

Straight from the "Hart"

September 3, 2023

Prepare – on the Foundation



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

Apostle's Creed

Opening Prayer

God of hope, amid an often-troubled world, where darkness seems powerful, we have come that you can again open our eyes to the light of your presence. Give us faith to stay focused against the voices of division and distraction. Through your Spirit, continue to remake us into hope-filled disciples, discovering in each other lives that are tuned in to your wonder, sparking in ourselves each other, and beyond, a desire to know you more. We pray this in the name of Jesus who comes to us. Amen. -ad. from Rev. Nancy J, on her blog, wonderings through life and other such nonsense.

Call to Worship

We have gathered that the Christ who walks on wounded feet will walk with us. We have come that the Christ who serves with wounded hands may equip us to stretch out our hands in service. We have joined together so that the Christ who loves with a wounded heart may open our hearts to be loved and to love. We are called to worship so that we may learn to see the face of Christ in everyone we meet, and that everyone we meet may see the face of Christ in us.

-- ad. from Traditional Celtic in Worship & Song, Leader's Edition.

Music And so together let's join in our praise of our Creator who equips us for the task of seeing Christ in others, and enabling others to see Christ in us...

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Text: Joachim Neander 1680, vv 1,3 tr. by Catherine Winkworth, 1863
v 4 tr. By Rupert E Davies, 1983 © 1989 UM Publishing House

Music: Erneueren Gesangbuch; 1665, harm. by William Sterndale Bennett, 1864

1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation.
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear --, now to his temple draw near;
join me in glad adoration!

3. Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.

Ponder anew --- what the Almighty can do,
 who with his love doth befriend thee.

4. Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,
 Fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee.

Then to thy need God as a mother doth speed.

Spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

Theme

In yesterday's Upper Room, the author spoke about being surprised by a snake while doing yard work. He got online to discover if it was dangerous, concluded it wasn't, but then texted his father to make sure because he didn't completely trust the internet (which is a good thing – because you often don't know who is on the other end of the information you are reading), but he knew and trusted his father's knowledge for his final answer on this subject.

There are lots of places we can go for answers in life, he reflected, but when we want to be confident of our next steps, our heavenly Father is the one to ask, trust, and obey. We can trust that he will give us good advice and sound direction... That is why David found so much value and joy in God's law. He didn't see it as prohibitive, but as something that enhanced and prospered his life, and the lives of those who followed God's way. Of course, not all will seek out God, they only way they will see who God is and what he wants for his creation is by looking to us...

Max Lucado is on an airplane and notices a rabbi reading. He strikes up a conversation and is told this parable about honoring God by the way we live. This is a short version.

A CEO has an office on the top floor of a Manhattan skyscraper. Most people have not seen him, but they have met his daughter, who works in the building for her father.

Unfortunately, she exploits her family position by making demands on people. She orders the guard at the front door to go down the street and buy her a Danish. The guard is torn between the duties of keeping the building safe and obeying the daughter. Reluctantly, the guard leaves his post and does as he is told. Meanwhile he is thinking, "If the daughter is like this, what does that say about her father?"

The daughter encounters a secretary who is carrying an armload of papers needing to be copied and collated for an afternoon meeting. Stopping her, she orders her to forget her project and instead clean her office. Since this is the boss' daughter, what choice does the secretary have? So she is put even further behind

her overwhelming task. She thinks, if the daughter is like this, then what must her father be like?

The daughter goes through her day, behaving in this irritating, demanding way, stifling the life of all in the building. She never uses the name of her father to order people around, but the connection is obvious: “And if this is what she is like, then what does that say about her father?”

Now suppose the daughter undergoes a change of behavior. Suppose, instead of ordering the guard to get her a muffin, she brings him one. Suppose, instead of ordering the secretary to interrupt what she is doing, instead she stops to help the secretary get that big job done. What if she expresses concern for the families of these employees, brings them coffee, and generally greets everyone in a spirit of concern and kindness.

Although she does not use the name of her father, that people are saying, “If this is what the daughter is like, then what must the father be like?” The rabbi pointed out, “They’ve not seen him. They’ve not met him. But they know his child, so they know his heart.”

God wants to reveal himself not only to his people, but to his world. Therefore, he has always gone out of his way to make himself, his character, and his ways known to his people so that we can reveal him to others. For not everyone will study and live the Word – as the saying goes, “We may be the only Bible some people will ever see.” Therefore, God has shown *us* his ways so clearly that King and Psalmist David says we shouldn’t be able to miss it. It is on this foundational knowledge that we build our lives, enabling us to do well in representing him to the world.

Bible Reading

The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; every night they make him known. Without speech, sound, or word, their voice is never heard, yet their message has gone to the end of the world... bursting forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding. It rejoices with delight like an athlete eager to run his race... [like the sun that] rises at one side of the sky, circles around to the other side, and nothing escapes from its heat.



The instructions of the Lord are perfect, restoring the inner person. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the thoughtless. The precepts of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living. Reverence for the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The rulings of the Lord are true; each one is altogether fair. They are more desirable than even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey dripping from the comb. Through them your servant is warned; in obeying them there is great reward. From Psalm 19:1-11 (NLT, CJB)

Special Music

God reveals himself to us through the directions he has given, and more generally he reveals himself in the order and in the majestic grandeur of creation that surrounds us. He continues to maintain and sustain it by its built in systems and by trusting his people to care for it. If we listen, we can hear it singing to us, and though sometimes it seems messed up, he is the ruler yet. Listen to Donna and Kathy as they play a medley of:



This is My Father's World, He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Music

What we discover as God reveals himself is that he is a God of order, but even more, a God of care and love, ultimately expressed in the life of Jesus. It is because of his love for us that we love him. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing

O How I Love Jesus

Words: Frederick Whitfield, 1855, Music: 19th cent. USA melody

1. There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth;
it sounds like music in my ear, the sweetest name on earth.

Refrain

O how I love Jesus, O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus, because he first loved me!

2. It tells me of a Savior's love, who died to set me free;
it tells me of his precious blood, the sinner's perfect plea.

Refrain

3. It tells of one whose loving heart can feel my deepest woe;
who in each sorrow bears a part that none can bear below.

Refrain

Prayers Gracious God, we praise you! You revealed your love for the world, and for us, in Jesus' self-offering on the cross. We are grateful that you speak to us through nature, by your Word, your Spirit, and through the saints throughout history and today.

Therefore, enlighten our hearts because sometimes we just don't get it, or maybe we just aren't paying attention. If our bulb is burned out, change us. If our dimmer is set on low, spin us up high. Help us understand. Christ died, yet you caused him to live. Now he is in charge of everything, including us. By that same power, rescue us from death and let Christ rule in our hearts. (portion ad. from © 2011 Robert D. Ingram in W&S,LE). **Petitions** Specifically, Lord, We continue to pray for: * Sherrie Rice's Emily Ann * for Jan's Reese and Calvin, for Jan's Kaylynn, * Jan's Fannie Williams, * and Mary Jo Bell's Michael * and Rich Nowak, tests this week; and Randy Bell ended his treatments, so we pray when the results of their effectiveness is tested, it will prove good results. * and there are others that we have not named out loud today but they are always close to us so we take a moment of silence to lift those to you ...

Now Lord, restore our hope, secure our inheritance, enlighten us again, that we can thank you and learn to live as you taught us to pray... **Lord's Prayer**

Responsive Reading

While perhaps expressed differently among the major religions, the foundational principles upon which spiritual people build their lives generally boil down to the same thing – they speak to how we treat God and how we treat others... and all agree on the same treatments. This teaches us that the principles are universally built into the warp and woof of humanity's intended design... The essence of these principles was first spoken through Moses, and then their application was elaborated on through the centuries.

Therefore, experts in the law tested Jesus by asking what is the most important commandment (See Matthew 22:34ff, Mark 12:28ff), and on one occasion, Jesus made the expert give what ended up being the same the answer to the question: What must I do to inherit eternal life? (Luke 10:25 ff) This responsive reading is based on the answer, which alludes to the God-given principles Moses laid down as well.



(P: Pastor C: Reader w/ Congregation)

P: Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind and soul.

C: We will love God with an intensity such that no substitute will suffice. The very mention of God's name will be precious as we cleave to our time of communion with the sacred.

P: Love your neighbor as yourself.

C: We will respect the wisdom of our elders. We will protect the lives and the reputations of those around us. We will cherish the relationships entrusted to us. We will not take what is not ours. We will learn the value of enough.

P: Love the Lord your God.

C: Amen.

ad from — (based on Exodus 20: 1-17 and Matthew 22: 37-38)
© 2002 Katherine Hawker, posted on her website, "Liturgy Outside."

Music The commands of the law are not supposed to be grounded in oppressive rules of manipulative control that keep us from being what want to be, but in God's love for us who wants us to thrive, together, as a community of his people. If comfortable, let's stand before the sermon and sing of his greatest expression of love – in the love of Jesus.

Jesus Love Me

Words: Anna B. Warner (st 1), 1860 and David Rutherford McGuire (sts 2, 3)

Music: William B. Bradbury, 1862

1. Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

2. Jesus loves me! This I know, as he loved so long ago,
taking children on his knee, saying, "Let them come to me."

Refrain

3. Jesus loves me still today, walking with me on my way,
wanting as a friend to give light and love to all who live.

Refrain

Sermon Prepare -- on the Foundation

God reveals himself in nature. Everyone can be awed by a deep starry night. God reveals himself through his law. Many people, when they think law, especially

religious law, think about binding restrictions that were purposed to control us rather than protect us, to take away our pleasure instead of preventing our pain, to eliminate our freedom rather than build our faith, to pacify and control the masses rather than explain how we can function together as a society. People who feel this way long to rebel by claiming they are outdated **and irrelevant and have no consequences.**

How different is the attitude of our Psalmist who sees God's law as joy-giving, insightful, pure and lasting, true and fair; Like the skies, they are so wonderful we should admire and chase after them even more than we chase after material wealth, they are more satisfying than (fill in your greatest food temptation), David called it honey from the comb. I was at an event in which I was given a box of honey on the comb. I had never seen it presented that way before and I guess someone who knew better saw me trying to figure out what to make of it, and he leaned over and said, "honey like that is the most expensive, premier quality stuff". David understood that God's law and warns us away from experiencing the terrible consequences that can be created by lawless living and by heeding its warning we are lead to abundant blessing.

Paraphrasing Immanuel Kant, The more we reflect in awe on the heavens above and the moral law within, Kant saw them as clearly understandable and relevant – they immediately connect with the core or our existence. (*Critique of Practical Reason*)

Last week as we prepared for a new normal in our lives, we find that what that new normal looks like for each of us will be guided by allowing the Bible's message of Christ fill our hearts and lives. This week, then, as we look at foundational principles found in the Bible, we will, primarily let it speak for itself. There may be a few minor grammatical adjustments to help with the flow of the readings, but I trust that each passage will not lose its intended meaning. I'll insert some transitions and ideas along the way, and from time to time, I'll ask you to read something with me.

Normal black font – Pastor comments **Bold Green font – NLT Bible quoted**
Bold gold font pastor with congregation quoting NLT Bible
Normal red Font – Unspoken direction Bold Red Font - Visual Action

Then God gave the people all these instructions: "I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. (Exodus

20:1-2) Even before we had a relationship with God, he demonstrates the value of being in relationship with him. He initiates the offer of relationship by his wondrous works, and that never changes, or ... **Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price.** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20a)

We must honor God. (1 Corinthians 6:19:20b)

But how do God's people establish and maintain that honorable relationship with him? I fondly call them the ten and the two. Through Moses, God gave ten foundational principles of how to live together as God's people. Jesus, in a conversation with law experts, summed them up in two commands. He said, **No other commandment is greater than these.**" (Mark 12:31b) The Law expert agreed, saying **These are more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.**" (Mark 12:33d) to which Jesus, realizing how much the man understood, said to him, **"You are not far from the Kingdom of God."** (Mark 12:34a)

The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments. (Matthew 16:40)

Jesus said, **"The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord.**

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. (Mark 12:29-30) **(Light big candle 1)**

The teacher of religious law replied, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other. And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, (Mark 12:32-33a)

(Pause) If we are going to love God with all that we are, then God says

You must not have any other god but me. (Exodus 20:3) **(Light little candle 1)**

We are his first priority of love, and He is to be our first priority and *nothing* should compete for that place of supremacy in our life.



(Pause) If we are going to love God with all that we are, then God says

You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind. (Exodus 20:4a) **(Light little candle 2)**

or [make] an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God (much of what we call jealousy today would more accurately called envy, or it is a negative emotion born of insecurity or paranoia, but here it expresses the proper emotion we feel when we rightfully and exclusively belong *only* to each other, and) **I will not tolerate your affection for any other gods** (or priorities).” (Exodus 20:4b-5a) **For what union can there be between God’s temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: “I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.** (2 Corinthians 6:16) **So I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.** (Exodus 20:5b-6) We cannot not influence those closest to us by our actions or inactions, and future generations cannot help but be impacted by how we choose to live. **You are reasonable people. God is faithful to us. He will not allow temptation to be more than you can stand... So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.** (1 Cor 10:15a,13a-14b)

(Pause) If we are going to love God with all that we are, God says

You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. (Exodus 20:7a) **(Light little candle 3)**

The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. (Exodus 20:7b) When you love someone, you don’t needlessly call out their name. Imagine that when something bad happens and you call out the name of your spouse or child or parent. They come running, and you say, “Never mind, I wasn’t talking to you.” You don’t do that to people you love. And you certainly try not to do things in their name that are not worthy of their name. You want to make the family proud. Of course, it does happen. Jesus warned us, **“Don’t let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many.** (Mark 13:5b-6) Peter also warns us that **there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them.** (2 Peter 2:1b)

Do you remember the story we told earlier about the boss's daughter? The rabbi created that story to explain to Lucado how this third commandment instructed us to live for God's glory. Like most of us, Lucado was puzzled because we are usually taught that this command is (only) about word choices. The rabbi said, "Don't think language, think lifestyle." This command calls us to elevate the name, the reputation of God to the highest place." It is how we live as God's people that profanes his name if we do it wrong, or honors his name if we do it right.

So instead of misusing God's name, making it vane and empty, revere it. **Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be** (set apart as holy, honored, and sacred) **hallowed be your name.** (Matthew 6:9)

(Pause) If we are going to love God with all that we are, God says

Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. (Exodus 20:8)

(Light little candle 4)

You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work... For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. (Exodus 20:9-11) In difficult days of unending hard labor just to survive, God had to foresight to design *for* us a day to refresh our bodies and renew our spirits.

Admittedly, by Jesus' day this law had gotten so over-regulated and twisted that it was one of Jesus' favorite points of contention with the religious elite. But lest we think it no longer applies, I see article after article about how Americans are over-stressed and under-rested. We need to get away from thinking that it was a day designed to exercise heavy handed control over every activity in the name of God, and get back to its spirit – that is, that **The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath.** (Mark 2:27) So **Jesus [invites us], "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest...for your souls.** (Matthew 11:28,29b) and that **those who worship the Lord on a special day do it to honor him.** (Romans 14:6a) and that **there is a [Sabbath] rest still waiting for the people of God... So let us do our best to enter that rest.** (Hebrews 4:9,11)

(Pause) We love God with all that we are is the greatest command. **The second is equally important:**

Love your neighbor as yourself. (Mark 12:31) **(Light big candle 2)**

The law expert agreed, **I know it is important ... to love my neighbor as myself.** (Mark 12:33a,c) **These—and other such commandments** (as will follow) **—are summed up in this one commandment** (Romans 13:9b). So, how do we love our neighbor? It begins at home.

(Pause) If we love our neighbor as ourselves, then God says

Honor your father and mother. (Exodus 20:12a) **(Light little candle 5)**

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do... This is the first commandment with a promise: If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1-3) But Jesus illustrates how we can fool ourselves. He said, **For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. [Your] worship is a farce, for you teach man-made ideas as commands from God.”** (Matthew 15:4b-6,9) **But those who won’t care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith.** (1 Timothy 5:8) **Instead, the church family should take care of any widow who has no one else to care for her. But if she has children or grandchildren, their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them. This is something that pleases God.** (1 Timothy 5:3)

(Pause) If we love our neighbor as ourselves, then God says

You must not murder. (Exodus 20:13) **(Light little candle 6)**

Yes, ...our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ But I, [Jesus], say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment!... go and be reconciled to that person. (Matthew 5:21-22a,24b) **For a person who has no love is still dead. Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don’t have eternal life within them.** (1 John 3:14b-15) **But if we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.** (1 John 3:14a,16)

(Pause) If we love our neighbor as ourselves, then God says

You must not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14) **(Light little candle 7)**

For the believing wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the believing husband brings holiness to his marriage [resulting in holy children]. (1 Corinthians 7:14) so **give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage.** (Hebrews 13:4a) The word adultery, adulterate – means to water down, weaken, to make impure. As much as it is within your power, be faithful in the relationships to which you have committed yourself. **(Pause)** If we love our neighbor as ourselves, then God says

You must not steal. (Exodus 20:15) **(Light little candle 8)**

For the thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. [Jesus'] purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. (John 10:10) So, we **must not ... steal, but must show ourselves to be entirely trustworthy and good. Then we will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every way.** (Titus 2:9b-10) So **if you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.** (Ephesians 4:28)

(Pause) If we love our neighbor as ourselves, then God says

You must not testify falsely against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16) **(Light little candle 9)**

You are not to be bought or otherwise pressured to twist the truth to benefit those who would manipulate lives and the legal system to benefit themselves. Near the end of Jesus' ministry, **the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus, so they could put him to death.** (Matthew 26:59) On the other hand, even Jesus' enemies (though perhaps insincerely) recognized his integrity: **"Teacher," they said, "we know how honest you are. You are impartial and don't play favorites. You teach the way of God truthfully.** (Mark 12:14a) Following Christ's example then, **Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body** (Ephesians 4:24-25), **always ready to do what is good, not slandering anyone and avoiding quarrels. We should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.** (Titus 3:1b-2)

(Pause) Finally, if we love our neighbor as ourselves, then God says

You must not covet. (Exodus 20:17a) **(light little candle 10)**

anything else that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:17c) Craving what belongs to others to have as our own leads to the temptation to break all the other "loving neighbor" commandments. Therefore, **"Beware! Guard against every**

kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.” (Luke 12:15) people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.



(1 Timothy 6:9-10) So learn to be content with whatever you have. (Philippians 4:11b) For true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. (1 Timothy 6:6) We should be satisfied with what we have. For God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.” (Hebrews 13:5) And even more, if someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person? (1 John 3:17) we should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. (1 Timothy 6:18) (Pause)

So the highly valued, desirable, sweet, foundational, law is before us. Don’t misunderstand. Jesus did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, he came to accomplish their purpose. (Matthew 5:17) to return it from a religious system’s externally imposed legalism to, as David felt it – a heart-felt desire to know and do what is right in God’s eyes. Paul sums this up – Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit. (Romans 7:6)

I died to the power of the law when I died with Christ [to sin]... The law showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, “You must not covet.” But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power. (Romans 7:4b,7c-8)

Does that mean the law of God is sinful? (Romans 7:7a)

Of course not! When I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life, and I died. So I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead. Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good. (Romans 7:7b, 9b-12)

But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause death? (Romans 7:13a)

Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes. So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. (Romans 7:13b-14) This is what the law points out to us: That we need an intervener to save us from our all too human (sinful) nature that separates us from our Father in heaven.

Communion Invitation

Which draws us to the Communion table – where we are offered a new or renewed covenant relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All who desire to live by the Spirit of the law are free to participate. Let's prepare by a time responsively praying this Confession...

Responsive Confession

So, Lord, you see how it is: In our minds we really want to obey your law, but because of our sinful nature, sin imprisons us. We have discovered this principle of life—that when we want to do what is right, and we do, for We love your law with all our heart.

[yet] we inevitably do what is wrong. [For] there is another power within us that is at war with our minds. This power makes us slaves to the sin that is still within us. Oh, what miserable people we are!

Who will free us from this life that is dominated by sin and death? (Romans 7:25b, 21-25a, 8:1-2 adapted into a prayer form)

Invitation to the Water

It is in the wilderness of sin and death that we find our new foundation in Jesus. So you have your piece of paper. **Which foundational Judeo-Christian ethic (which command) may I need to work on more diligently?** (repeat) Perhaps the struggle is not so much with the commands but our externally legalistic reception and fulfillment of them. They have not yet become joyously internalized. Or maybe something else is going on in your life that supersedes the topic of the day that you need to bring to the Lord – or, lacking any of these things – let the paper simply represent you bringing your whole self to the living waters,

[Pour water into bowl] where I will stir them and they will dissolve into a cloud of prayers to our God.

Think about what you want to put on your paper while I sing a song. When I finish, they will continue to play. At that point you can bring your papers forward to the living water... Let's prayerfully meditate as I sing



Special Music **Wild and Lone the Prophet's Voice**

Words: Carl P. Daw, Jr © 1989 Hope Publishing Co.
Music: David Ashley White © 1996 Selah Publishing Co.

1. Wild and lone the prophet's voice echoes through the desert still,
calling us to make a choice, bidding us to do God's will:
"Turn from sin and be baptized; cleanse your heart and mind and soul.
Quitting all the sins you prized, yield your life to God's control."
- 2a. "Bear the fruit repentance sows: lives of justice, truth, and love.
Trust no other claim than those; set your heart on things above.
- 3b. So we dare to journey on, led by faith through ways untrod,
till we come at last like John to behold the Lamb of God.



Assurance

So, who is it that will equip us to reach our ethical goal? **Who will free us from this life that is dominated by sin and death?**

Thank you God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. (Romans 7:25b, 21-25a, 8:1-2 adapted into a prayer form) Therefore, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Christ, you are forgiven.

ALL: Glory to God, Amen.

Great Thanksgiving (pastor normal font, bold – pastor with congregation)

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

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. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we do 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. 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. 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, now and forever. **Amen.**

...every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again. You should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. so that we are being disciplined [and] not condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:26,28b,32b) For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him [and his work on the cross]. "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. (John 3:17-18)

On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Take and Eat] In the same way, he took the cup of [the vine] after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." [Take and Drink] (1 Corinthians 11:23b-25)

Series Blessing

Now having received from the Lord's table, Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

18th Cent. aphorism, attr. to John Wesley

Go to the World

Words: Sylvia G Dunstan, © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc.

Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

Go to the world! Go into ev'ry place.
Go live the Word of God's redeeming grace.
Go seek God's presence in each time and space.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

Pstr: Amen. **C: Amen**