

MCCC Sanctuary Worship Order 2022

March 27, 2022

Fourth Sunday in Lent

COLORING PAGE: SENT

THEME PICTURE:

Prelude

“Jesus is My Life”

Jan Green

[Todd Kendall]

Welcome

Rev. Chad Delaney

Welcome to the Mantua Center Christian Church

We are a community seeking to have open minds, open hearts, and open arms, building community in a fragmented world.

- We want to **welcome** everyone who is in the house today, everyone online, and everyone downstairs watching our live telecast. We are grateful for all the many ways you can join us for worship on this Lord’s Day.
- ANNOUNCEMENTS
 - COMMUNION --- Personal communion
 - OFFERING Announcement
 - CJ’s Eagle Scout Project
- Let’s prepare our hearts and minds for worship with our Opening Scripture Reading...

Opening Scripture

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Prayer Vigil for Ukraine

Rev. Chad Delaney

From the National Council of Churches:

Today we call for peace and an end to Russian aggression and acts of war in the Ukraine.

We lament the loss of life and the unnecessary suffering that is unfolding.

Light a Candle

We stand with the Ukrainian people and pray that Russia would end this pointless and unwarranted conflict. *Light a Candle*

We stand in solidarity with and pray for those protesting their government to choose a different, peaceable course of action.

Light a Candle

We recognize the unrest, uncertainty and trauma this war will cause are immeasurable and will affect the entire global village. We lift the world's people in our prayers...

Light a Candle

Lord of all people and all nations, We lift before you the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia, Each girl and boy, each woman and man living in fear of what tomorrow might bring, We long for a time you spoke of through your prophet Isaiah, When weapons of war would be beaten into ploughshares, When nation will no longer lift up sword against nation, We cry out to you for peace,

Protect those who only desire and deserve to live in security and safety,

Comfort those who fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones,

Change the hearts of those set on violence and aggression,

Fill earthly leaders with great wisdom to find paths to peace,

Please Lord come and have your way in your world,

May your will be done here, on earth as it is in heaven,

May your peace reign. Now and always.

God, we now lift the concerns of our hearts to you in silent prayer....

We lift this prayer to you, our God who is able to do more than we can ever ask or imagine, In the name of Christ our saviour, Amen

Communion

Meditation

MaryEllen Hamlin

Communion Hymn When you do this, Remember Me #400

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

MaryEllen Hamlin

Words of Institution

Rev. Chad Delaney

Music: :Communion: [Cesar Franck]

Scripture

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Prayer of Illumination

God of open doors, We often long to come home
to you, to love, and to ourselves, but we aren't always sure how to get there.
We know that we need you, but the road back to you is heavy with
distractions. So if we can dare to be so forward, we pray—
reach into the cacophony of our hearts and minds and make yourself
known. Quiet everything but your Word for us today.
Leave us awestruck. Drown out the distractions.
Come as thunder or come as a still, small voice;
we don't care which, we just pray that you will come.
Turn on the light. Speak through these words.
Find the parts of us that are lost. With hope we pray, amen.

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.
²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow
welcomes sinners and eats with them."
³ So he told them this parable: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The
younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the
property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.
¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a
distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.
¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout
that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself
out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed
the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs
were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself
he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to

spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’ ” ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” ²²But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ ‘Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.” ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!” ³¹Then the father said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.” ’

Sermon

Prodigal Grace

Rev. Chad Delaney

When I was a kid one of my very favorite places to go with my family was Virginia Kendall Park in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Peninsula. There are rock formations left by glaciers that--for a kid and an adult--its a magical and beautiful place. We loved to climb the rocks, go into caves and crevices. It is still my park of choice when I get to choose.

There's a spot there that we would climb as kids and it felt like it was super high. An enormous cliff with sheer rock facing and much to my mom's dismay...my dad would stand at the bottom and tell us we could jump down to him. It was terrifyingly exciting. Each of us would go up and look down debating whether we would take the chance and jump.

What enables you to take a chance? Likely in your life you have taken a chance...maybe sky-diving or bungee jumping or something like that. Or on a relationship? A job? A different path? In talking to someone you don't know? Living in the time of a worldwide pandemic has constantly exposed us taking chances. Getting in a car with a teenager just learning to drive? I live that one every day.

So we make all these risk/reward calculations. There is "what's the best or worst that could happen?" Is the payoff worth it? How does this affect me and those around me? Each decision made and the circumstances around it creating a domino effect in which we have varying amounts of control. I'm getting tired just thinking about it.

And sometimes, there is no time to think or we just don't think of what could happen. We throw caution to the wind and commit ourselves to taking on the consequences and dealing with it then.

Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son may be his most famous and for good reason. Just chalk-full of amazing life applications and nuggets of wisdom. One of those stories we can return to again and again to hear a powerful word.

Looking at it this week I was struck by all the chances taken in the story. It begins with the story-teller himself “welcoming sinners and eating with them”. Everyday Jesus was seen as risking his holiness and reputation on being OK with associating with such rabble. So he tells a story filled with people taking chances. The lost son goes to his father and asks for his inheritance. The father does it. The lost son travels to another land and squanders it. He then went and became a hired hand. He goes back to dad again. Chance. Chance. Chance. Chance.

The dad not only takes him back but runs out to meet him and then throws a party for him. Gives him his best robe, a ring, and the fatted calf. This infuriates the other son who confronts his dad. The dad dismisses the concerns and invites him to celebrate. Lots of chances here!

There is a thin line and tipping point as each of these chances are taken. Going out on his own could be a huge success or a disaster. Walking back to his dad could have gone any number of ways. The dad took a chance on his enthusiastic welcome not knowing how it would impact him, his wife, and his two sons. Would the son learn his lesson or take advantage of the situation? Would there be fear of retribution or hope for reconciliation? How would this go?

As we know, life is actually full of these kinds of choices and chances every single day. Any act of vulnerability...of uncertainty...any act of getting outside the comfort zone...any act of love...means taking a chance. Working, Relationships, Parenting...Living. Always understanding that things won't always go as well as we hoped and the chance that it will give us an incredible opportunity or teach us something extraordinary.

I think that when I stood on that little ledge in Virginia Kendall, of course, what allowed me to take the chance was knowing that Dad was going to catch me. There was no way he would let us fall down.

When it comes to taking chances in all the different areas of our lives....What difference would it make to us if we trusted that God's GRACE would ALWAYS catch us? ALWAYS. That no matter how it went....whether terribly or beautifully that Grace would be there. The whole passage is full of chances AND it is saturated with God's Grace in amazing ways. There we see a Father who catches, who embraces this one who has fallen and still names him worthy of extra-ordinary love.

Church Family, every day, we are navigating decisions, choices, risks, and chances many times unsure of what is before us and what might come next. May we never doubt that come what may...nothing will ever stop God's Amazing Grace from catching us and embracing no matter what. May it be so! Amen

***Closing Hymn There's a Wideness in God's Mercy #73, v.1, 3-4**

Benediction

Rev. Chad Delaney

As you leave this place,
 may you be awestruck by the beauty of this world.
 May you laugh, and may it be contagious.
 May you overflow with love for those around you.
 May you be effusive with hope and quick to point out joy.
 And in all of your living, and breathing, and being,
 may you find yourself full to the brim with God's Holy Spirit,
 and may it change your life.
 In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—
 go in peace, full to the brim. Amen.

Postlude

“O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus”

Jan Green

[Jason W. Krug]