MAY 17, 2020 SERVICE

OPENING HYMN *“Blessed Be God” (Lori-Anne)*

Come and see, come and see, what God has done for me

Come and hear, come and hear, of God’s wonderful deeds

For truly God has listened

To the words of my prayer

Blessed be God, who receives our prayers

Blessed be God, who engulfs us in love

Blessed be God, who is faithful beside us

Blessed be God, who brings us, into an open place

Blessed be God, who journeys amongst us

Blessed be God, who fights for our lives

Blessed be God, who triumphs the darkness

Blessed be God, who brings us, into an open place

Come and see, come and see, what God has done for us

Come and hear, come and hear, of God’s wonderful deeds

For truly God has listened

To the words of our prayer

Blessed be God, who receives our prayers

Blessed be God, who engulfs us in love

Blessed be God, who is faithful beside us

Blessed be God, who brings us, into an open place

Blessed be God, who journeys amongst us

Blessed be God, who fights for our lives

Blessed be God, who triumphs the darkness

Blessed be God, who brings us, into an open place

GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY.

The Blessings of God be with you this day. Let us pray: God you love us and dwell with us, and you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. Teach us of the wisdom you give in the various seasons of our lives, including the different ways that you live and move among us, and inspire us from within. Give to us anew the Spirit of your truth and peace, through the love and blessings that we receive in Christ Jesus, our Faithful One. Amen.

WORD

PSALM: Psalm 66:8-20

 8Bless our God, you peoples;

let the sound of praise be heard.

 9Our God has kept us among the living

  and has not allowed our feet to slip.

 10For you, O God, have tested us;

  you have tried us just as silver is tried.

 11You brought us into the net;

  you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.

 12You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water,

  but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

 13I will enter your house with burnt offerings

  and will pay you my vows—

 14those that I promised with my lips

  and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.

 15I will offer you burnt offerings of fatlings with the smoke of rams;

  I will give you oxen and goats.

 16Come and listen, all you who believe,

  and I will tell you what God has done for me.

 17I called out to God with my mouth,

  and praised the Lord with my tongue.

 18If I had cherished evil in my heart,

  the Lord would not have heard me;

 19but in truth God has heard me

  and has attended to the sound of my prayer.

 20Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer,

  nor withheld unfailing love from me.

HYMN “*FAITHFUL ONE” (Robyn Mark)*

Faithful One, so unchanging, Ageless One,

You're my rock of peace

Lord of All, I depend on You

I call out to You, again and again

I call out to You, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble,

You lift me up when I fall down

All through the storm, Your love is the anchor

My hope is in You alone

GOSPEL: John 14:15-21

 [Jesus said to the disciples:] 15“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

  18“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

MESSAGE

Love is without a doubt what is to define us most as followers of Christ.

In John’s gospel, we hear over and over again Jesus urging us

 to walk in the ways of love, to serve one another in love.

And we do so because LOVE is really what God is all about.

It is how God is revealed.

God is a God of Love, and inspires us to love one another,

even if it may be hard to do so.

Even if we feel to orphaned to do so.

Because let’s face it-it’s not always easy to be loving,

to do the loving thing, to share love,

or to walk in love when we don’t always feel like doing it.

When we don’t always feel like we have the reserves to do so.

Sometimes, it is easier to emotionally distance,

to not do something that may be a bit taxing,

to tell ourselves it is not our problem, to not meddle,

to mind our own business, and to walk away.

Even if we see people suffering or hurting before us.

And yet-we hear today that our love for God, our love for Jesus,

our love for the One who is always with us,

the One who never leaves us orphaned or abandoned,

the One who never leaves us unloved,

that our love for God is enacted in our love for each other.

How we love one another is how we love God.

For the two go hand in hand. Always.

And we fool ourselves that we are loving God

when we can’t be bothered to love one another.

We fool ourselves that we are loving God

when we leave each other orphaned and waiting to be loved,

rationalizing that it is somehow OK to walk away.

I know in these times, we may feel too tired, too burdened,

even too orphaned ourselves to walk in love.

Walk where? Walk outside? Walk at least 2 meters apart from others?

Love behind masks? Behind gloves? Behind closed doors?

How can we love and be loved at this time?

There is so much to overcome in order to love one another

outside the walls of our home, let alone inside of them at times.

I know it’s an odd time right now,

and in some ways it is even more challenging to be loving.

 But maybe it’s just a time to be creative.

To not forget that God always promises to come to us in new ways.

Even now.

Today we hear Jesus telling his disciples:

*“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.”*

No matter what we have been through,

no matter what trials, what floods, what fires,

we will never be orphaned for our God does not leave us.

We are never without a Holy and loving Parent.

We are never without the eyes and ears of our God,

truly seeing us, truly hearing us,

and promising to bless us through and through.

We are promised that the abiding presence of God is always with us,

and living within us, and will come to us in new ways

 to know and experience.

Without a God who dwells within our hearts,

we would not have the inspiration to love.

We would not have the guidelines of what love looks like.

In one of my conversations this week,

a wise woman had shared that it was in her hardest times

when she had experienced the nearness of God most deeply.

Whenever she needed God most, God showed up in new ways.

In fact, her hardest times were in many ways her sweetest time,

because of how profoundly she experienced God.

I think it is in these moments when we sense

 our dwelling God most profoundly,

that we are most inspired to share love, to walk in love,

to choose to love even when it may be difficult to do so.

It is what gives us the courage to love and be loved,

even when it may be hard to do so.

There will be a time soon when we can surround one another,

 and give thanks for the abiding presence of God

we have all felt through this trying time.

And until then, we can find different and creative ways to share love.

I’ve heard many pots being banged, seen many grateful displays of art

on sidewalks, watched as people dropped off essentials

 for those who couldn’t leave their homes,

heard of deep connections made with family members or friends

that wouldn’t have happened without the extra time and space

 to cultivate those relationships.

I have noted how Zoom or Facetime have been used in creative ways,

that there have been many messages, letters, or gifts,

 sent in the mail, or through virtual mail.

I have witnessed you keeping each other in prayer,

and heard of the many ways

 people are protecting those who are vulnerable.

As restrictions loosen, and we can begin to emerge from our homes,

and be mindful of loving each other and remaining physically distanced,

I trust that there will be new and creative ways to walk in love together,

inspired by the abiding love that God has for us all,

and is with us through this all.

And as we continue to rely on technology

to help us remain connected throughout this pandemic,

I think as time goes on we will have more energy to try new things,

to put ourselves out there, even if it is only in the virtual world,

and to share love with one another more profoundly.

To not feel as though we have been left too orphaned in this moment

to give back our love to the people God gives us to love.

For we are promised that love will always be returned to us

 as we purpose to live our lives in love.

Our hearts and hands will never be left empty.

We will have all the inspiration we need from the One

who always dwells with us, and comes to us in new ways,

and helps us to walk in Jesus’ guidelines of love.

HYMN OF THE DAY *“Nobody Loves Me Like You” (Chris Tomlin)*

VERSE 1

Morning, I see you in the sunrise every morning

It’s like a picture that you’ve painted for me

A love letter in the sky

VERSE 2

Story, I could’ve had a really different story

But you came down from heaven to restore me

Forever saved my life

CHORUS

Nobody loves me like you love me, Jesus

I stand in awe of your amazing ways

I worship you as long as I am breathing

God, you are faithful and true

Nobody loves me like you

VERSE 3

Mountains, you’re breaking down the weight of all my mountains

Even when it feels like I’m surrounded

You never leave my side

CHORUS

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION: God we trust that you are with us, and will teach us to see how you dwell with us in new ways, and how you love us.

God, you abide with us. you have revealed yourself to us in Christ Jesus. Empower us to reveal your love to everyone in our speaking and in our living.

God by your Grace, Help us to Love.

God, you are the creator of heaven and earth. Teach us how we can be a part of revitalizing the health of your living world, of bodies of water, of land, of air, and of all that give life to your all of creatures.

God by your Grace, Help us to Love.

God, you call all people of the world your children. Work in and through us to judge justly, to show mercy to the oppressed, and to speak truth to power.

God by your Grace, Help us to Love.

God, you come near to us when we are lost, and you hear our distress. We pray for those who suffer in any way *especially who are struggling with illness in any way shape or form, and those whom we hold close to our hearts*. Teach us the ways we can reach out and help. God by your Grace, Help us to Love.

God, you remain with us always, and your kingdom has no end. We remember those whom we love who have gone before us *especially those who have recently passed*. We thank you for the ways they have loved us.

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your loving care. Amen.

LORD’S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May our abiding God bless your hearts with love,

raise you to new life and fill you with hope.

Almighty God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,

bless you now and forever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Be at peace. God abides with you, and within you.

God’s love is with you forever.