



*Come to me, all you
that are weary and
carrying heavy
burdens...*

Sunday Devotion

July 5, 2020

*Find a quiet place by yourself or with
another and come to God.*

HYMN SING

#834 Precious Lord, Take My Hand

1. Precious Lord, take my hand;
lead me on, help me stand;
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night,
lead me on to the light;
take my hand, precious Lord,
lead me home.

2. When my way grows drear,
precious Lord, linger near;
when my life is almost gone,
hear my cry, hear my call,
hold my hand lest I fall;
take my hand, precious Lord,
lead me home.

Just a Closer Walk with Thee #835

Refrain: Just a closer walk with thee,
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea,
Daily walking close to thee:
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.

2. Through this world of toil and snares
if I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee.

Refrain

1. I am weak, but thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong:
I'll be satisfied as long as I walk,
Let me walk close to thee
refrain

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, all that are weary, all that are carrying burdens so heavy

Jesus will give us rest

Come, take what Jesus has to offer: love, forgiveness, and grace

Christ will give us peace

Come, find rest, and learn from Jesus

For our Savior will give us rest in our souls

Come, let us worship our God

Let us follow our Savior, who leads us into life.

OPENING PRAYER

We gather together this morning, O Lord, eager to feel your healing touch for our wounded spirits and weary souls. Flood our lives with your peace. Shine your light of joy in our souls this day, for we pray in Christ's Name. Amen.

HYMN #824 There Is a Place of Quiet Rest

1. There is a place of quiet rest,
near to the heart of God,
a place where sin cannot molest,
near to the heart of God.

refrain

O Jesus, blest Redeemer,
sent from the heart of God,
hold us, who wait before thee,
near to the heart of God.

2. There is a place of comfort sweet,
near to the heart of God,
a place where we our savior meet,
near to the heart of God. *refrain*

3. There is a place of full release,
near to the heart of God,
a place where all is joy and peace,
near to the heart of God. *refrain*

PRAYER OF BROKENESS

Merciful and loving God, I am so grateful for your redeeming love for everyone. I confess that there have been times of doubt in my spirit. I confess that when the times of difficulties are upon me, I don't always believe that you will take my burdens. I feel I have to always be in control, trying to demand the desired outcome. Help me to place my trust in you. Remind me that you surround me continually with your care, you never just let me go to drift aimlessly about. Open my heart and spirit again to your healing powers. For I pray these things in the name of Jesus, the one who will take my burdens and give me peace. Amen.

WORDS OF HOPE AND FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news. Jesus releases all from our burdens. Place your whole trust in his love because Jesus died for you. Jesus forgives you. Jesus loves you. Jesus is good to you. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. 35 The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. 37 My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; 38 but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son...' 42 "I came today to the spring, and said, 'O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! 43 I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little water from your jar to drink," 44 and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also"—let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son.'

45 "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' 46 She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels. 47 Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. 48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. 49 Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left..." 58 And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." 59 So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

"May you, our sister, become
thousands of myriads;
may your offspring gain possession
of the gates of their foes."

61 Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. 63 Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. 64 And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, 65 and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON Matthew 11:25-30

25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

SERMON

Have you seen the animated movie "Cars 2?" That's the great thing about having children around, you get to see all the Disney kid movies. The lead character of the first "Cars" movie was a bright shiny red sports car named *Lightning McQueen*. In *Cars 2*, the film centers more around McQueen's best friend, a tow truck named Tow Mater – that's the other fun part about kid movies – clever lines – my kind of humor.

Mater is, in many ways, the opposite of McQueen. He's rusty, unsophisticated, unpolished (socially and physically). He gets caught up in an international spy adventure and needs to have his appearance changed. He is willing to be a different color, to lose the rust and have a shiny paint job. But when he's told they'll need to repair his dents so the ruse will work, he refuses. Those dents aren't just for looks, he explains. Each one reminds him of one of his close calls, usually with his best friend. The dents may make him imperfect, but they are part of who he is.

In today's scripture lesson, Jesus offers the invitation, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." The invitation is to everyone, not just some supposed few who have ever been tired or had a burden to bear. We all come bearing something, don't we? A sadness. A worry. An ache. A dent. The current pandemic issues and racism affronts have certainly made their marks, but they aren't the only dents we wear. Sometimes the dents are obvious to everyone. Sometimes we are pretty good at hiding them. I may be going out on a limb here, but I think all of us are dented in some way or another. Sadly, tragically, a life lived is a life that has experienced pain. Each one of those hurt places can conjure up a memory or fear of losing someone or something so important that our breath catches at the very thought of it. The dents make us who we are. They make us human.

In today's Old Testament lesson, we hear the continuation of Isaac's story. Now there is someone who has some dents. He was nearly killed as a sacrifice to God by his own father. He returned home while that same father, Abraham, went to another country, probably unable to face his wife, Sarah, or even Isaac, for that matter. Isaac and Abraham never speak again. Isaac went home to mom, Sarah. And we can only imagine how she, with her own visible dents, embraced this precious child of her old age who was nearly ripped from her. We can only image the battering Isaac must have taken *again*, when after all he has been through, the one person left to trust, the one person he loved and was loved by, was taken from him by death in her old age. Sarah was no spring chicken, but she must have been a lifeline for Isaac. It was she who held and soothed his dents. We can only imagine how the very real pain of grief drove him to wander aimlessly out in the field with no words to say other than, "O God, O God, O God." I can only imagine that he was ready for either some strong anti-

depressants or a behavioral health facility with electric shock therapy or all of the above. He was so very battered, bruised and dented. He was empty, nothing left, maybe even to live for.

For others having gone through such experiences, the temptation is to give up. I remember a few years ago my eldest daughter sat with one of her best friends, holding her hand as she wept during her brother's funeral service. Her brother was 32 years old and after being battered and bruised throughout his life by his own inner demons, he gave up and took his life. At 32, the dents were too great for him and he saw no other way out. He let go of the life given to him.

Compare that example of how to face pain and suffering in life to the holiday we just celebrated, the birth of this nation with our declaration of independence from England. There are lots of things that I traditionally do with my family on that day – watch a parade, swim, go on a picnic in the park, and listen to a concert. But this year, this weird challenging often difficult and painful year, much of that was put on hold and instead I watched one of those wonderful movies about the beginnings of this great nation – my favorite, *1776*. I also watched a documentary detailing the events surrounding the actual military campaign that was being fought as the whole issue was being argued and strategized. And as if for the first time, I was struck by the monumental task of those founding fathers – and *mothers* of this nation. Out number, out organized, out equipped, out trained, in a hostile environment and with opposing opinions and loyalties, it is nothing short of extraordinary that the rebellion, although long and arduous, was successful. It could have gone so differently – and for many, it did. This nation could have given up and let go of their idea of freedom from England's oppression. But they didn't. They held on, dents and all and those very dents helped to define just who they were and who we are to be now. It feels a little like that now with something that feels like a revolution about racism. I imagine for some it is tempting to give that up. But in the beginning, we were a nation that said, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free" – dents and all. Isn't that something to always strive for?

When we recall Israel's beginnings with the patriarchs, we are reminded that their stories tell us so much about God and about the relationships God intended. Isaac, like Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, there were dents, wounds caused by the hardships of life. All of those patriarchs had their hardships. But as we learn again in this story of Isaac, God's steadfast love endures forever. There is hope. There is comfort. There is a future. Isaac was not abandoned by God and did not abandon God. He could have thrown in the patriarchal towel. But at the moment when he had nothing left but his own despair, he received the comfort and hope he needed in the gift of a wife, Rebekah, and God's promise continued.

Jesus calls us, the tired and the poor, the dented and the lost, to also not give up on God, but to come close, so close as to stay yoked with God. When life throws a punch, dents us, how should we respond? Jesus says we have only to come to him, weary and dented, don't give up. In fact, if we don't come this way, if we don't even perceive this to be our condition, we might not be compelled to turn to him at all. Over and over we see in the Bible that the self-satisfied are not the people whom Jesus wins for God. The self-satisfied scribes and Pharisees, Pilot, Herod, even Paul before he is struck blind on the road to Damascus, all are distanced, separate from God.

Episcopal priest Barbara Hawthorne Crafton tells the story of a bitterly cold winter. "My first child was a baby. We were poor. Having no car, I had bundled up the baby and taken her on a city bus to the doctor for a checkup and was on my way home again, having written the doctor a painful check for her inoculations, a check that completely wiped out my grocery money for the next week. We waited for the bus. I stamped my feet in the cold and tried not to think about what I was going to do for food. The bus didn't come and then it didn't come some more. The wind grew colder and colder. I bent down and hugged Corinna in her stroller, trying to keep the cold from her. More than a half hour I had crouched there. She was crying now, and I was trying not to. Where was the bus?

A truck driver stopped and offered us a ride. I looked up into his face and said yes. We got in. It's too cold to be out there with a baby, he said. I know, I told him. I really appreciate the ride. Please let me pay you the bus fare. Nah, he said.

Can you let me out at the grocery store? I asked. I had three dollars, maybe, which was more in 1968 than it is now but still wasn't very much. Might as well buy what I can now with what I've got, I thought, and just make it last.

As I got out of the cab, I sneaked the thirty cents onto his dashboard where he'd find it later and thanked him. Wheeling Corinna through the grocery aisles in a shopping cart ten minutes later, though, I came face to face with him. He looked angry. He shoved the thirty cents into my hand. I could kill you for doing that, he said. And he turned on his heel and walked away, my thank you trailing uselessly along after him.

He was genuinely angry, I believe. I've thought of him often. After all these years, I still don't know why he reacted that way. I could kill you for doing that. Doing what? Depriving him of the privilege of doing a good deed? Treating him like a cab driver instead of like the Good Samaritan he was? It seemed an extreme thing to say. And I don't really know why I insisted on paying him the thirty cents. I think it was because I was ashamed of being so down and out, and paying my way in that little exchange helped somehow. Maybe he felt the same about himself. Maybe we both needed to give and receive comfort.

It's a terrible thing to feel so powerless. It's terrible that thirty cents should assume an importance so beyond its worth. The main thing about being poor is that something you know is very small to most people becomes very big for you, and there's not a thing you can do about it. It's very hard on the spirit. I've never forgotten how it was to live that way.

Prosperous people already know they matter. They are already so secure in their human dignity that they usually don't give it much thought. It is the poor whose attempts to claim their own dignity -- small, but often so costly -- need affirming. It is the poor and the weak who are most aware of the need for comfort and refreshment all of us have. When things are going your way, it's easy to forget that you depend on God for everything you have. It's easy to begin thinking you don't have that dependence but, instead, your power resides within yourself. The powerlessness of all human beings shows clearly in the lives of the poor. The rich can hide from it -- for a time.

But there is nobody who will not one day find himself bearing a load too heavy to carry alone. None of us are self-sufficient, however strong or weak or rich or poor we may be. We are all in need of comfort, in need of refreshment. Blessed are those who know their need of it early; they are the ones who will put themselves in the way of the Comforter.

No, Jesus rescues those burdened by failure and oppression, the suffering and the lost, those who desperately need rest from the burdens of life's trials through deliverance and perhaps even be unmade and starting anew such as a young mother, as Isaac, as our country.

St. Isaac of Syria summarizes what it is that Jesus offers as "Among all His actions there is none which is not entirely a matter of mercy, love and compassion: this constitutes the beginning and the end of Jesus dealings with us."

Hold on and be held. Don't let go.

PRAYER

In times of weakness and hour of need, yours is the strength by which we carry on, the shoulder we rest our head upon. When our load is heavy and too much to bear, yours are the arms stretched out to help us, the grace that we depend on. In times of weakness and hour of need, your voice is heard, 'Come... find rest.' This is grace divine, the path we tread to wholeness of body and spirit, the path that leads to you, and for which we offer our praise. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Come to this table, not because you must but because you may, not because you are strong, but because you are weak.

Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come,
but because you need mercy and help.
Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more.
Come, because he loved you and gave himself for you.
Come and meet the risen Christ, for we are his Body.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

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.

We thank you, God, for this meal that your Son, Jesus, gave us. In it are represented your many gifts to us:

Gifts of daily food, part of your generous creation,
Commemoration of the time you gave manna in the wilderness,
Remembrance of the times that Jesus fed the multitudes,
Recalling the sadness of the last meal he had with the disciples,
A foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have promised,
Memories of mealtimes with friends and with those who have gone before us,
Celebration of loving relationships, a meeting place for us with you,
The promise that you will sustain us through all of life.

The gift of being able to come to your table prompts us to not forget those who are without food and those who do not feel welcome at your table, strengthens us for tasks of daily living, and empowers us with your Spirit in difficult times.

We want to know you, God. We want to experience you, Jesus Christ. We want to breathe you in, Holy Spirit. Come; meet us now at this table, pouring out your Spirit on us and on this bread and cup. You alone have created us. You alone nourish us. You alone can guide us to be your children. What we have is nothing, if you are not in our lives. We give ourselves to you here and now. Amen.

SHARE THE BREAD AND CUP

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me. Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious God, may we who have received this sacrament live in the unity of your Holy Spirit, that we may show forth your gifts to the entire world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

HYMN #833 O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go

1. O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.

2. O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
my heart restores its borrowed ray,

3. O Joy that sleekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain
that morn shall tearless be.

4. O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,

that in thy sunshine's blaze its day
may brighter, fairer be.

and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be.

BENEDICTION

God, who has given you rest and peace, will go with you as you go from this time of worship. Feel the healing love of God in your life. Bring the good news of God's love to all whom you meet. Go in peace. Amen.