

Unsettled But Unafraid: A Liturgy For Worshiping At Home

Week of March 22, 2020

St. Simons Presbyterian Church

*Although we are not able to gather in-person for worship this week, we are able to gather in spirit. This simple resource is designed to help us worship together around a common liturgy and theme during this time of disruption from our normal routines and places. Use this liturgy individually or as a family. If you are using it in a family setting, consider giving each person one part to "lead". Take some time to consider the reflection questions. If using individually, try to carve out 10-minutes to quietly read and reflect. **Liturgy this week was created by Rev. Annie Franklin Arvin. Reflection by Frieda Warner.***

Opening Sentences:

O Lord, you are kind and forgiving,
full of love to all who call on you.
Listen to my prayer, O Lord;
hear the cries of my pleading.

Psalm 63:1-8

O god, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
**Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,
that I might behold your power and your glory.**
For your steadfast love is better than life itself;
my lips shall give you praise.
**So will I bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your name.**
My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,
**when I remember you up on my bed,
and meditate on you in the night watches.**
For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.
**My whole being clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.**

Scripture – John 5:1-9 (The Healing at the Pool)

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

Reflection Questions

- Who do you resonate with in this story? The crowd of people? Jesus? The sick man? Why?
- When Jesus asks the man if he wants to get well, he responds saying he has no one to carry him to the water. In this time when distance from each other is a priority, what are some ways we can get to the water together?
- Jesus directs the man to pick up his mat and walk. What is Jesus telling you this day?
- In today’s video devotional, Rev. Alan Dyer talks about praying for the “strength to face whatever is ahead”? What is the one thing you need the most strength to face

Closing Prayer

As you offer this prayer, consider pausing to pray by name for the people and places that come to mind in each bolded section.

God around us, we are scattered in your land and the end is not in sight. Yet you remain with us always. We trust in your Spirit, which stays with us and unites us with each other no matter the distance between us.

Hear our prayers, O God, as we pray together, yet apart.

For **the Church**, keep inspiring your Church with creative and innovative ways to remind the world of your presence in it as ministry this week looks different than it did last week. Lord, hear our prayer...

For **the creation** you made, heal the earth and draw us into the beauty of the world you made as we breathe in fresh air, hear birds chirping, and see the sun rising once more. Lord, hear our prayer...

For **neighbors** who are at risk of losing their jobs and their income during this time of uncertainty, provide stability. Lord, hear our prayer...

For those who no longer have reliable access to **food and nutrition**, send manna raining down. Lord, hear our prayer...

For **friends and family** who are isolated and alone as we are asked to keep apart, remind them that your comforting Spirit is indeed there. Lord, hear our prayer...

For **healthcare workers** who are working overtime, making difficult decisions, and feeling compassion fatigue, sustain them in your strength. Lord, hear our prayer...

For those suffering from **illness** in this time as hospitals risk reaching capacity and healthcare providers are stretched thin, provide hope. Lord, hear our prayer...

God, we trust in you. We trust our prayers to you and believe your Holy Spirit moves among us. In your Holy name we pray. AMEN.

A Prayer for the Week:

Loving God,
you want us to give thanks for all things,
to fear nothing except losing you,
and to lay all our cares on you,
knowing that you care for us.
Protect us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties,
and grant that no clouds in this mortal life
may hide from us the light of your immortal love
shown to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

-Book of Common Worship, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Do Small Things With Great Love

A Reflection by Frieda Warner

**“We cannot all do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”
–Mother Teresa**

It is the fourth week of Lent. None of us expected the BIG challenges we face today.

Regardless of whether or not we practice “giving up” something for Lent, a global health crisis has forced us to “give up” some very BIG things. We have given up watching or playing sports, attending our schools or colleges, going out to eat at restaurants, going to movies, visiting loved ones at senior centers, having parties/get togethers, going to choir practice, working at our actual workplaces.... even going to worship! This is a lot to give up!

Like most of you, I have been spending more time at home trying to do my part to keep physical distance (which does not come easy to me!). On the wall in my family room, there is a wooden sign that reads: *do small things with great love*. This well-known quote of Mother Teresa gives me some comfort in these uncertain times.

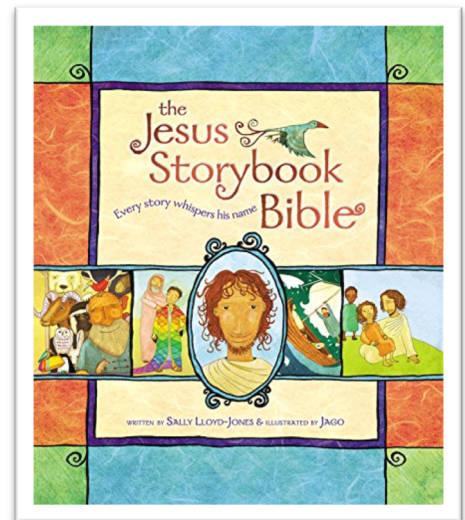
As people of Christ, we want to know what we can *do*. I challenge you to begin by trusting that God is present. In last week’s reflection, Kate Buckley shared a challenge with us to turn off the news/laptops/phones.... to sit and surrender... to be still and know that God is present. Continue to let these words of comfort flow over you. Feel the strength and comfort of Jesus as you pick what you ponder. Be guided by the Holy Spirit to *do small things with great love*.

Of course, there are BIG challenges all around us in these days. But as the COVID-19 numbers increase, I am also overwhelmed with hope as a result of how quickly and creatively people have come together to fight this sickness. Alongside all of the sobering statistics, the news also includes reports. There are headlines about progress on developing a vaccine, entire industries that are changing what they manufacture in order to produce lifesaving supplies and equipment, bipartisan solutions for our economy, healthcare workers providing non-stop care, teachers and professors creating entire new ways to continue educating, and more. The response to the COVID-19 challenge has been inspiring!

So, yes, we, personally, may not be able to invent a cure for this virus or stop making cars and produce ventilators, but in this upside-down world, no action done with great love is too small. The Holy Spirit is still very much at work.

Case in point is the fact that the psalm assigned by the Lectionary for this Sunday is Psalm 23. The words of this psalm have served as a comfort to countless people in times of uncertainty. Reflect and ponder on these simple, yet comforting, words of Psalm 23 as written in the Jesus Storybook Bible:

*God is my Shepherd
And I am his little lamb.
He feeds me.
He guides me.
He looks after me.
I have everything I need.
Inside, my heart is very quiet.
As quiet as lying still in soft green grass
In a meadow
By a little stream.
Even when I walk through the dark, scary, lonely places
I won't be afraid
Because my Shepherd knows where I am.
He is here with me
He keeps me safe
He rescues me
He makes me strong
And brave.
He is getting wonderful things ready for me
Especially for me
Everything I ever dreamed of!
He fills my heart so full of happiness
I can't hold it all inside.
Wherever I go I know
God's Never Stopping, Never Giving Up,
Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love will go, too!*



Personally, I have never been very good at giving up something for Lent. I like the idea of taking on something new. *What small things can you take on right now to share God's love in this most uncertain time?*

We have made BIG life changes. We all feel the weight. Pick what you ponder. *Do small things with great love.* You are not alone. The Shepherd is with you. Your church family prays with and for you.

Peace be with you,
Frieda Warner