

Lakewood Congregational Church

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Sunday, November 15, 2020



An Order of Worship to be followed in your home, along with our
worship video on your own
Preferably at 10:00am

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to worship on this Sunday.

We are glad you're worshipping with us today. Welcome to our
Virtch service today!

At Lakewood Congregational Church, we strive to be people of
extravagant welcome. Whether you are young or old, gay or
straight, single or partnered, happy or sad, confused or inspired,
street smart or college-educated, whether you can't pay your
bills or you have more than enough to share—no matter who you
are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here in
this place, to worship the God who welcomes us all.

Say, "May the Peace of Christ be with you"

Offering and Contribution Collection

Please consider fulfilling your pledges during this time. Financial
gifts are always welcome, and our church feels the call to respond
to the needs around us as they arise. Financial stability allows us
to do so more effectively. So, let us give generously of our time,
talent, treasure to further the work of God in our community. You
can do so in the following ways:

- Writing and mailing a check to Lakewood Congregational
Church, 1375 W. Clifton Blvd., Lakewood, OH 44107
- Texting STEWARD to 44-321
- Sending a gift through your bank's online bill pay
- By using the donate button on the church's website
www.lcc-church.org
- Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other
options

Prelude

Where Waters Flow by Ron Mallory

LCC Handbell Choir

Paula Deal, Michael Komperda, Ben Malkevitch, Bob Paraska,
Cathy Spicer, Robert Wenz, Jan Young

Photos taken by Ben Malkevitch at Christmas Rocks Nature
Preserve, Lancaster, OH and Buzzardroost Rock Trail, Lynx, OH

Opening Prayer

Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Elsa Cook

Dwell with us
here, O God.
Dwell in
our screens
and in our hearts
as you have from
generation to generation.

Dwell with us
in this time
of worship
enough that we can
feel the ground begin to shift
and new horizons emerge.

Dwell with us
in all our pandemic
confusion and worry
to find new
dreams and wonders
for ourselves
for our church
and for the world.

Dwell in
our worship,
O God. Amen.

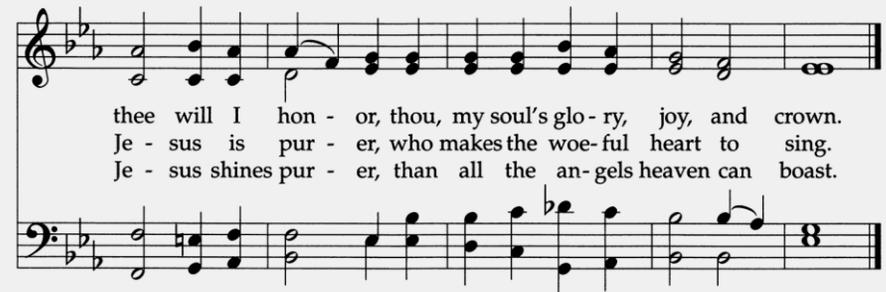
Hymn *Fairest Lord Jesus*



1. Fair - est Lord Je - sus, rul - er of all na - ture,
2. Fair are the mead - ows, fair - er still the wood - lands,
3. Fair is the sun - shine, fair - er still the moon - light,



O thou of God to earth come down; thee will I cher - ish,
robed in the bloom - ing garb of spring: Je - sus is fair - er,
and all the twink - ling, star - ry hosts: Je - sus shines bright - er,



thee will I hon - or, thou, my soul's glo - ry, joy, and crown.
Je - sus is pur - er, who makes the woe - ful heart to sing.
Je - sus shines pur - er, than all the an - gels heaven can boast.

LCC Virtual Choir

Victoria Peacock, soprano; Gwen Delaney, alto; Ben Liu, tenor;
Noah Hamrick, bass; Ben Malkevitch, piano

Pastoral Prayer

This we pray as you taught us to pray saying...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Let us praise God with our gifts of tithes and offerings.

Dedication Prayer

Collaborative Creator God, you call us to join in your work of love in the world, and you equip us with all we need to follow your lead. Now make us generous of hand, heart, and mind, as you are. As we return to you a portion of your gifts, we pray you would receive them as a sign of our gratitude for your unending love, and guide us as we offer our whole selves in your service, seeking your abundant life for all. Amen

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts:
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Scripture Reading, read by Claire Stair

Matthew 5:10

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 13:10-17

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, 'There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.' But the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?' When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Message

***We've included this transcript for the benefit of people who do not have audio access on their computer. Please keep in mind that it is written in a way it's spoken, so the grammar/sentence structure may feel a bit awkward to read. Even so, this feels like the best way to communicate to as many people as possible.

- I. There's an episode of Monk—I hope you all know that wonderful television series about a brilliant detective with Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder—in which Monk, the main character who never rests, takes a vacation with his assistant Sharona. The episode opens with Monk and Sharona on the beach. Sharona is trying to relax in the sun, while Monk sits next to her in his usual attire, a fully buttoned up suit with perfect dress shoes. As they are supposed to be relaxing, Sharona's son becomes the one and only witness to a homicide inside the hotel. Monk episodes always begin this way... with some kind of complex and mysterious crime that Mr. Monk must solve—and he always does. When Sharona's son shares the news of what he saw, Monk doesn't skip a beat before going to find hotel security and beginning to work on figuring out what happened, but the whole time his assistant Sharona is complaining about why they can't just rest, why they can't go anywhere without working on a case. Mr. Monk Takes a Vacation is about a man who is supposed to be on vacation—resting... recharging... taking Sabbath—but instead he is called into his purpose.
 - a. It reminds me of what happens to Jesus in Luke's Gospel lesson. Jesus and those around him are supposed to be resting on the Sabbath. The religious elites remind the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." Jesus, as a teacher, as a Rabbi, was allowed to teach in the synagogue, but not to do work beyond that, especially not to heal. So he's going along teaching and a woman walks in who is bent over and seeking healing, and Jesus just cannot look away, not even until tomorrow. He cannot ignore her need, he cannot put it off until later. He has to offer her the healing that only he can offer. Jesus is supposed to rest... recharge... take Sabbath— but instead he is called into his purpose.
 - b. New York Times Journalist Charles Blow is credited with saying, "There is no wrong time to do the right thing." It's a thread that unites Monk and Jesus in these moments. When there is a very important need, and we have the unique gifts to respond to it, we cannot just put it off.
- II. Of course there's a pretty big difference between working on vacation and what Jesus did here in Luke, especially because there is so much going on in the Gospel that has to do with social context and cultural expectations. So let me talk about that for a minute.
 - a. The Pharisees, the leaders in the Temple, were all about Law and Order. There was a very specific way things were supposed to be, and if God's Realm was ever going to be fulfilled on earth, then everything needed to be exactly the way the law and the scriptures said it needed to be. Everyone needed the right eating habits, the right daily schedule, the right familial set-ups. God's people needed to be following this very particular set of guidelines. So for the Pharisees, this wasn't just about wanting things to be the way they wanted them to be. They really held a very firm belief that God's realm could not be fulfilled unless everybody remained vigilant.
 - b. And for these men in the Temple, a very important part of those guidelines had to do with the Law of Sabbath.
 - i. The commandment to rest and restore our souls was and still is, a beautiful and necessary law.
 - c. We need Sabbath so bad it hurts most days. We work so hard, and we live in a society in which being busy

is glorified. Not even a pandemic can slow us down. In fact, in some ways it's made it more challenging, as the line between where we live and where we work is often blurred. A 40-hour workweek often isn't enough. Employees are rewarded for extra hours and somehow being busy has become equated with being important. Yet our minds and our bodies demand rest. Stress increases our risk for innumerable diseases and conditions, puts us at a greater risk for depression, anxiety, and burnout, and stands in the way of healthy relationships. Our relationship with God demands Sabbath, because it allows us to recalibrate and notice how God has been working in and through our lives.

i. So Sabbath is important. It is law. It is beautiful. And yet here in the Temple, Jesus unapologetically breaks it.

d. And when he does, we feel this tension between these two faithful Jewish men—Jesus and the religious leader. They are both struggling with what it means to be faithful. The temple leader is strict and rigid in what he believes is obedient faithfulness. He cannot think outside of the box and can't imagine flexibility within the law of the Sabbath. So says this woman could come any day but today: "Come on those days and be cured." But Jesus leads with a new promise, a new way of being faithful to the call to feed, clothe, welcome, visit, and heal. Jesus understands obedient faithfulness to be putting compassionate hospitality over religious law and order any day of the week.

III. This week, as we near the end of our series on the Beatitudes. We reflect on the Beatitude: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

a. This temple encounter is one among many moments throughout the Gospel when Jesus himself is persecuted for righteousness' sake. By healing on the Sabbath, he upsets and offends the religious elites. This betrayal of the law is just one tally mark on the list for those who persecuted Jesus for presenting a new way of being in the world. We continue to see the theme of Jesus putting compassionate hospitality over religious law throughout the Gospels, up to his arrest and crucifixion. Jesus speaks of the blessedness of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake because he knows what it feels like. It is the road he walks.

IV. I defined righteousness a few weeks ago when I reflected on the Beatitude "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." I explained that we often describe righteousness as a synonym for justice, but the two words don't quite click interchangeably. Justice is the vision we're working towards. Justice is when the woman who has been bent over for 18 years is upright again, no longer in pain. But righteousness is about the actions we take in order to accomplish that vision. So, to act justly is to be righteous. Righteousness in this moment for Jesus means ignoring the laws of the Sabbath in order to accomplish the vision of justice: Healing on the one day he isn't supposed to heal.

V. Looking through history, we can name many people who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other Civil Rights leaders, Harriett Tubman and other abolitionists, and many other righteous individuals and who have led movements to liberate and accomplish the vision of justice for the oppressed.

- a. This year we've been reminded often of Congressman John Lewis who invited us to "get in good trouble, necessary trouble."
 - b. Jesus, while teaching in the Synagogue on the Sabbath, got in some good, necessary trouble. He saw a woman who had been in pain for 18 years and he couldn't stand idly by and allow her pain for one more day. Righteousness meant getting in some good trouble with the law. He said, "Ought not this woman be set free from bondage on this Sabbath day?" And while he was persecuted by those in authority and those in power, the crowd witnessed his righteousness. His followers knew the taste of oppression, brokenness, and grief, and they had experienced for themselves the healing power of some good trouble.
 - c. (For what it's worth, I think Adrian Monk got in some good, necessary trouble all the time in that TV series too).
- VI. In last week's sermon I spoke of being peacemakers rather than peacekeepers. If Jesus were a peacekeeper, he may have asked the bent over woman to wait until tomorrow for healing, so as not to upset the Temple leaders. But as a peacemaker, he engaged in some good, necessary trouble.
- a. When we commit to the work of peacemaking rather than peacekeeping, we'll experience a certain amount of persecution for righteousness' sake. To be clear, we do not experience true persecution in 2020 in America, but we sure as toast experience the dynamic of being disliked, disapproved of, unfriended, or estranged, when we pursue the presence of justice over the absence of tension. When we take a firm stance about what it looks like to be faithful to God's call to bring about a just world for all, we will upset someone, somehow. And Jesus says, "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."
- VII. I'll remind you as I've spoken of so many times before that if we were to draw a venn diagram between heaven and earth, with earth being full of human brokenness, strained relationships, greed and resentment, violence and oppression, and heaven being this world where God's creation is whole, and healed, and free, with every baby on every hip fat and healthy-- then our job as followers of Jesus Christ is to occupy the overlap, to live in the space where Heaven and Earth meet, and to declare to people that this world is possible-- that a world of Beloved Community with a baseline of Grace and abiding presence is possible.
- a. A simpler more succinct definition of the Kingdom of God comes from theologian Hans Kung who says that the Kingdom of God is "God's Creation, Healed."
- VIII. I wonder how, during this seemingly endless time of our pandemic reality, we understand our balance between observing the Sabbath and creating good, necessary trouble. What does it look like to occupy the overlap between heaven and earth in a time when God's creation is so deeply in need of healing, and yet we ourselves are exhausted in the deepest parts of our soul.
- a. One of the many blessings of the Beatitudes is that when read together, they remind us that as the Body of Christ together we each experience different seasons. Perhaps you remember Rachel and Chris's beautiful performance of Turn, Turn, Turn a few weeks ago. We recall those early beatitudes which speak of the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst: those who are deeply in need of Sabbath rest to restore their souls. As the Body of

Christ, we participate in a relay together. We pass the baton, so that when one is in need of rest, another can take the baton and run for a while. So that we do not all burn out all at once.

- b. Some days our work of righteousness, our work of occupying the overlap, our work of healing Creation is indeed healed through Sabbath rest, when we heal ourselves by taking a big long beautiful nap on a rainy day, or when we set aside work to connect with the ones we love, or when we free ourselves from a life-sapping obligation. Other days God's creation is healed through some good, necessary trouble; because when we see people or places or systems in need of healing we cannot look away.
- c. As we enter into this colder, darker season in the midst of a spiking pandemic, I invite you into deep discernment about where you are on that relay. Listen to your body and to the pull of the Holy Spirit. Stay in tune with the needs of the world, but recognize that you cannot pour from an empty cup. Set your intentions for the day and seek accountability. Keep an eye open for the person in need of healing, and recognize that sometimes that person is you. Get in some good, necessary trouble... but take a nap sometimes too.
- d. Jesus has made it quite clear that in our faithfulness, we will be blessed along the way.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Benediction

Beloved, go forth from this place listening to the voice of God calling to both righteousness and rest. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, Mother of us all. Amen

Postlude

Jubilation by James Mansfield

Ben Malkevitch, organ

Our Mission Statement proclaims our common goal.

*We strive to be a welcoming,
worshipping community of faith,
helping people discover and deepen
their relationship with God, growing as
disciples of Christ, and reaching out in
faith and loving service.*

In keeping with the spirit of our Mission Statement,

*Lakewood Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ,*

is an Open and Affirming congregation.

*We welcome people of all sexual orientation,
ages, differing abilities, and ethnic, economic,
and racial backgrounds into
the full life and ministry of our church.*

*We declare this in the name of the Still Speaking God,
whose Son, Jesus Christ, welcomed
all people into God's circle of grace.*

