

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

February 22, 2023

Ash Wednesday 7:00 pm



**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.

## **Opening Prayer**

Grace and peace to you who have gathered tonight or online to begin our 2023 Lenten journey. Let's Pray. Heavenly Father, as we follow Jesus to Jerusalem, let us again behold His beauty, learn of the wonders he has done. Teach us again how to follow his example: listening to the voice of God in the wilderness, following the lead of the Holy Spirit, resisting temptation.

As we gather with humble hearts and open minds, we now turn to you, Lord; in our joys and in our struggles. Forgive us, redeem us, and renew us; that we may worship and praise you and your mighty works in Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **Intro to and Responsive Bible Reading**

One of the interesting things about Lent is that it doesn't begin as Jesus begins his final fateful trip to Jerusalem, but three years earlier with his baptism and being rushed out into the wilderness, where he is tempted to *not* to fulfill his ministry as the Messiah. It was then that he began to set his course toward the cross. I will read all, join me on the reading. (P – Pastor, **C – Congregation**)

P: Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River, being urged by the Spirit out into the barren wastelands of Judea, where the Adversary tempted him for forty days. During that time he ate nothing, and afterwards he was very hungry. The Adversary said to him, "If you are the God's Son, order this stone to become bread."

**C: "The Scriptures say, 'Man does not live on bread alone, other things in life are much more important than bread.'"**

P: The Adversary took him up and revealed to him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world, and said to him, "I will give you all the power and glory of these splendid kingdoms. For they are mine to give to anyone I choose. So if you will worship me, it will all be yours."

**C: "The Scriptures say, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only"**

P: Then he took him to Jerusalem to the highest point of the Temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, jump from here! For the Scriptures say that 'God will order his angels to guard and protect you, and support you so that you will not hurt your feet on the stones.:'"

**C: "It also says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to a foolish test.'" Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"**

P: When the Adversary had ended all his testings, he left Jesus for a while and went away until an opportune time. From Luke 4:1-13 (TLB, CJB)

^ **Music** Let's sing in response,

### **Lord, Who Throughout These 40 Days**

Words: Claudia F. Hernaman, 1873

Music: USA folk melody; arr. by Annabel Morris Buchanan, 1938;

harm. by Charles H. Webb, 1989

© 1938, 1966 J Fischer and Bro Co; harm. © 1989 J Fischer and Bro Co;

1. Lord, who throughout these forty days, for us did fast and pray,  
teach us with thee to mourn our sins and close by thee to stay.

2 As thou with Satan didst contend, and didst the vict'ry win,  
O give us strength in thee to fight, in thee to conquer sin.

3 As thou didst hunger bear and thirst, so teach us, gracious Lord,  
to die to self, and chiefly live by thy most holy word.

### **Intro to Season of Lent**

The *focus* of Lent is an awe-filled meditation on the new covenant established by Jesus' suffering and death, and by trusting in him, the penalty and curse of sin and separation from God is removed so that we can live fully and eternally.

The *attitude* of Lent is a season of reflection and prayer as we spend a time of honest self-examination to consider what we have done or failed to do individually or as the human race, that required Jesus

to go to the cross for us. As the season starts tonight, the barrenness of the decorum emphasizes the ancient tradition of sackcloth and ashes, symbols of mourning loss and the consequences of the failures of humanity and how we stand exposed and vulnerable before God. As the season continues, the traditionally



added colors and décor signify repentance and the practice of self-discipline as we strive to connect with Christ's intense, passionate self-disciplined journey to Jerusalem and the cross, following him as he places his holy and innocent life in the hands of an evil world.

The normal disciplines of lent are not about us trying to earn God's forgiveness or grace or pleasure through our self-denial, good works or prayers; but it is about following Christ in a disciplined/ disciple life -- sometimes adjusting our life, at least for the season, in some tangible way that reminds us to put ourselves in a place where we can listen to God and experience afresh what He has done for the world and for each of us in Christ, *and allow Him to work in our hearts and on our lives.*

**Music:** Let's center ourselves, letting go of the things that burden or distract us so that we can prepare for the discipline of Lent by singing...

### **Come and Find the Quiet Center**

Words: Shirley Erena Murray © 1992 Hope Publishing Co. Music: attr. to BF White

1. Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,  
find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:  
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes that we can see  
all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.
2. Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,  
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,  
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,  
raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.
3. In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,  
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:  
there's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,  
in the spirits lively scheming there is always room to spare.

### **Journey of Stones**

This series is loosely based on a book by the same name by Steven Molin

#### **Bible Reading**

Hear the Scripture. Jesus' words from Luke 12. It will become as evident as yeast in dough. There is nothing covered up that will not be uncovered, or hidden that will not become known. What they have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be broadcast from the housetops for all to hear. Dear friends, don't fear who can only kill the body but have no power over your souls. But I'll tell you whom to fear: fear him who after

killing you has authority to throw you into hell. Aren't sparrows sold for next to nothing? ... Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And he knows the number of hairs on your head. Don't be afraid, you are far more valuable than many sparrows. And I assure you of this: whoever acknowledges me in the presence of others here on earth, the Son of Man will also acknowledge in the presence of God's angels. But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before God's angels.

Luke 12:2-9 (TLB, CJB)

## **Sermon Cornerstone: Calves or Commandments**

Each week of Lent, we'll be getting a new stone that will represent something different. As you entered, hopefully you picked up a stone. We'll be using them throughout the Lent season. Each service the stone will represent something a little different. Please hold the stone during the sermon and use it as a tangible touch point for the message. [Pause]

The covenant agreement between God and people began with Abraham, and the Bible makes it clear that it was established by faith. The covenant moved forward with Moses. The people agreed to it and Moses went up in the mountain to codify the covenant in stone.

Moses was a long time returning from the mountain – 40 days. The people got impatient waiting to seal the deal. God forbid that we must wait more than a month for a clear answer from the Lord. So the people went to Moses' PR man, Aaron. They demanded, since they didn't know what had happened to Moses, that Aaron make them gods to lead them. Aaron, in a flash of creative genius, collected their gold jewelry, melted it down, took a tool and shaped it into a calf. When the people saw it, they said to everyone, "This is the god that brought you up out of Egypt." Aaron heard how pleased they were and built an altar in front of the calf and declared that the next day there would be a festival to the lord. So the next day they rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and ate and drank, and indulged in revelry (to put it mildly).

Meanwhile, up in the mountain, the Lord told Moses to go down because the people were already quickly turning away from the will of the Lord, bowing down and sacrificing to the calf idol. God was angry with this stiff necked people, but Moses interceded for them, reminding God that their destruction would allow the Egyptians to gloat that God only brought them out of slavery with the evil intent of destroying them -- (in other words, they would rewrite history to make it look like

God was the bad guy in all of this - and God's name shouldn't have a bad reputation), and Moses also reminded God of the eternal faith covenant made with Abraham. The Lord relented.

Moses began descending the mountain with two God-inscribed stone tablets. The inscription stones delineated what God had worked out with Abraham, that he would be our God, and we would be His special, chosen, treasured people, if we heed Gods voice and keep the covenant -- and written in bold print on the stones was the outline of how we obey His voice... Half way down, he rejoined Joshua who had gone part of the way up the mountain with Moses. Together, they continued down toward the camp.

As they neared the camp, they heard the people shouting, and Joshua thought war had broken out, but Moses said "it was not the sound of victory or defeat, but of singing and partying." When they arrived, Moses saw the calf and the dancing, and he became so angry he threw and broke the tablets into pieces at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

Long story shorter: The covenant of God, sealed in stone, was, in effect, broken, and the consequences must be ingested. (Can't get around it). ***Do we consider what the long-term effects will be on our life because of what we choose to make our highest priority in the present?***

The people had said that they would obey. How could they (or we) think anything else when we are ushered out of slavery to freedom -- why would we even think to say no to a God who proves his love and power for us like that? They said yes, and Moses went up to get it written in stone.

It's an interesting phrase, isn't it? "Written in stone." We still use that phrase to describe something that is secure and long-lasting, something that is intended to be permanent. This wasn't a puppy lover's kiss, it wasn't even a contract as in a business deal -- it went much deeper than that. The original faith covenant with Abraham was ratified in the ancient way – animals cut in two, laid across from each other and the weaker party was to walk among the pieces saying “if I break the deal, this is what will happen to me” – but God knew we wouldn't be able to keep our side, so he stepped in and he walked among the pieces saying he would be ripped in two if the covenant was broken. And indeed,



it was God who was torn in two because of the broken covenant. -- but that is for another day. For today, let's just say that God's love for his people was written in stone -- a heartfelt vow that goes so far beyond a broken business contract that you can't really compare them. His expectations were written into the covenant -- and if you break them, you aren't breaking the covenant, you are breaking yourself against the covenant. But even so, so often the choice is to violate them, or ignore them, or rewrite them to fit our preferences, and assume that God is not paying attention or will look the other way.

Moses said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you that you led them into such a great sin? Aaron answered, "Do not be angry, you know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us... So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

So in a handful of sentences, Aaron **blames** the "evil people" who forced him, who were already blaming Moses for staying away in the mountain for so long. Adam blames Eve, who blames the serpent, we are always passing the buck for our own failures...

Their absence makes it their fault that we do what we do. Moses was gone, we didn't think God was looking. In effect, we excuse our failures because we thought we were not being watched -- So "*apparently*", "sin isn't doing wrong, sin is *getting caught* at doing wrong". No...

In current modern terms: "Mom, it's your fault I ate the cookie when I wasn't supposed to because you were not here to guard the cookie jar". The thinking is that what I do when others are not watching is hidden and secret, and therefore it is not wrong, and if I somehow get caught, then it is your fault because you found out and you weren't supposed to find out. The whistle blower is most to blame for the sins of the company, not the ones who commit the sins. It is the one who exposes the sin that we hate. It should be left hidden, secret, rationalized away -- then we are "innocent" (and yet it seems too many are too eager to point out everyone else's sin while ignoring their own), but it is paying attention to our own is what we need to be looking to correct. Good ethics is doing what we should even when no one else is looking to catch us.

Jesus warns us that sooner or later, if not before people, at least before God, that what we think is said in secret might as well be broadcast from the roof tops, what is plotted in back rooms will get back to the one in charge if not the public, what is

done in the dark might as well be done under spotlights on a stage - nothing we think is hidden will remain that way, not even the motivations of the heart.

"And besides", Aaron says - I just threw the gold in the fire and out came this calf -- he didn't do it... it was a mysterious miracle...beyond my control. I just held out my hand and the teller gave me 5,000 dollars. (We don't mention the fact that there was a gun in the other hand—we keep that part out of the story). I think this is what they call *im*-plausible deniability.

We, on the other hand, think our deniability is plausible. After all, that was 4,000 years ago. It's long enough to remove the guilt that accompanies a broken promise. And it is certainly long enough to relieve us from feeling responsible for others disobeying God. What were those fools thinking back then? How could they so blatantly and so intentionally break God's laws, right after he miraculously delivered them from slavery? But then, the honest ones among us realize that we probably would have acted no differently. After all, everyone else was doing it, we might as well go jump in the frozen lake with them.

We do the same now -- it may differ in specifics, but our world, and sometimes we ourselves, break God's will. The choices they made are the ones we make, and we dismiss God's will as antiquated, out of tune, no longer relevant -- we are as good as Aaron, rewriting the rules of the game and saying, "this is just how things come out now".

No, it isn't a golden calf that we bow down to -- although for some, the first half of that is still pretty relevant -- gold, and what we think it brings -- wealth, popularity, and power -- or we think it does, anyway. When we bow down to these or other things, we might as well be kissing the calf. We have broken what was written in stone. What was written in stone started this way:

"Hear people, the Lord your God is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all you heart, with all you mind, and with all your strength. You shall not worship anything besides me. Do not make any images or things that compete with my priority.

Longer story still a bit shorter: God is saying, I am making you my treasured people, and I expect the same in return -- Be devoted and committed to me above all else. Do not reject me. If you are not ashamed of me, if you will stick by me even when it isn't popular or expedient -- then when crunch time comes and you stand before me, I will stick by you. But if you deny me and my people by severing ties, by being ashamed, by avoiding or excluding me because I seem to be

unpopular; if you do what seems expedient by leaving me out of the picture; then when crunch time comes and you stand before me, I will not recognize you either – the choice is yours.

It is a terrible thing to be rejected. We've all experienced it in some form or other. We don't get the job, we lose the election, the publisher rejects our writing, we don't make the team, the girl or the guy said "No", and sometimes they don't say it nicely. It's a terrible thing to be told in word or attitude or action that we are unacceptable, unworthy, unnecessary.

Some people respond to this challenge by developing resilience and determination to succeed, they may become even more caring, sensitive, and compassionate. At other times, or other people, rejection leads to bitterness, resentment, and being jaded, leaving them cold, judgmental, and angry.

Jesus knew what it was to be rejected, and yet he is made the Cornerstone or Key Stone of the new covenant. In our day, the cornerstone is essentially a big block in the foundation that has the date of construction. But in those days, the cornerstone established the building's ground level, assured that the foundation would be solid, was the way they calculated the distance and the angles of the building, it is what kept it square and able to be built. The keystone (or capstone) was the pivotal stone on the top of an arch, and all the weight and strength of the arch rested on that one key (cap) stone at the top.

Jesus becomes the standard, he holds the church together, straight and true. He is the foundation upon which God's kingdom rests, the key upon which all our strength and standing is built. Yet he was rejected by the very people who were primed to receive him. They failed to follow his call, -- or even listen for that call. Too often, Jesus is treated as the millstone that will drag down dreams rather than the corner/key stone that holds people up.

The thing that we live as most valuable to us ... that is the calf, the idol, the god, and it is the corner or keystone that directs how you live. The question is, what is your cornerstone, what is your keystone? Our conflicts of conscience present themselves in everyday settings like telling the truth on our income tax forms -- or not; being faithful in our friendships -- or not; giving our children role models they can emulate -- or not; having integrity in every business or volunteer dealings -- or not. These are just some of the ways that we are faithful, or the ways we reject Jesus.



The issue here is not that we have broken or are breaking the Commandments, we all have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory; but rather, that in that rejection we have broken ourselves have become a broken people who must drink its consequences, and we need a Savior who will save us from ourselves.

### ORDER OF COMMUNION AND ASHES

**Music** The season of Lent is a time to ask God open our eyes to what we are not yet seeing, and seek forgiveness for our blindness, to recognize where we have created calves, where we are still broken; and to, by God's grace, re-enter the covenant and begin or expand the building of our lives on the cornerstone of Jesus, relying on him as the keystone that holds us together as we allow him to guide, support, and straighten us into new paths of living. Let's stand and sing a confession as we prepare for communion and the ashes...

#### **Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes**

Words: Rae E. Whitney © 1991 Selah Publishing Co.

Music: Attr. to B.F. White

1. Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes as another Lent begins;  
thus we kneel before our Maker in contrition for our sins.  
We have marred baptismal pledges, in rebellion gone astray;  
now, returning, seek forgiveness; grant us pardon, God, this day!
2. We have failed to love our neighbors, their offences to forgive,  
have not listened to their troubles, nor have cared just how they live,  
we are jealous, proud, impatient, loving over much our things;  
may the yielding of our failings be our Lenten offerings.
3. We are hasty to judge others, blind to proof of human need;  
and our lack of understanding demonstrates our inner greed;  
we have wasted earth's resources; want and suffering we've ignored;  
come and cleanse us, then restore us; make new hearts within us, Lord!

#### **Invitation**

And with that, we turn our attention to Communion and Ashes. The Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.

When a tree is destroyed in a fire, all that is left is ash. Ashes are left when something living, something holy, something vibrant, is destroyed. That not only applies to Jesus as he enters Jerusalem and heads for the cross, it also reminds us that we too must face our mortality.

Traditionally, the ashes are made from the previous year's palms (as we just sang), which are blessed for *that* service. In that service, we welcome Jesus with open arms as he processes into the city Jerusalem -- and now those palms have been reduced to ash -- reminding us, like those who lived the Exodus, that we aren't always as welcoming to God and Jesus and his will for us as we could be.

Communion and Lent remind both remind us that we are reconciled and restored to participation in the life of the church, through accepting the message of mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the Scriptures.

I invite you, then, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. Let us now humble our hearts before the Lord, our maker and redeemer through a time of responsive confession. Join in on the responsive reading...

**Confession and Assurance** (P – Pastor, C – Congregation)

P: For grievance and injustice, aloofness and indifference

**C: Forgive us Lord.**

L: For weakness and transgression, resistance and rebellion

**C: Forgive us Lord.**

P: In the shadow of our Savior's holy cross, we admit what God already knows:  
We have sinned against God in thought, word and deed.

**C: Forgive us Lord.**

P: We have failed God by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

**C: Forgive us Lord.**

P: We have failed to live as children of light. We have abused the gift of language by saying things we had no business saying and leaving unsaid things it was our duty to say.

**C: Forgive us Lord.**

P: We have tried to possess that which does not properly belong to us: certain experiences, relationships, powers or possessions that would not be good for us and that you in wisdom have withheld.

**C: Forgive us Lord.**

P: We have bent the truth to serve our own ends. We have not treated our neighbors the way we would wish our neighbors would treat us.

**C: Forgive us Lord.**

P: Jesus Christ was given to die for us and raised to new life for us. So as we surrender our lives in death with him, we too will be raised to newness of life. For the sake of your risen Son, we seek your mercy.

**C: Forgive what we have been, and show us what we may yet become.**

P: The grace of Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

**C: God's mercy endures forever.**

**Thanksgiving (Congregation reads the bold parts)**

It is in the confidence of our God's slow to anger and quick to forgive nature that we can be confident that our sins will be forgiven and we can enter God's presence. Therefore,

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

You brought all things into being and called them good. From the dust of the earth, you formed us into your image and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, you bore up the ark on the waters, saved Noah and his family, and made covenant with every living creature on earth. When you led your people to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, you gave us your commandments and made us your covenant people.

When your people forsook your covenant, your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights; and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. When you gave him to save us from our sin, your Spirit led him into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry. When he suffered and died on a cross for our sin, you raised him to life, presented him alive to the apostles during forty days, and exalted him at your right hand. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter, you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts, that during these forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

### **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

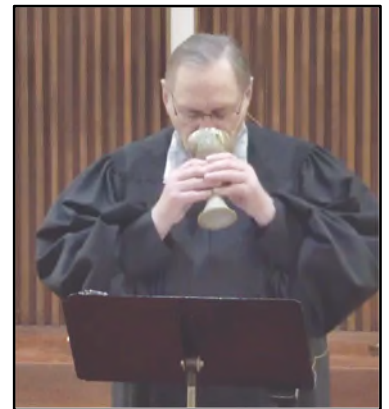
By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father God, now and forever. **Amen.** And now, with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray: **Lord's Prayer**

### **The Bread and Cup**

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Take and eat]

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

[Take and Drink]



## The Ashes

Let's pray let's place the cross on and hold it in place as we say this prayer. Almighty God, we hear and claim the covenant promises of Scripture which are remembered tonight, Now, we hold on to the ashen cross. Lord, remind us that you desire not the death of sinners, but rather that we may turn from our wickedness and live. For those who are truly repentant, you absolve the punishment of their sins, and render spiritual death powerless for those who believe the gospel with sincere hearts, and guided by your Holy Spirit, may we do only those things that please you on this day, and that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, until at the last we may come to Your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Prayer and Meditation

With heads remaining bowed, now again take up the stone and feel it in your hand. Feel its strength, its harshness, or smoothness. Imagine it broken with sharp, jagged edges. Imagine them leaving stoney, dirty, dust on your hands, leaving the residue of its influence on our life. Each takes a different shape in our lives.

Tonight's stone represents all the golden calves of our life. All those temptations and priorities that would replace Jesus as the key stone. We can take it home and continue to displace Jesus from those problem areas of our life: times we blinded ourselves to loving God because we blinded ourselves to loving others. Times we denied him as most important, or at least, lived like he wasn't. Times of failure or setbacks that we continue to hang on to, allowing it to crush the life out of us... We can hang on to all of these, justifying, excusing, blaming -- trying to maintain the alleged secrecy of them all, and we can remain a broken people in a broken world if we take it home with us.

Or, we can leave these stone calves here, at the foot of the cross; we can let go of misplaced priorities, failures, sins, and resolve to reduce those times of blindness, denial, and rejection. It doesn't mean everything will magically change and fall into place, but it is a commitment to a process of methodically laying our calves aside, giving them to Jesus, and asking God to refresh our commitments to his Son, the cornerstone, being more and more able to make Jesus the key stone, the cap stone, the support and foundation of our life upon which we will better lean -- from this day forward.

**Prayer** Now, Lord we could speak yet another confession here, but we confess that traditional and formal confessions often sound good, but they can also be filled with things that seem not to apply, or are too vague to find relevance, or we are

too quick to label others with this or that and forget to even to think about our own lives, or they are simply too quickly forgotten.

So Lord, we will only focus on what you have brought or will bring to our mind as we consider the stone in our hand. Awaken us to discern new avenues of obedience, that we may live more fully and love more deeply.

So on this night and through these Lenten days, as we focus on you as our true center, help each of us to bring home to our own heart and life what **we** need to *confess*... We consider questions this particular stone in our hand *may* raise as we allow God to lead us -- Feel the stone.

- 1) What is my Cornerstone? Golden Calves or Covenant Commandments?
- 2) What promises are most frequently broken in the world today? Which promise do I most frequently break?
- 3) What is it about the gods (the errant priorities) of my culture that are so attractive to me? Which temptations – which life patterns -- do I most struggle with?
- 4) How am I broken – in what parts of my life?
- 5) What does it feel like to be rejected? In what ways do people reject God today? Do I ever reject God or his people? If so, why? (This "why" is not intended as an opportunity for Aaronic types of justification or explanation, but as a check on our own feelings and attitudes about our own lives).

As we think about these things -- or maybe there is something else that is weighing you down tonight that is more important to you -- then let that be the stone for tonight. The questions are printed on the bulletin so we may consider them again and longer than our time here will allows, and we will have an opportunity to discuss them in tomorrow night's study, but think on these questions or that other weight as the instruments play through our hymn once, and then we will stand as quietly as possible and begin to sing the verses, and as we sing, I will invite you to come as you feel led, and lay your stone at the foot of this cross...

### **Music Grace Greater Than Our Sin**

Words: Julia H. Johnston, 1911    Music: Daniel B. Towner, 1910

1. Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!  
     Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
     there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Refrain

Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin!

2. Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold, threaten the soul with infinite loss;  
grace that is greater, yes, grace untold, points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Refrain

4. Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe!  
You that are longing to see his face, will you this moment his grace receive?

Refrain

**Blessing** And now as we leave in silence, may what we have said with our lips  
be believed in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts may we practice in  
our lives, through Jesus Christ our Cornerstone. Amen.

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CCLI # 2561297 ~~~~~