adds that he has not arrived but still strains forward to take hold of what Christ has already taken hold of him. (See 3:7-14)

He wants to take hold of Christ who has already taken hold of him. That last phrase includes a twist that isn't immediately clear, necessarily. This is what helps me see it. A few years ago, there was a young toddler named Rex. This was the Sunday nearest Valentine's Day, and he happened to come up the stairs the same time I did -- the Sunday School rooms, and old Fellowship Hall were down there. We happened to be coming up the stairs together, which made it very slow progress as he reached up and grabbed my finger and very slowly navigated one step at a time – you know how that goes, we've all been there and that was fun. And then when we got to the top presented me with a Valentine's card he had made for me in Sunday School. That was really neat. But as we went up the stairs and he reached up to grab one of my fingers, It reminded me of an old story I think I shared with you before, about a youngster and his grandpa walking in the woods. The youngster had reached out and latched on to grandpa's finger. But with the toddler's inexperienced walking skills combined with uneven terrain, and his not yet fully developed muscles, every misstep broke

Christ holds us

their connection and he would tumble to the ground. The grandfather graciously stopped and patiently waited while his grandson picked himself up and brushed himself off, he reached up and grabbed his finger again and they continued their walk until the next misstep. After this happened 3 or 4 times, the youngster said, “Grandpa, I’m not strong enough to hang on to you when I fall, but if you hold onto me, I know you are strong enough to hold me up when I stumble. So the grandfather took hold of the boy’s hand and with every future misstep, grandpa kept him from falling... sometimes even turning it into a fun flying spin...

Paul is telling us that God, through Jesus, has successfully reached down, completely restores our relationship with him, and with his strong arms he holds us all up -- *all* who trust him even when we do not have the strength to hold on to him. We can rest on his power to hold on to us even while we strive to seek those epiphany/transfiguration transforming moments of our life when we learn how to better keep in step with him.

We probably remember how exciting it is to learn even the simple secrets of life -- when you have grandkids around, you know that – to watch their excitement when after a long time period of struggle and practice and sometimes with someone’s patient and wise instruction, we finally figure out how to tie a shoe, or we learn the lake well enough so that we know where to go to find the fish that will grab our hook, and some of us may yet discover the secret that will make the new math understandable to us. I don’t know, I think I’ve given up. But when the light goes on and the dark vanishes, infuriating frustration turns into inspiring joy, a longing to give up becomes and craving to continue seeking even more “aha” moments.

We crave the “aha”

And I think that is, in part, why we come on Sundays -- in the hopes that some Bible verse, some song lyric, some part of a prayer, some moment of silence, or conversation with each other before and after -- will spark an epiphany, an “aha” moment, a new clarity -- that will connect our faith’s guidance to next steps of our life, within our particular circumstances as we journey forward into the forest of this world....

It is also true that sometimes we don’t always receive the “aha”, we don’t always discover the answers that we seek, at least not in the way we seek them. At a Men’s Breakfast – Bible study in a previous church. We were discussing Job and the frustration we can experience when the “why” of life’s mysteries, especially the tragedies, elude us. Job went

“Ahas” can be elusive

through all these things and “Why?” He couldn’t get a good answer, at least, at first. We like life to be pleasant, but if it is not pleasant, we at least want it to make sense, to have order and logical explanations, and usually simple ones – but it doesn’t always happen for us.

To use a trivial like example: A long time ago, Bob Benson wrote in one of his books that he liked all his dinner table glasses to match. I do too. I tend to buy big and multiple extra sets of one kind of glassware in the house, so that when glassware is on the table, there cannot be anything else but that same matching glassware. I buy a lot of extra ones so that when there are breakages along the way there will be plenty -- because I have learned the hard way that if you break one or two and you go to get replacements, they’ve changed the style already, and then you have to get a whole new set. Well, as the story goes... Occasionally, Bob Benson would remove the old glasses and replace them with a new set in nice, neat orderly rows in the cabinet. But after a few weeks, inevitably, the same thing would always happen. Someone finishes the peanut butter. Someone else puts it in the dishwasher. Another person puts it on the shelf. And then a few days later it will end up on the dinner table. A nice set of delicately etched matching crystal glasses, and one thick, old, ugly peanut butter jar with part of the label still attached... (Paraphrased from *Laughter in the Walls*)

We try and try to make life line up nice and neatly with everything in its proper place, and that is a good thing; but more often than not, sooner or later, someone or something (often unknown to us) throws a wrench -- or a peanut butter jar -- into the mix and it doesn’t make any sense to us.

One of my theology professors used to say it this way. Theology, by the way, is simply “God-speak”. It is talk about God that we topically categorize to help us get a better understanding of who God is. And he put it this way. Well, you see this in a lot of organizations. Mailboxes, on the wall, usually just open-ended boxes, nice neat orderly rows and columns, and then each box is labeled for the person, department or committees. This one does it a bit different, but even a lot of churches have them. Well theology is like, “okay, we think we understand this piece of information about God and that fits the box of this characteristic or topic, so we put it in there with other bits of information on that topic, and the more in the box, the more we should be able to



understand that topic about God... but in the lower right hand corner of this mail system, this box system, is a great big box, bigger than all the rest, in which things are placed in which we can't comprehend, or how it fits. There are some things about God that are simply beyond our understanding.

...such as the need for variety

What we understand about the Epiphany season now after 2,000 years of scholarly reflection – is probably a lot more clarity than those who lived in the original season – before it was even a season. Gentiles, for centuries, were thought to be the peanut butter jars of the world – they didn't belong – they were never meant to come to the table. This, despite direct and indirect hints all through the Old Testament about God's sovereign care for the foreigners and strangers among them and beyond them. A thread of thought that continued throughout the New Testament because it was still not accepted in popular thought. It was difficult even for Jesus' disciples to accept the validity ---- of Gentiles, along with others -- like little ones and lepers and lame and sinners. This is why Paul felt he had to hammer it home again and again --- the great mystery finally revealed after all the ages was not only that Jesus was the Messiah came to be with us, to be in God's people, but that the promise is extended beyond the faithful Jews and reaches for us Gentiles as well. Those who for centuries were considered cut off from God are included as his called and chosen people.

Now what we've got is what our house was more like when our young kids were – young. We didn't just have glass – as a matter of fact we tried to avoid glass at all costs when they were young – and we didn't end up with because even then we had the large, but we had goblets, something similar to root beer mugs for floats and sundaes, we had plastic sippy cups side by side with the “fine crystal” or in our case – cheap glass drinking cups, and a few mugs here and there. They all had good reasons for their particular type of use at any given meal or snack and for each given person depending upon their age. The variety had its purpose and its needed place. And Paul tells the church in Corinth that it is not that outer shell that is important, but what it is holding that counts -- Who it is holding that counts. This is what he writes:

We don't preach ourselves, but rather the lordship of Jesus Christ... We are like common clay jars [peanut butter jars] that carry this glorious treasure within (TPT) ... to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. (MSG)

(2 Corinthians 4:5a,7)

The differences of background (religious or otherwise) race, gender, age, economic prosperity, social status, good or difficult circumstances or any other differences – don't matter. We are not qualified because of what we are, or what we are like; but because of who we contain; and it is who we contain by obedient faith that graciously grants us confidence to approach the loving heavenly Father's presence -- seeking one more "aha" moment about him, and our world, and our life.

Prayer Let's pray. Lord, help us to remember that it is by the power of your love in Jesus -- that you have revealed yourself to us and unlocked for us the way to you and to heaven. While the mystery is revealed to us in Christ, that Christ is in us, and that he makes us acceptable by our faith in him, there is still much to learn and live and love.

We may not always understand the circumstances of our life, even the ins and outs of how we live out our salvation -- but empower us daily to know and follow the way of Christ in whom we believe, and trust that he is always able to lead us on a journey that is best for us until we join together in heaven on that great day. And it is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

Music God has revealed himself in Jesus from whom we have best learned God's heart. The Transfiguration we celebrated today is one of Jesus' clearest pre-resurrection revelations to his people. The inspiration of this unforgettable event would carry these three disciples later in life after the resurrection. Of course, they still had much to learn.

As much as we have learned by living in the presence of Christ – in our hearts – we too have more to learn, will never learn it all – but we can know enough to put our trust in Jesus, his power, and his love; and that he will be faithful to his promises to those who commit themselves to him. So let's conclude singing

I Know Whom I Have Believed

Words: Daniel W. Whittle, 1883 Music: James McGranahan, 1883

1. I know not why God's wondrous grace to me he hath made known,
nor why, unworthy, Christ in love redeemed me for his own.

Refrain

But I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able
to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day.

2. I know not how this saving faith to me he did impart,
nor how believing in his word wrought peace within my heart.

Refrain

3. I know not how the Spirit moves, convincing us of sin,
revealing Jesus through the word, creating faith in him.

Refrain

Blessing Now go to serve God's love to the world, knowing that through Jesus' glorious life within us, we have been called, forgiven, made acceptable, and adopted as God's children according to the riches of his grace that he has lavished on us. Amen.

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