

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

July 2, 2023 Independence Sunday



Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are really glad you are here and participating in today's time of worship.

**Opening Prayer** Our God, for all of the blessings you have poured out on us, we have gathered to offer these gifts and ourselves as a pleasing sacrifice of thanksgiving in the presence of each other. Guide us to use them wisely for the furtherance of your holy and merciful reputation through the name of Jesus. Amen. Please remain standing for the call to worship, pledges, and first song....



Donna Allmond (not pictured on piano), Kathy Novak (flute) and Randy Bell (bass guitar) play the music of the day.

**Call to Worship** We gather together to worship God, who, through the blood of Jesus Christ, has freed us from the emptiness and futility of our former lives! We have been reborn. We are now children of the living God! Come, let's worship the God who has set us free!

**Pledges** If you are a veteran, could you raise your hand so that we can acknowledge you for your service for our freedom? Now all of us join in on the pledges, and then immediately after, we will sing America the Beautiful.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America,  
and to the Republic for which it stands:  
one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag  
and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands.  
One Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again  
with life and liberty to all who believe,  
uniting all humanity in service and in love.

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word,  
I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path,  
and will hide its words in my heart  
that I might not sin against God.

## America the Beautiful

Words: Katharine Lee Bates, 1904 Music: Samuel A. Ward, 1888

1. O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain;  
for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!  
America! America! God shed his grace on thee,  
and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.
2. O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,  
who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!  
America! America! May God thy gold refine,  
till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine.
3. O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years  
thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!  
America! America! God mend thine every flaw,  
confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law.

**Theme** Some people notice that from time to time, not often, I have a limp. At times have sat while preaching to help alleviate whatever various pains or other problems I might be having on any given day. I used to use a knee brace at times, I've worn an ankle brace at times and I've worn strips for plantar fasciitis. which sometimes helped and various other things. Sometimes these supports helped and sometimes didn't. If you look around the church or around the town, you sometimes notice other people also have with them different kinds of help for their walking or breathing or whatever relieves whatever ails them. **Types of Equipment** Some people use a cane, or a cane that has legs at the bottom of it, or a zimmer -- or we call them in American, walkers -- (sometimes with rubbers covers on the bottom; sometimes tennis balls, sometimes wheels, and some of them have chairs and/or baskets to help us as we get around as well. All kinds of nice stuff to help us when we need it.

**Different Problems** Not everyone who has trouble walking is because of a bad knee or ankle, it could be all kinds of different things. it could be a hip. or a back, it could be a combination of any or all of them, and other reasons as well, such as bad circulation; or weak muscles, or a balance problem, and the list could go on and on. Not only is it different problems, **Different Causes** it could come from different causes. It may be an accident, a disease, the toll of time, or many other kinds of reasons. **Different degrees of pain** Some will feel the pain intensely, and others not so much, sometimes it goes back and forth -- and everyone reacts with

different sensitivities even if the amount of pain is the same. **Different Terrain**  
 Sometimes it isn't even the person – it is not the body, it is the terrain we are on -- people walking on snow use special shoes that look like oversized tennis rackets to get around on snow, cross country and downhill skiers use different kind of foot wear as well as poles to help them move and steady themselves as the move across the snow or down the slopes, and sometimes hikers use walking sticks to help them to walk steadily on uneven terrain.

The points, We shouldn't worry about what equipment people use or don't use, what problems people have, or what has caused them; or why people have the pains they have, or how bad it is, or what kind of terrain they have been walking on. We're all different. We all have kinds of different hurts, caused by different things that make us feel differently.

One of my pet peeves is when I'm hurting in some way, not always physically; and somebody wants to comfort me, and they start by saying, "I know *exactly* how you feel" and then start telling me a story about themselves, which on one or two occasions may have had a very slight connection to what I was going through. But because we are all different, even if it was a very similar thing does not mean we will feel the same way about it. Plus, I think I learned somewhere along the way that if you are trying to comfort someone, you don't make yourself the dominate part of the conversation.

What we should do, however, is treat others with joy and love despite any hindrances they might have in life or that we may have in life. It is also an analogy for how we treat each other on our spiritual walks. We have traveled and will travel different paths, with different obstacles, rest stops, detours, setbacks, and forward movements -- but through all of this we can know -- God loves us and supports us and helps us every step of the way, and likewise, our job as Christians is to love and share our joy with them and let them know that God wants to be the "walking stick" in the same way he has been for us.

### **Intro to and Bible Reading 1**

Paul advises us to live in such a way that we do not impede others on their way to and/or growing in their trust in God. Later he writes that however the recipients of his ministry team responded to them, whether they believed it or not, they did everything possible to not hinder but to reinforce their faith by the example of their lives. They, and



we -- do this because that is what the Lord does for us. David rejoices that God stabilized his life's journey on this earth and prays that he still needs God's attention and help.

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, then he listened to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He taught me to sing a new song, a song of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed and will put their trust in the Lord... You have done many things for us, O Lord our God; there is no one like you! You have made many wonderful plans for us too numerous to list. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them. How I love to do your will, my God! I keep your teaching in my heart. May all who come to you be glad and joyful. May all who are thankful for your salvation always say, "How great is the Lord!" I am weak and poor and needy, but you have not forgotten me, you have kept me in your thoughts, you are my helper and my savior...

Psalm 40:1-3,5,8,16-17 (NLT, GNT)

[Paul writes the Corinthian believers] ...Be careful so that your freedom does not cause others who are weak in the faith to stumble and fall into sin. Suppose others whose conscience is weak sees you with your so-called "superior knowledge" [doing something that they see as wrong] will this not encourage them [to do that same thing?] So because of your "superior knowledge", this weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ.

1 Corinthians 8:9-12 (NLT, GNT)

We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our work. Instead, in everything we do we show that we are true servants of God. We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. Dear friends in Corinth! We have spoken honestly with you, and our hearts are open to you. There is no lack of love on our part.

2 Corinthians 6:3-4,8,11-12a (NLT, GNT)

**Music** What God does for us in Jesus marks the example of what we do for each other, and one of the primary things we do to avoid tripping up ourselves and others and ushering in peace is the attitude and act of forgiveness. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing

**Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive**  
**(to tune of O God our Help in Ages Past)**

Words: Rosamond E. Herklots 1966 © 1969, 1983 Rosamond E. Herklots Music: Attr. to William Croft 1872; harm. by W.H. Monk 1861,

1. "Forgive our sins as we forgive," you taught us, Lord, to pray;  
but you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.
2. How can your pardon reach and bless the unforgiving heart,  
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bitterness depart?
3. In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly knew:  
what trivial debts are owed to us, how great our debt to you!
4. Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls, and bid resentment cease;  
then, bound to all in bonds of love, our lives will spread your peace.

**Prayers** God of all nations, we thank you for the life and history of our country, for its vast beauty, its wilderness, and wealth of forest, field, and sea. We praise you for its people, whether they have been here for generations, or have just arrived. We thank you for the wide variety of our traditions and cultures, the riches of our spiritual and religious heritages, the strength of our democracy. We pray for our nation, our citizens, residents, and governments – so that working together -- we may face the future with confident hope and faith in your purpose for our nation and the world.

We thank you that in your grace, you offer the free blessings of salvation to all who will trust in you through Christ, who took the curse of disobedience for us, so that by faith in his work on the cross, we can be reborn and restored. Therefore, as Christians and citizens of this nation, we pray that just as a tree in the forest becomes tall reaching for the light – that may we grow above the shadows of sin, fear, and doubt. As it gives shelter and shade to its friends of fur and feather, so may we help the people that surround us. As the tree sends down roots deep into the soil that it may be nourished, may we be firmly grounded by the love of Christ and sustained by his grace. If a tree falls and decays, it provides nourishment for plants and gives its place in the sun for others. Our Lord and Savior died to make a new life and a new place for us. When a tree in the forest is cut down, its wood is used for shelter and fuel. Jesus taught that only when life is surrendered, when love is poured out, can we build his Kingdom and reflect the warmth of his spirit, and as a result, our nation will be blessed as well. May your compassionate grace motivate us to trust your word, follow your will and bring honor to your name in

every situation in our lives, and in the life of our nation. **Petitions** Today we offer prayers for those that need them, including \* Pat Schleh's friends who have undergone tests with unknown results, \* and Donna Webber who is having hip replacement surgery Friday. \* We also continue to pray for \* Mark Harper as he recovers from surgery that was scheduled last week. \* for Matt Eichorn and his family as he is in hospice, \* for Jim Malott who is awaiting test results, \* for Jan's brother Reese and son Calvin, \* For Cheri Holt's father-in-law "Bill" with pancreatitis, \* and others that are on our hearts and minds – meet each need, physical, behavioral, mental, spiritual, economic or circumstantial, meet those needs according to your will.

And finally Lord, we pray and dedicate a quilt for Kathy Tomaszewski, who is having back surgery, and we lift her before you today as we dedicate this quilt. We ask that you would be near Kathy today, that you would shower her with blessings and fill her with your Spirit. We ask that through this quilt, Kathy is renewed in faith, love and assurance offered by the prayers of this



congregation---as well as her trust in you. Let her feel the calm peace of your warming comfort as she wraps it around her. Let it give her confidence that the promise of your presence in our lives is real, through difficult as well as in joyous times. We ask that you give her your strength whenever she feels weak; and your patient understanding if she should have any challenges on this road to recovery. In all things, let her feel the care we offer to and for her through you. Let her look forward in anticipation to her healing and wholeness and all the abundance of possibilities that you have planned for her life. We pray this blessing through the One who has gone before us and endures forever and teaches us to pray. **Lord's Prayer**

## **Bible Reading 2**

Today we move deeper into the book of first Peter. Peter pictures us as people of God whose true home is in heaven. We are merely temporary residents in this world. This truth became even more relevant as predicted Christian persecution and martyrdom was probably already breaking out and would soon become state sanctioned. So what do we do while we travel through this earth? Peter wants us

to live as faithful sojourners, appreciating and respecting the culture in which we live -- loving people, yet representing the homeland and its characteristics proudly and in such a way that people indigenous to earth will honor our heavenly home and perhaps even join us on our journey there. He encourages us to do so by reminding us of the new life God has already created for us through Jesus. In response, Peter lays out the kind of people we are to be.

So get yourselves ready, prepare your minds for service, control yourselves, and put all your hope in looking forward as you focus on the gift of grace that will be ours when Jesus Christ returns. In the past you did not understand. But now you are children of God, so you should obey him as you put aside the evil desires you used to pursue. Since the One who chose and called you is holy, be holy in all you do. For in the Scriptures God says, "Be holy because I am holy."

You pray to God and call him Father. He judges everyone without partiality according to their actions. So while you are living out your days of exile here on earth, you should live with reverence and awe and respect for God. You know that in the past you were living in [an empty] way. It was a way of life you learned from those who lived before you. But you were saved from that useless life. You were bought, but not with things that perish like silver and gold. You were bought with the precious blood of Christ's death, who was like a pure and perfect sacrificial lamb.

God determined to send him before the world was made, but he was shown to the world in these last times for your sake. Through him, you trust in God. God raised Christ from death and gave him honor and glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

Now that you have made yourselves pure through your submission to the truth, you can experience real love for each other. So love each other deeply with all your [pure] heart.

You have been reborn. This new life did not come from something that eventually dies, but from something that is eternal and cannot die. You were born again through God's life-giving message that endures forever. For as Isaiah said,

All life is like the grass of spring,  
and any glory we enjoy is like the beauty of the wildflowers.

The grass dries up and dies, and the flowers fall.

But the word of the Lord will live forever.



This is the Good News that was told to you.

So then, get rid of all [hate-driven intentions] and deception, of hypocritical insincerity and jealousy and slander. Put all these things out of your life. Stop doing anything to hurt others. Be like newborn babies hungry for milk, crying out for spiritual milk, the pure and simple teaching that will help you grow and mature in your salvation. For you have already [tasted and] examined and found how good the Lord is.

1 Peter 1:13-2:3 (ICB, VOICE, ERV)

**Music** Last week we learned that it is Christ who enables us to shed to old life and enter the new life. We remain faithful to it by preparing ourselves to move deeper into that life by craving more and more of Christ and keeping by his side in all circumstances. Let's sing before the series prayer and sermon...

### **My Faith Looks Up to Thee**

Text: Ray Palmer, 1875, Music: Lowell Mason, 1831



1. My faith looks up to thee,  
thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!  
Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away,  
O let me from this day be wholly thine!
2. May thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire!  
As thou hast died for me, O may my love to thee  
pure, warm, and changeless be, a living fire!
3. While life's dark maze I tread, and griefs around me spread,  
be thou my guide; bid darkness turn to day, wipe sorrow's tears away,  
nor let me ever stray from thee aside.

### **Series Responsive Prayer with They'll Know...By Our Love (Ref only)**

Now join me on the worship series responsive prayer and musical response.

Pastor: God has mercifully chosen us to be his people, set apart and equipped to represent his excellence.

**C: Lord, as members of your kingdom, may we reflect your radiance while we live on this earth. Amen.**

(Inspired by 1 Peter 2:9-12, 2 Peter 1:3)

### **They'll Know We Are Christians By His Love**

Words and Music: Peter Scholtes © 1966 FEL Publications, assigned 1991 to Lorenz Corp

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love;  
yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love



## Sermon Craving the New Life

Steven Carter and Julia Sokol wrote a book entitled *Lives Without Balance: When You're Giving Everything You've Got and Still Not Getting What You Hoped For*. (Which sounds like a good description of the original people to whom Peter wrote, for they were faithful, and yet they were going to be facing persecution). Peter wrote to them about leaving behind the empty and meaningless life from which we have been saved. The co-authors use the imagery of 4 types of rides that describe the empty life. These are not in-depth metaphors, so don't overthink them, they are just a topic starter.

The first ride is running up the downward slide. We go to the park and run up the slide (not the steps). But this is not your average park slide -- it is too steep and very slippery, and we don't have the right shoes, and there is a horrible mud puddle at the bottom... In a Frank & Ernest cartoon, one said to the other: "The boss said I was the cornerstone of the organization -- and then I found out they were cutting corners." It seems like someone turned off the light at the other end of the tunnel, or to stay true to the image -- someone is beginning to push us back down from our upward progress up that slippery slide and down to the puddle where there is no return.... It becomes all too easy to stop investing ourselves in anyone or anything. We let the pull of gravity, the weight of external pressures guide our lives and our attitudes. It is a give up and give in way of life. That is the slide.

### The empty life (1) Slide

The second ride is the treadmill. You can probably imagine what it is already, right? We are always exhausted. We are afraid to slow down lest we lose ground or get thrown against the wall like we may see in so many video clips now. We expend all of our energy just to keep up, to stay in one place, to just -- survive. And that leaves us no energy for growth or for the more important things and people in our lives. It is a *little* better than the "giving in or giving up" mindset, but it is fares little better than merely trying to "keep up" as a way of life, and not getting ahead.

### The empty life (2) Treadmill

The third ride is the roller coaster. One minute we've climbed high with life, and work, and God and the next minute we are plunging down low, and it isn't an exhilarating thrill. We think we're in it for the love of the fast track -- we love the stress of success, but with it also comes the high blood pressure and ulcers and migraines and all the rest that comes with it that we don't like so much. Our lives are lifted

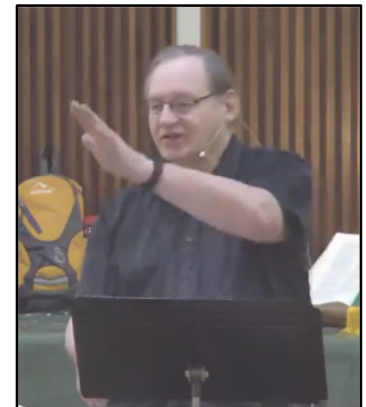
### The empty life (3) Roller Coaster

and plunged by our circumstances because we aren't proactive, we just respond to whatever happens to us. We don't run our life, our life runs us.

The last image is the escalator. We step on and we are lifted to success. [It reminds me of a time

#### The empty life (4) Escalator

when I was a little kid, and we were in a mall. I don't remember when it was or where it was, but it was a new (at least to us) mall, and it had escalators because at least one of the stores had a second floor. And I, as a little kid, I don't remember how small, either anticipated that the family was going up to that next level, or I was just curious, I don't remember my motivation, but anyway, I got on the escalator. About halfway up the family called out to me "We're not going that way!" And so I had to turn around and come back down – except – being a little kid, I was kind of afraid to run on this new contraption, and I couldn't walk down faster than the steps were carrying me up. And so I ended up on the next floor. And this was one of those stores where it was kind of weird where the up escalator wasn't right next to the down escalator, it was somewhere else in the store. And I don't know why the family didn't come up to get me, they just found the other one and called up from the other side, so I finally figured out where to go and got back down with my family. On the surface, this image could look to others like a full and busy life, we're moving up, we're doing things good. But in the context of the imagery our authors were giving, there is no floor to get off at. We are just going, never stopping, there is never enough so we have to keep on going, we are never secure, no matter how much we have or how much we've done. We must keep climbing and climbing and climbing with no purpose or end in sight. The climb is similar to Stephen Covey's ladder of (empty) success – we get to the top and realize there is nothing there - we've leaned out life's ladder against the wrong building, and there is no way to get back down.



I'm sure we've all experienced at least 1 or 2 or all of these emotions about life's circumstances at one time or another. But there is a difference between experiencing the rides that life throws at us and adopting it as an ongoing lifestyle.

Peter says we have been rescued from these and other futile ways of life. We used to not grasp God's grace, to understand God's grace, so we conformed to the patterns of evil living that was modeled before us and is modeled around us.

But these patterns led nowhere, or at least, nowhere we want to be; only back to evil desires; because these patterns are the result of leaving God out of the picture and putting selfish control and unhealthy types of gratification at the center.

The opposite of this empty life is the whole life, the full life, the holy life. Its

**The holy life (1) Genuine mutual love**

*focus* is not the result of rules and regulations, that'd just be another ride we go on. The focus of holiness is to love God and others wholly (with the "w"). Genuine mutual love is the goal of the holy life. This is the choice that Peter puts before us today: On the one hand, ultimately unsatisfying personal indulgence (which often includes harming others to get there) OR the pleasure and fulfillment of becoming a people who are loved and loving. First – a mutual love with God and his people, and his people with God.

Peter emphasizes how we live with respect to God. This may go beyond Peter's immediate intent here, but I don't think it goes beyond Biblical thought. Respect has two definitions, so I'll use a little word play with you. The first definition is "in respect to this matter", it is a topical thing. We live in respect to God. meaning we are always aware of him, we consider him, we pay attention to him. He is at the forefront as we choose what we do in life. A second meaning of respect is to honor, to esteem, to give highest regard. So put the two together and as we go through this life, we are always aware and attentive to God's presence and guidance, and that is important because we are honoring him as a person, and who has wisdom that we follow as we live out each day. I think that is a good way to think about what the NIV describes as living "in reverent fear" (and then they footnote it to say fear does not mean afraid, but living with a wholesome, reverent respect for God as we do everything in our life).

This is important because God does not play favorites, but judges each of

**The holy life (2) Does not pretend love**

us according to our own actions and the motivations of those actions, so we need to be aware of what is going on as we decide what we do. The cost of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection was too deep for God to play games and go along with the games that we play -- to pretend we are good and holy when we aren't. We may feel like we are building ourselves up and getting our way by knocking others down, but not in respect to God. Mutual love with others cannot be pretend any more than it can be with God.

Do you remember that classic, popular, secular song -- *The Games People Play*?  
A couple of the lyrics go like this,

Oh the games people play... Every night and every day...  
Never meaning what they say... Never saying what they mean...  
And they wile away the hours in their ivory towers

...  
People walking up to ya sayin "Glory, hallelujah"  
And they try to sock it to ya In the name of the Lord

...  
Look around and tell me what you see what's happening to you and me  
God grant me the serenity to remember who I am  
Cause you've given up your sanity for your pride and your vanity  
Turned your back on humanity And you don't [care anymore]

Why are so many so tempted to play these games? to knock others down to build themselves up? Why are so many so willing to play the race card, the gender card, the age card, the money card, the wild card, the rules card; but never the love card?

Peter hints at it -- we play the games in the name of finding our own personal security, and we have been trained by our world that we find that security in personal nest eggs, in physical resources. Peter says our new lives cannot be bought with silver or gold. Peter is not saying there is something wrong with wise investing and financial reserves. He is not contrasting money and faith as an either/or; as if your money is good then your faith must not be - or vice versa.

What he is telling us is that **The holy life (3) Relies on God's promises** *ultimately*, what will make us secure in the holy life is relying on the eternal promises of God, and not the temporary and tenuous securities of wealth. I love the way Peter puts it: he says that it is "silver and gold" that fades away and perishes. That's not what we think of when we think about silver and gold, is it? We usually think of them as the lasting kinds of resources. But he calls those temporary, those are fading away, those are tenuous and perishing.

Years ago, NASA decided to build a shelter for its huge rockets to assemble them and keep them protected from the frequent Florida rains. It brought in all its best scientists and think-tank experts and technofixers and engineers. They designed a single hangar-like building bigger than several city blocks. It was said to be the largest single-story building in the world.

The problem was that it was so big it generated its own weather. On humid days, rain clouds would form inside the building below the ceiling. Of course, with all those engineer and techno-fixers, they were able to solve the problem. But the idea is that they thought they were building a protective shelter, and it was secure at all.

Sometimes we rely too much on *our* programs and proposals and plans for our lives. But no proposal is big enough to protect us from the storms of life, or the threat of drifting towards irrelevance.

Against these false securities, Peter joyfully proclaims that our faith and

**The holy life (4) Responds in obedience**

hope is in God through Christ, and he stands beside us no matter how violent are our storms (remember many of his readers and Peter himself were already beginning to, or were about to face the threat of literal martyrdom). It is in this trust that allows us to plant seeds of promise as we obediently live our way into the future God has prepared for us. The holy life responds to Christ by loving God and others through him, or better, allowing him to love others through us.

Charles Plum was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected first, and parachuted into enemy hands where he spent six years as a prisoner. Later, he gave lectures about what he had learned from that experience.

One day, Plumb and his wife were in a restaurant enjoying a meal, and man at another table came up to him and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk!"

"How in the world did you know that?"

"I packed your parachute. I guess it worked!"

Plumb replied, "If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Later that night, a sleepless Plumb wondered how many times he might have passed him on the Kitty Hawk, seen him and not talked to him because he was a [high and mighty] fighter pilot, and that guy was "just a sailor".

He imagined the many hours the sailor had spent in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time, the fate of someone he didn't even know.

Now when Plumb lectures, he asks his audiences, "Who's packing your parachute? Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day."

Two applications: 1) Is Jesus your security chute? -- as you fly your missions for God? -- and 2) Do you live like we all need each other? As Ben Franklin said to John Hancock: We must all hang together, or we will all hang separately. Even we who are in the bowels of life are critical.

God judging equally means God will bless us if we do not play favorites with each other on the basis of any perceived better-ness or worse-ness. For God has a positive regard for each person. There are no second-rate citizens in the heavenly kingdom. What he desires for you and me is to be genuinely human together and before him. Therefore, it is love that securely liberates us.

Theologian Barbara Brown Taylor. Her nephew Will was having his 1st birthday party. The little boy was the center of everyone's attention, and so he did a little happy dance -- until a jealous 7-year-old named Jason charged over, put both of his hands on Will's chest and shoved. Will fell hard backwards, first on his bottom and then his head hit with a crack.

He was utterly stunned. No one had ever hurt him before. He didn't know what to make of it. Then he opened his mouth and howled. He quieted down as his mother helped him to his feet and hugged him. Then the first thing Will did in his one-year-old walking shoes, was toddle over to Jason. He knew Jason was at the bottom of this thing, but since meanness was new to him, he didn't know what to do about it. And so, he did what he always did. He put his arms around Jason and laid his head against him, against that mean little boy's body.

And Brown said, what Will did to Jason put an end to the meanness in that room. That is what love is... not only a warm feeling between like-minded friends, but plain old imitation of Christ, who took all the meanness of the world and ran it through the filter of his own body, repaying evil for good, blame with pardon, death with life.

## **Communion**

**Invitation** Communion reminds us that it is by Jesus' death that we are enabled to choose and live a new life in him and with others. Jesus invites all who love him and who earnestly seek to follow his ways and to live in peace with one another. Let's prepare by a time of confession.

## **Confession, Assurance**

Almighty God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart or our neighbors as ourselves, or even ourselves – not always. We gamble with our health, we ignore right living, we choose indulgence over discernment. We

separate ourselves from your people and fragment our lives, imagining that we can chase distorted drives and passions without hurting our spirits.

But through Jesus you offer to take us on a kind of ride where we are empowered by our trust in you alone. It is not a ride filled with false securities leading to an empty dead end, but to an exhilaration that can only be found in life in you. We are secure in Jesus, the perfect sacrificial lamb who died for us. Because of your promises in him, we can now set aside the life we lived when we didn't know better, and begin to live life for all it is worth, because we have experienced how good you are. By your example, we invest in people. We follow Jesus Christ – who, though the Son of God, trusted not in his superiority, not in his sinlessness, not in his superior knowledge, but he trusted in you, his heavenly Father and gave every part of his being to following your will. By your mercy, empower us to be and do the same.

**Music** Let's continue to prepare our hearts for Communion by singing...

***Take My Life , and Let It Be***

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1873

Music: Louis J.F. Herold, 1839 ; arr. by George Kingsley, 1839

1. Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.  
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.
3. Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.  
Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure-store.  
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

**The Great Thanksgiving (Bold font spoken with congregation)**

We receive God's healing. He speaks his peace to us and we shall be made whole -- for through the work of Jesus Christ we have been forgiven. We are forgiven, therefore,

The Lord be with you **And also with you.**

Lift up you 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.**

For God, you embodied yourself in humanity. You lived out your life among those who were sick physically, mentally, and spiritually. You reached out to touch them,



you spoke words to comfort them, you performed miracles to forgive and heal them. We thank you that you shared Jesus with us so that we could find forgiveness and be saved. 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.**

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

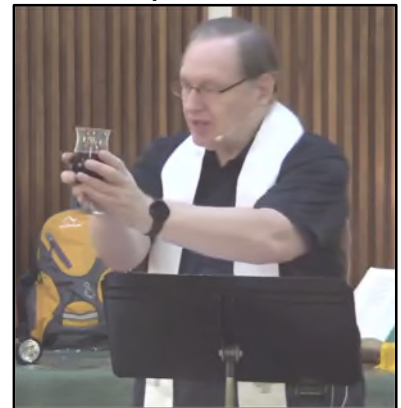
**Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Spirit on all who have gathered here, and on the gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be the body of Christ together in ministry to the world until we feast together at his heavenly banquet. All honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (God) now and forever.  
**Amen.**

### **The Bread and Cup**

Jesus invited his disciples into an upper room on the night he was betrayed. 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]....



**Communion Blessing** Now, Lord, through your acceptance and grace and forgiveness that is expressed through Communion, we cling to our relationship with you. Continue to crave to have our lives shaped by your will. Daily, be it sunny or stormy, encourage us to choose life, to choose love, to choose to listen and trust and obey. Amen.

**Music** Now with minds renewed and spirits strengthen from the table, let's sing

**Now Let Us From This Table Rise  
(to tune of Jesus Shall Reign)**

Words: Fred Kaan, 1964 © 1968 Hope Publishing House

Music: John Hatton, 1793

1 Now let us from this table rise renewed in  
body, mind, and soul; with Christ we die and  
live again, his selfless love has made us whole.

2 With minds alert, upheld by grace to spread the  
word in speech and deed, we follow in the  
steps of Christ, at one with all in hope and need.

4 Then grant us courage, Father God, to choose a -  
gain the pilgrim way, and help us to ac-  
cept with joy the challenge of tomorrow's day.

**Blessing** As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart. Therefore, as we return to the world to resume our temporary travels on this earth, remember that every decision we make, every action we take, even word that comes out of our mouth is done in the name of the Lord who is with us every step of the way. Amen.

First line is Proverbs 27:19 (NIV)

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