

Straight from the "Hart"

June 16, 2024 – Father's Day
Enemies of Abundant Living (15)



HARTLAND

Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve

Where is the Love?

Welcome to the Hartland UMC worship service script. We are glad you are participating in today's time of worship through this printed version. Hartland UMC will be hosting guest speakers over the next two Sundays, and July 7th will bring a new pastor when 'Straight From the "Hart"' may resume, take on a different form or ? It was a pleasure to minister to you through this medium.

Pastor Chuck Williams.

Music Let's begin by singing with the praise band How Great is Our God

How Great is Our God

Words: Ed Cash, Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves Music: Arr. by Jeff Anderson
© 2004 Alletrop Music

The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light, and darkness tries to hide;
it trembles at his voice, it trembles at his voice.

Chorus

How great is our God! Sing with me, "How great is our God!"
And all will see how great, how great is our God!
Age to age he stands, and time is in his hands;
Beginning and the End, Beginning and the End.
The Godhead, three in one, Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb.

Chorus

Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing, "How great is our God!"

Repeat

Chorus

Opening Prayer

Lord, we have gathered that you may enrich our lives as we journey with you toward abundant living. All of our gifts and resources and time and energy are made possible by your love for us. What we return to you of our resources and ourselves is an expression of our love for you. Accept them and us to make a positive difference in your world. In Jesus name, Amen.

Call to Worship

Come to worship, come to Jesus – for he is our life, our joy, our all. He is our true friend who watches over us and provides us with his strength as we follow him, blessing us with a beautiful life that has no end of eternal joy.

Inspired by portions of “Jesus is All the World to Me” by Will L Thompson).

Music We have come to worship the one who came to save us and be our God. You may be seated as we sing:



Here I Am to Worship

Words and Music: Tim Hughes, arr by Jeff Anderson
© 2001 Thank You Music

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness,
opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you,
hope of a life spent with you.

Chorus

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God.
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days, oh, so highly exalted, glorious in heaven above.
Humbly you came to the earth you created, all for love's sake became poor.

Chorus (2x)

I'll never know how much it costs to see my sin upon that cross.
I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross.

Chorus (2x)

Father's Day Tribute / Prayer

This is Father's Day, and so in honor of all Dads or people who have filled that role, I read this poem by Edgar Albert Guest entitled

Only a Dad

Only a dad, with a tired face, Coming home from the daily race,
Bringing little of gold or fame, To show how well he has played the game,
But glad in his heart that his own rejoice To see him come, and to hear his voice.

Only a dad, with a brood of four, One of ten million men or more.
Plodding along in the daily strife, Bearing the whips and the scorns of life,

With never a whimper of pain or hate, For the sake of those who at home await.

Only a dad, neither rich nor proud, Merely one of the surging crowd
Toiling, striving from day to day, Facing whatever may come his way,
Silent, whenever the harsh condemn, And bearing it all for the love of them.

Only a dad, but he gives his all To smooth the way for his children small,
Doing, with courage stern and grim, The deeds that his father did for him.
This is the line that for him I pen, Only a dad, but the best of men.

Let's pray

Our heavenly Father, bless the fathers who are on earth; who work hard every day to light a path and show the way... who praise your name in the course of daily life... strengthen their faith in you, their providing God. Nourish them with your love and justice, empower them with determination, with the fruit of your Spirit, always reminding them how Jesus gave himself for us, demonstrating that there are many ways for a man to give of himself, to work for the forgiveness that leads to peace with all people near and far. Bring them wisdom and spiritual strength to live in a way that brings glory to you and your kingdom on this earth. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

adapted from portions of Father's Day Prayer by Rev Marilyn E Thornton © 2009

Theme

It is not only fathers, but all people who seek to be loved and to love well. "True love is the most powerful way to change the world from the inside out, and it starts with ourselves."

Once upon a time, there was once an incredibly rich, beautiful, and wise Princess. She got tired of men who were more interested in her money than her. She decided to announce that she would marry whoever managed to make the most valuable, tender, and sincere gift of all.

The palace became filled with flowers and gifts of every kind, letters describing undying love, and love-struck poems. Among all these wonderful gifts, she found a simple dirty pebble. Intrigued, she demanded to see whoever it was who had offered this gift. Despite her curiosity, she pretended to be highly offended by the gift when the young man was brought before her. He explained it to her like this, "Dear Princess, this pebble represents the most valuable thing one can give - it is my heart. It is also sincere, because it is not yet yours, and it is as hard as a stone. Only when it fills with love will it soften and be more tender than any other."

Well, that intrigued the princess. She took the pebble with her wherever she went. She started pursuing the giver of the pebble with gifts and attention, but she did

not win his heart. It remained like stone in her hands. Eventually she lost hope and ended up throwing the pebble in the fire. In the heat, the hardened sand around it crumbled revealing a beautiful golden gem beneath. The Princess understood that she herself would have to be like the fire that separates what is useless from what is truly important.

She set about changing the kingdom, and devoted her life, her wisdom, and her riches to revealing what is truly valuable. Her words and actions demonstrated that she sacrificially cared about the people of her kingdom, enabling the hungry to eat and the ability to have books to learn, and all the rest. People became enchanted with her because she loved so very so much. She gave off such warmth that they started calling her 'The Princess of Fire'.

And the fire of her caring for everyone reached the pebble giver and it melted his hard heart too. So just as she, and then he promised, they married and lived happily ever after.

Princess of Fire by Pedro Pablo Sacristán, freestoriesforkids.com

The Bible says that God will be like a refiner's fire, purifying our hearts, (See Malachi 3:2-4) enabling us to love more fully, so we can make a big difference for good in ourselves, the people around us, and beyond. Love's power works its way out into everything but it starts within our hearts, and it is made available in our hearts as the mystery of Christ is made known to us, and then through us.

Responsive Reading 1 (R: Reader, C: Pastor with Congregation)

R: God's grace was given so that the mystery of Christ is made known — namely, that through the gospel all people together are members of one body and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.

C: We become empowered servants of the gospel by the gifts of God's grace.

R: Through the church, we are called to make plain to everyone God's wisdom, who accomplished his eternal purposes in Christ.

C: That purpose is that through faith in Christ we can approach God with freedom and confidence.

R: This is what we pray — that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen us with power through his Holy Spirit in our inner being, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, and being rooted and established in love —

C: we may have power, with all God's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ —

R: — and to know that this love surpasses knowledge,

C: that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Music Let's sing about that Savior's love that we count on through every storm and that we are to make known to any who will listen.... Let's sing Cornerstone.

Cornerstone

Words and Music: Edward Mote, Reuben Morgan, Jonas Myrin, Eric Liljero
© 2012 Hillsong Music Publishing

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean in Jesus' name.

Chorus

Christ alone, cornerstone; weak made strong in the Savior's love.
Through the storm he is Lord, Lord of all.

When darkness seems to hide his face, I rest on his unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil,
my anchor holds within the veil.

Chorus

He is Lord, Lord of all.

Chorus

When he shall come with trumpet sound Oh, may I then in him be found;
dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless stand before the throne.

Chorus (2x)

Music Now let's prepare our hearts for prayer by continuing to sing of his worth and offering our devotion to him.

Offering

Words and Music: Paul Baloche arr by Lura Foster
© 2003 Integrity's Hosanna! Music

The sun cannot compare to the glory of your love;
there is no shadow in your presence.
No mortal man would dare to stand before your throne,
before the Holy One of Heaven.
It's only by your blood, and it's only through your mercy, Lord, I come.

I bring an offering of worship to my King.
No one on earth deserves the praises that I sing.
Jesus, may you receive the honor that you're due.

O Lord, I bring an offering to you.
(repeat this section)

I bring an offering of worship to my King.
No one on earth deserves the praises that I sing.
I bring an offering of praises to my King.

Prayers Almighty God, you sit on your throne above all, and yet through Jesus you have freely chosen to live and walk among us, even among those who refuse to acknowledge your presence. We come to you as our refuge and sanctuary from the struggles of our week, and we put our hope in you when despondency and despair persistently haunt our spirits. Comfort us and/or convict us with the stillness of your in-spiriting presence. Continue enabling us to sense your open, inviting arms and to trust in the strength of your hands – desiring to free us from the chains of evil temptations and healing us from intentional or accidental wounds, that we may continue to take confidence in you and in your saving deeds and powerful providential care. It is with assurance of who you are and what you desire for your people that we place our requests and our praises into your hands

Petitions Karen Nowak requests prayers for her sister Eva, who is going in for heart surgery tomorrow. We give thanks for the Lemon's sister Dorothy who had successful delicate surgery on her optic nerve, we continue to pray for * Ann Martin, * Bill Wycoff, * Karen Nowak's sister, * Jim Malott, * Stephen Brittain, * for Fran Warthman, and there are many others, I am sure, that we have not named out loud but remain on our hearts and minds.... and we pause in this moment of silence to lift them from our hearts to your ears. **Silence**

Lord, we also pray for all those who are going through times of transition, whatever that transition it may entail, coming or going, or whatever it may be. Now, loving God open our ears to hear your word and draw us closer to you, that the whole world may be one with you as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray. **Lord's Prayer**

Special Music The story of the Bible is a collection of stories of history of how God in his great love came to release us from whatever imprisons us, whether it was a conquering nation (like in the days of Moses) or the bondage of personal sin and corporate sin (in the days of Jesus), and up through the modern day. This song is new to us, and apparently, it is going to be the last time we ever do it 😊. It is quite tricky to learn, we are going to do it as a special for you. If you happen to know it from the radio, feel free to sing along, but otherwise, just enjoy our attempt to get it close to right....

Redeemed

Words: Benji Cowart and Mike Weaver
© 2012 Word Music, LCC and Weave Country, Inc.

Seems like all I could see was the struggle,
haunted by ghosts that lived in my past;
bound up in shackles of all my failures,

wonderin' how long is this gonna last.
Then you look at this pris'ner and say to me, "Son,
stop fighting a fight that's already been won."

Chorus

I am redeemed---, you set me free---.
So, I'll shake off these heavy chains. You wipe away ev'ry stain.
Now I'm not who I used to be,

I am redeemed---. I'm redeemed.
All my life I have been called unworthy,
named by the voice of my shame and regret.
But when I hear you whisper, "Child, lift up your head,"
I remember, oh God, you're not done with me yet---.

Chorus

because I don't have to be the old man inside of me,
'cause his day is long dead and gone:
because I've got a new name, a new life, I'm not the same,
and a hope that will carry me home.

Chorus 2x

Oh, God, I'm not who I used to be.
Jesus I'm not who I used to be.
'cause I am redeemed--. Thank God, redeemed.

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

We will look at the story of Esther. Her actions led to the festival of Purim, one of the most joyful of the Jewish festivals. It celebrates the redemption of the Jewish people in the land of Susa. We'll hear the fuller story later, but we will reinforce critical events of the story now. Mordecai overheard a plot to assassinate the king. He sent word to his cousin Queen Esther, who told king Xerxes, who thwarted the plot, and this was recorded in historical annals.

Then the king began honoring and elevating Haman over all the other government officials. Orders were that the king's servants were to bow before him. This went to Haman's head. Mordecai refused to do this, and it bothered Haman to no end. He not only wanted to destroy Mordecai, but all his people, the Jews, who lived in all the kingdom of Xerxes.

Mordecai reached out to Queen Esther to intercede. But anyone approaching the king in the inner courtyard when he hasn't summoned you (and he hadn't



summoned her for a month), is a death sentence --- unless the king chooses to intervene. Through a messenger, she explained this to Mordecai. She was afraid for her life. Summary of 2:22-3:6, 4:8-11

Upon being told what Esther had said, Mordecai asked them to give Esther this answer: "Don't suppose that merely because you happen to be in the royal palace you will escape any more than the other Jews. For if you fail to speak up now, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from a different direction; but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows whether you didn't come into your royal position precisely for such a time as this." Esther had them return this answer to Mordecai: "Go, assemble all the Jews to be found in Susa, and have them fast for me, neither eating nor drinking for three days, night and day; also I and the girls attending me will fast the same way. Then I will go in to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." Then Mordecai went his way and did everything Esther had ordered him to do.

Esther 4:12-17 (CJB, names from NIV)

Sermon Where is the Love?

There is a passage in the Bible that talks about many great qualities we are to have as Christians; and then how we are to put on love which binds all of these qualities together in perfect unity (See Colossians 3:12-14), and then the love chapter introduces the topic by telling us that we can speak wonderfully, know everything, do great miracles, give all we have, sacrifice our very bodies – if we do all this – but there is no love in it, it doesn't benefit anyone or anything. (See 1 Corinthians 13:1-3) So it is not surprising that E Stanley Jones' concludes with this 15th enemy of abundant living: the absence of a positive, outgoing, love. If we can conquer the first fourteen major enemies to abundant living, but lack outgoing love, we will come up short in our quest.

Josh McDowell wrote a book called "Givers, Takers, and Other Kinds of Lovers." Let's illustrate its basic concept this way: Imagine we are all in the same boat, which is taking on water.

A giver lover is one who will pick up the pail and bail the water and refuse to let anyone else help. They want to do the sacrifice and salvation all by themselves. It sounds noble, but this giver wears him or herself out, and they deny others the gift of helping, of taking responsibility and sharing in the community task of keeping the boat afloat.

A taker lover is one who sits in the boat and receives, sometimes even demanding others do all the bailing for them. While they may think and say they want to help the sinking ship, they really are not in the boat to help, but to only receive the benefits of others' work. They expect love from others, but they expect nothing of

themselves in giving love back. They love to help others practice their gifts so that they don't have to take part themselves.

The other kinds of lovers recognize mutuality. They recognize that we are all in the boat together and all have our roles to play, and all should do whatever they can to help everyone participate to the best of their abilities because that is how all of us will excel the most. This mutual love is the kind that sacrifices all and at the same time can accomplish anything. Jones explains that you cannot get rid of your own troubles unless you take on the troubles of others. We bring out the best of ourselves and others not by doing it for or demanding it from others, but by an infectious mutual outgoing love.

The truth is we are infectious. The question is – what kind of infection are we bringing? An infection that drags us and others down because we are doing it all or demanding it all? Or an infection that helps awaken ourselves and others to live up to our full group potential. Jones quotes Leslie Salter saying, "very normal man or woman longs for love, for warm friendship, for admiration and human responsiveness from others more than for anything else in life.... If we want to live fully, then we must invest ourselves in others, encouraging, cheering, supporting; and you may receive in return a friendliness and happiness you never dreamed possible, and which will revolutionize your whole life."

We may discover, that loving our enemies because we first love God because he first loved us is better medical treatment not only for our nervous indigestion but also for almost anything that ails us. Where in the Bible do we look for examples outgoing love? You can pretty much just let it fall open because it is saturated throughout the sacred pages as it describes people in all kinds of circumstances. It is an interesting study to see how many of these 15 enemies of a full life negatively impact circumstances and their solutions positively impact circumstances. As an example, we turn to the book of Esther. We heard a couple of the key passages, we will hear them again. I won't highlight every time an enemy or its opposite shows up, but hopefully I will try give you an idea when they do by my tone, or maybe I'll raise my hand or something, we'll see how it goes.

[in this paper medium, underlined words indicate I am pointing out an enemy of abundant living or its opposite trait]

As the book opens, we see fearful, worried, anxious exiles living in Susa even though they had freedom to return over 50 years earlier. They had been there so long that they were already established – or they feared the journey, but either way they remained foreigners in the city of the Persian king's winter home.



It was here that the self-centered king with undisciplined desires king spent 6 months displaying his wealth and power and ego as they planned to attack Greece. In the midst of these meetings the king held a banquet, got drunk and wanted to show off his beautiful wife (Jewish tradition adds bare – ly, not clothed, just barely). But Queen Vashti was busy hosting a banquet for the women of the palace and refused to come. Now this angry, resentful, hateful king was just sober enough to follow protocols and asked his advisors what he should do about it. Long story short – she was deposed (Jewish tradition adds that she was executed) and in an act of ignorance and lack of judgment a decree was sent throughout the land that women shall respect their husbands; (they felt that if they left Vashti get away with it, then she would become an example and women all over the land would begin doing ---- something they didn't want them to do. Let's put it that way. And so they created a law that said they shall respect their husbands, as if a law would ever make that work (🤔 😊). With Vashti gone, in a move reminiscent of the Cinderella ball designed to find the new princess – all the beautiful women were called from the harem where they were given beauty treatments and a chance to become the new queen.

Now Mordecai was one of the Susa exiles in those days. When his uncle and aunt died, in outgoing love, total life discipline, and unselfishness, he took his cousin Esther and raised her as his own daughter. She had been put into the king's harem and so was now a candidate to become queen. Mordecai used his knowledge to give her advice, and to not reveal her nationality. Even though Jews were free and could do business and even hold political office – they were still exiles (It would be like – “the slaves are free” but there are still a lot of civil rights biases to overcome in that foreign land. With physical harmony and training, Esther secured favor with the man in charge of the harem and he assigned seven maidens to work with her. Mordecai hung around the courtyard worrying about her. Unlike our instant make-over shows, this make-over was a 1-year required process, and the story goes into detail, but we won't take time to do that.

She followed the knowledgeable advice of the harem leader, and her time before the king won her the place of queen, giving her an opportunity to have an even wider impact on her social order. This is the point of the story where during a gathering of the harem, Mordecai overheard the plot and thus thwarted the assassination of King Xerxes, and when Esther told the king about it, she did mention that it was Mordecai who found out about it, so his name got into the records that way.

Then the king began to honor Haman above all other nobility, who along with everyone else, were to bow down to him. So, wherever Haman went people bowed, and it went to Haman's self-centered head.

But Mordecai, who had a faith that went beyond himself and undivided loyalties wouldn't bow down, because he was a Jew and he only bowed to his one God. This enraged Haman who decided he didn't just want to take out Mordecai, he was going to wipe Jews off the face of the whole Persian Empire, creating an unfaithful social order.

Haman used his status to convince the king that it was not in his best interest to tolerate the Jews' presence; and that he himself would pay for their execution. The king refused the money but in ignorance and a lack of judgment, (for the king was not fact checking, but only listening to the scheming Haman for his information to form his bias), and he allowed Haman to do as he pleased.

They tossed a pur, from which we get the word purim (which is kind of like drawing or lots (or throwing die) and it was to see when this genocide and transformation of the social order would take place – and the result of the toss was that it was nearly a year away. The law was written and delivered to every province. All the people who read it were shocked and confused, (just like sometimes in America), wondering why and how this law came to being -- while the king and Haman sat down to drink.

Mordecai, in faith beyond self, mourned in Jewish fashion, (torn clothes, sackcloth and ashes, weeping and wailing) which caught the attention of Esther's servants. They told her about it. In positive outreaching love, she sent him clothes, but he refused them. Then she sent a messenger to find out about why he was so upset. He explained the law and plan to exterminate the Jews; and Mordecai asked her to intercede. Even as queen, as we heard in the reading, Esther could not approach the king without him summoning her, and he had not summoned her for a long time, and if she went without a summons, she risked death, it was up to the fickleness of the king's mood of the day, and we already know from his dealings with Vashti that the king had an easily triggered explosive anger and hate. Needless to say, like most anyone would, Esther experienced negativism and fear as she explained her predicament through a servant who brought her message to Mordecai.

Mordecai warned her that she must discipline herself and face her fears. She cannot remain silent, for if she spoke up the Jews would still be delivered and maybe this was her calling! So Esther, in a faith beyond herself that gives ultimate meaning and purpose, she told Mordecai to have all the Jews fast for 3 days, and she and her maids would do the same. Then she went to see the king, who saw her and was pleased with her and offered her up to half of the kingdom. Instead, she invited the king and Haman to a banquet she had prepared. At the banquet, the king repeated his request: "Up to half the kingdom, what would you like?" Esther using all the knowledge she had gained, replied, "Come to a banquet tomorrow and then I'll give you an answer."

Self-centered Haman went out thrilled to be part of such an exclusive banquet, but then he saw Mordecai (who still wasn't bowing down to him) and he was again filled with anger, resentment, and hate, but he restrained himself for the moment. Instead, he went home, called all his friends together and started boasting about how much favor he had with the king, how rich he had become, and how Esther had invited he and the king to this exclusive banquet today and again tomorrow. But he still couldn't be happy with any of this because "that Mordecai" still wouldn't bow down to him.

In self-serving ignorance and lack of judgment, his friends, like the king, listened only to Haman's point of view, and in what MAY have been self-serving insincerity, advised him to build a 75-foot-high gallows and in the morning to ask the king to hang Mordecai on it, and then he could really enjoy his exclusive afternoon banquet. Haman loved the idea and had the gallows built.

Meanwhile, back in the palace that night, the king could not sleep. He began reading the annals (the historical records) and came across Mordecai's reporting the treason which had saved the king's life and noted that Mordecai had received nothing for this. So he began to ask his advisors "What are we going to do to reward this man, he saved my life..."

Just then, Haman arrived to ask about hanging Mordecai. The king sees his high ranking official and asks, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Self-centered Haman naturally thought, "Who else could he be talking about except me?" So he answered, "Dress him in a royal robe that has been worn by the king. Put him on a horse the king has ridden, decorated with the royal crest, and let him be led through the streets by people who will proclaim, "This is what is done for the man in whom the king delights!"

So the king, in resolving guilt for not rewarding Mordecai in the past, said, "Good! Get the robe, get the horse, do everything as you have suggested, and go get Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate, and you lead him through the town proclaiming to all 'This is what is done for the one who pleases the king.'" Haman did not like that, but he had no choice, and he followed the king's commands and did this for Mordecai, and when it was done, he rushed home in grief.

In negativism and fear, this time his friends said, "You are on a downward track now! You will not stand much longer." And as they were saying it, the messengers came to get Haman for the queen's second exclusive banquet.

The king again asked what he could do for Esther, and she named the coming disaster on her people. "If they were only being sold as slaves," she said, "then I would have kept quiet, for it is too little to bother the king about it, but since this is annihilation, I felt I must speak."

And now we have hate, anger, fear and ignorance, and guilt, at least, in this next plot development coming up. The king was enraged, "Who is doing this!?" Esther

pointed to the only other person at the banquet, Haman. "It is this vile Haman." Haman became terrified. The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out the garden to fume. Haman knew the king had already decided his fate, and so he went to beg Esther, who was reclining on a couch. He fell on the couch just as the king was returning and the king assumed he was molesting her. And that wasn't a good thing for Haman either. At the king's words, servants covered Haman's face, and one of them said, "You know what, Haman has a 75-foot gallows standing at his home." So the king said "Hang him on it." And when Haman was hung on the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai, then the king became calm again.

Haman's estate was granted to Esther. Esther told the king about her relationship to Mordecai, her cousin, and so the king took the signet ring (the ring that grants you authority) that he had previously given to Haman and gave it to Mordecai.

Esther now used her influence to transform the social order by going to the king again asking for another favor, for the law of the coming genocide was still in effect. The king said write the laws as you see fit, and the edict went out that the Jews had the right to assemble and to protect themselves, and legally attack any armed force that seeks to kill or plunder them (on that genocide day).

Mordecai left the king's presence in royal robes and the city had a great celebration of happiness and joy and gladness; with feasting and celebrating. Any many people became Jews because they feared the Jews. Go with the winner, right? (In my last church in the UP, it was "if the Lions were doing bad, vote for the Packers, for vice versa" because the teams were about the same distance away. Probably involved in that was unconscious or conscious insincerity, self-centeredness, negativism and inferiority attitudes, divided loyalties, a whole bunch of the enemies could have explained the motivation for why they became Jews, but one is actually listed in the Bible fear, worry, anxiety, for it says they were afraid of the Jews, and so they converted to Judaism to be safe.

When the time of the scheduled genocide of the Jews came, the destruction planned for them failed and flopped because everyone was afraid of them and Mordecai became even more prominent; second in command of the whole Persian Empire, only the king himself held a higher position. The tables of the social order were turned completely around. Mordecai recorded these events and sent them to the Jews everywhere, and the celebration of Purim was established.

So you see, in any "little" story (of the Bible), how many enemies of life, or their conquering opposites apply, and I could have listed more, even within this synopsis that I gave you. But it is to just give you an idea. If the king had just been wise in the beginning, if he had controlled his temper, if he mastered his urges, if Haman had been humble, the story would have had a completely different plot line. So many negative examples from which to learn, and good examples too.

How much this means for us today, to follow these principles, which is capped off by positive outgoing, (outflowing) love. In following them is how to have an abundant life.

A modern singing group asks this question (slightly paraphrased and lifting just a few of the lyrics):

What's wrong with the world? People acting like they have no parents? ... addicted to drama, attracted to things that'll bring trauma. If you only have love for your own, then you leave space to hate. Madness is [then] what you demonstrate and that's exactly how anger works and operates. You've got to take control of your mind and meditate. Let your soul gravitate -- to love [people]... People killing, people dying, children hurt and you hear them crying. Can you practice what you preach? Would you turn the other cheek? Father, help us, send some guidance from above, cause people got me questioning: Where is the love? People keep on giving in, making wrong decisions only envisioning the dividends, not respecting each other, denying our brother, If you never know the truth, then you never know love. Where is the love?

portions of "Where is the Love?" by Black Eyed Peas

I think that is a good call to church. Love is in the salt and light and seeds of Christ's kingdom. We are charged to bring it to our world and to work towards a social order that reflects the positive outgoing love of God, just as he expressed it through the life and death and resurrection and Spirit of Jesus -- beginning right within each of our own hearts and then from there flowing outward....

Prayer Let's pray. God of power and wonder, we are awestruck by the glory of your presence, the way you work things out for your people as they worship and pray. We rejoice at what we see in Scripture, throughout history, and in our own lives. You continue to shine brightly in our world, loving, protecting, challenging and nurturing. As we wait on you, you lift us up, you strengthen and transform us. so that we may love and serve you in all that we do, and by doing so, bring glory to Christ in whose name we are praying. **Amen.**

adapted from Jane V. Doull, © 1993 United Church
Publishing House in UM Worship & Song, Leader's Edition

Music Let's sing for our final song in praise to our Hope, our Deliverer, our Everlasting God.

Everlasting God

Words and Music: Brenton Brown and Ken Riuley
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Chorus

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord.

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,
we will wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord.

Chorus 2

Our God, you reign forever. Our Hope, our strong Deliverer.
You are the everlasting God, the everlasting God.
You do not faint, you won't grow weary.
You are the defender of the weak, you comfort those in need.
You lift us up on wings like eagles.

Chorus

Chorus 2 (2x)

Closing and Blessing

And thus concludes my ministry with you. And so, I wish you much blessing as you proceed into your future with your new pastor and his family. Lord, for each person, for each heart, we are thankful that your heart is poured out to us. We are thankful that you stay above the fray granting peace and strength in every situation. [Prayer of grace for the potluck: We are thankful for those who have prepared the potluck, we ask that you bless their hands and bless the food to our bodies that we may go through this day serving you and rejoicing in all that you have done, are doing, and will do in the lives of your people]



Now may God's blessing give you strength for the journey. May the Spirit of wisdom give you vision for the road. May the love of Christ shepherd you and lead you and make you caring companions, as together you go forth from this place, but never from God's presence. **Amen.** adapted from Jane V. Doull © 2000 United Church Publishing House, in UM Worship & Song, Leader's Edition.

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In some contexts, a bulletin is not provided. For those settings, a bulletin insert that reviewed the first 14 enemies of abundant living is on the following page.

#	Enemy	Imagery	Christian Solution (Scripture verse) Application question Imagery
1	A lack of faith in and loyalty to Something beyond oneself ... that gives ultimate meaning, coherence, and goal to life; When we look only inward, "fads" spin us like a weathervane	Imagery	Focus on Jesus and his example and will... (Hebrews 12:2) What is the compass of my life — what guides my decisions, actions....? determined to follow the cross (for which we need each other)
2	Self-centeredness Unhealthy egoism is a spiraling whirlpool to destruction		Love the Lord you God and others (Luke 10:27) Is my world only about me, or is it about God and others too? beach sandcastles — not about us, but the ocean — the big picture
3	Anger, Resentments, Hate Unhealthy anger is like unknowingly wearing blinders		Be angry and sin not. Do not hang on to your anger (Ephesians 4:26) Does my anger cause me to work toward healing justice for others? healthy anger motivates insight to constructive compassionate solutions
4	Fear, worry, anxiety unhealthy fear is like the unraveling rope versus		See how nature doesn't worry (Matthew 6:25ff) Do I seek to instill faith in myself and others? Do I face my fears? the rope that twists itself around others making all strands stronger
5	A Sense of Unresolved Guilt Worldly guilt: "I'm sorry I got caught"		Make it right (if in our power) even if it is not our fault (Matthew 5:23) Have I trained my conscience? Do I seek to correct what is wrong? godly guilt: "Caught or not, I'm sorry I did it and will make it right."
6	Negativism and Inferiority Attitudes Earthquake personalities often cover inner soul quakes		We are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 8) Is negativism an excuse for my inaction? Do I do what I "can't" in Christ? Slam the door on negative thoughts and actions.
7	Undisciplined Desires Musicians, Athletes — dream and fanaticize about excellence		See and strive for the bigger goal (1 Corinthians 9:19-27) Can I discipline my desires so that I can accomplish the long term goals? or do what it takes (practices and works) to reach the goal.
8	Insincerity, Conscious and Unconscious Pure water may not be as pure as it looks		What comes out of the heart is what counts (Mat 15:18ff, 1 Tim 1:5) With a friend, devote yourselves to seeing yourself as others see you — is it what you think you are — what you want to be in Christ? We must run water through the purifier (Christ) to be truly clean.
9	Divided Loyalties Trains reach the "station" if we are not wrecked by distractions		Seek God first (Matthew 6:33, Philippians 3:13) Is Christ on the throne of my heart? Does he will have first priority in all? Trains stay on the rails (within the guides) if they want to reach home
10	Unbalanced Virtues Butterfly—transformed to new life		Treat others as if you were in their shoes (Matthew 7:12) In my life, does right balance with relationship? Grace with Law? Etc... New life is balanced around ALL aspects of the good of life
11	Ignorance and Lack of Judgment Knowledge, unbalanced puffs up the ego		Study to show yourself approved (2 Timothy 2:15) Do we form opinions on sound bites and peers, or do we really know what we are talking about? Love respectfully builds up what is good for all
12	Physical Disharmony Lack of Training		Your body is God's temple — (1 Corinthians 6:19) How does my diet, rest, exercise help or hinder the whole of my life? Training
13, 14	An Un-Christian Social Order, Lack of Total Life Discipline The Tornado as a Destructive Force at its selfish bottom		the world and its nations are Christ's (Revelation 11:15) Am I living in a way that may expand or hinder God's rule? The constructive wind that spirals out into building a new order