

ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



16 OCTOBER 2022

PENTECOST 19



WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Carve out a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

Hymn: TIS 546 Lord Jesus, think on me...

Prayer for today

Teach us, O God, to view our life here on earth as a pilgrim's path,
and give us grace to tread it courageously in the company of your faithful people.
Help us to set our affections on things above,
not on the passing vanities of this world,
and grant that as we journey on in the Way of holiness
we may bear a good witness to our Lord,
and serve all who need our help along the way,
for the glory of your name.

God of our pilgrimage,
you have given us a desire
to take the questing way
and set out on our journey.
Help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus,
that whatever we encounter as we travel,
we may seek to glorify you by the way we live.

Eternal God,
give us the courage to set off on pilgrimage.
May we travel unhindered by worldly possessions
simply trusting in you for all that we need.
Sometimes our hearts will be heavy as we plod along
and our feet will ache and feel dirty.
Other times we will rejoice as the sun shines
on the path stretching before us.
May we ponder the truth,
that the pilgrim's journey is never finished till they reach home.

We confess

When we do not see the gravity of racial injustice, shake us from our slumber and open our eyes.
When out of fear we are frozen into inaction, give us a spirit of bravery.
When we try our best but say the wrong things, give us a spirit of humility.
When the chaos of this [time] dies down, give us a lasting spirit of solidarity.
When it becomes easier to point fingers outward, help us to examine our own hearts.

by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Assurance of forgiveness

Friends in Christ, know this: the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, and I remind you of this surpassing grace – in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Amen.

Hymn: TIS 561 Who would true valour see...

Scripture

From the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalm 121 (from The Jerusalem Bible)

1 I lift my eyes to the mountains: where is help to come from?
2 Help comes to me from Yahweh, who made heaven and earth.
3 No letting our footsteps slip! This guard of yours, he does not doze!
4 The guardian of Israel does not doze or sleep.
5 Yahweh guards you, shades you. With Yahweh at your right hand
6 sun cannot strike you down by day, nor moon at night.
7 Yahweh guards you from harm, he guards your lives,
8 he guards you leaving, coming back, now and for always.

From the New Testament

Luke 18:1-8 (from The Jerusalem Bible)

The unscrupulous judge and the importunate widow

Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart.
2 "There was a judge in a certain town," he said, "who had neither fear of God nor respect for man. 3 In the same town there was a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, 'I want justice from you against my enemy!' 4 For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, 'Maybe I have neither fear of God nor respect for man, 5 but since she keeps pestering me I must give this widow her just rights, or she will persist in coming and worry me to death.' " 6 And the Lord said, "You notice what the unjust judge has to say? 7 Now will not God see justice done to his chosen who cry to him day and night even when he delays to help them? 8 I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?"

A Pastoral Letter: Number Six

Just for a while, rather than simply repeat the sermon from the church-based service, I have decided to offer the folks not able to attend the service a special tailored “pastoral letter” for their prayerful consideration. The overall theme, for a while, will be The Lord’s Prayer, and today we will look at the next words: “Your will be done”.

Looking at The Lord’s Prayer — ... on earth as it is in heaven.

Last week’s words from The Lord’s Prayer were “Your will be done...”. Of course the sentence was not complete. The completion of the line is “... on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus could have said that the almighty God we owe allegiance to is in the place he ought to be — a godly place, out of this world, and in that godly place he does his godly thing. Except that is not what Jesus says at all. What he really says is that God’s will is put into action right here and now; in this earthly place that we call home, as well as God’s unimaginable abode. The distinction is not a real one anyway, because we accept as an article of our faith, that this God, that we call “Our Father” is as much at home, here, with us, on earth, as anywhere. If we want to see God’s will in action we don’t have to wait until we get to heaven, but we can simply open our eyes. Yes, God’s will is being “done” in plain sight, here on earth — as it is in heaven. In other words; everywhere!

So, what do we need to do to see God’s work? Well, there is a word for it. It is a word that goes right back to the early 1500s, and the use of it has in recent years had a boost by the advocacy of Pope Francis. The word is “discernment”, and it points to the practice of paying close attention. The test is the quality of the insight. Briefly, if it feels of God; if it feels as if it comes from a generous, gracious, loving God it is to be taken seriously. If it reeks of negativity, judgmentalism, anger, self-righteousness, pain and the like, chances are that it is not of God. These are not hard and fast rules and indicators, but the fact that Christians talk in these terms is a good thing. Good on Pope Francis for showing us a way to talk sensibly about God and his will and his acts.

Karel Reus (Minister)

Hymn: TIS 560(ii) All my hope on God is founded...

Prayers — Prepared by Mardie Townsend

Today, as we come to our prayers of the people, we think of pilgrims and pilgrimages. While a pilgrim has traditionally been defined as someone who travels to a holy place for religious reasons, the term is now more widely interpreted to include worshipper, devotee, believer, traveller. Thus, as the hymn says: “we are pilgrims on a journey”. Today’s prayers draw on a variety of prayers relating to pilgrims and pilgrimages, including the words of Thomas Merton, Christine Valters Painter and Ninevah Murray.

Let us pray

Lord God, we have no idea where we are going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think that we are following your will does not mean that we are actually doing so.

We ask your blessing as we travel today in spirit.
Guide our minds as we learn of those who came before us, traversing the pilgrim way.
Give us a hunger to seek your face in paths through fields, along roads trod by many seeking the blessing of your presence. Nurture our fellowship and help us to see each other as a brother or sister sharing the journey to your blessed kingdom.

We pray for others on their pilgrimages of faith and their journeys through life. We think of those of other faiths: Hindus about to celebrate the festival of Diwali; Muslims, many of whom make a pilgrimage to Mecca; Jews, many of whom make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; Buddhists, who travel to holy places including the birthplace of Gautama Buddha.

We pray especially for those whose pilgrimages, journeys have been forced upon them by war, oppression, hunger, disaster. Open our hearts Lord to do what we can to address the needs of the homeless, the refugees, the displaced, the hungry, and inspire us to challenge our governments to reach out to those in need, both at home and abroad.

We pray for those whose pilgrimages and journeys through life have been or are being challenged by illness, disability, frailty, grief. May we find ways to journey with them as companions and as instruments of your loving kindness.

Journeying God, pitch your tent with ours so that we may not be deterred by hardship, strangeness, doubt. Show us the movement we must make toward a wealth not dependent on possessions, toward a wisdom not based on books, toward a strength not bolstered by might, toward a god not confined to heaven. Help us to find ourselves as we walk in others' shoes.

And for all who are journeying through life, we pray:
O God, be for us our companion on the walk, our guide at the crossroads,
Our breath in our weariness, our protection in danger,
Our refuge on the Way, our shade in the heat, our light in the darkness,
Our consolation in our discouragements, and our strength in our intentions.
So that with your guidance we may arrive safe and sound at the end of the Road,
enriched with grace and virtue. May we return safely to our homes filled with joy.
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn: TIS 569 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

Blessing

The love and affection of the angels be to you,
The love and affection of the saints be to you,
The love and affection of heaven be to you,
To guard you and to cherish you.

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Thoughts for the week to come

The Pilgrim's Prayer

O God,
be for me a companion on the walk,
my guide at the crossroads,
a breath in my weariness,
my protection in danger,
my refuge on the Way,
my shade in the heat,
my light in the darkness,
my consolation in my discouragements,
and my strength in my intentions.
May it be that with your guidance
I may arrive safe and sound
at the end of the Road
enriched with grace and virtue
may I return safely to my home
filled with joy.
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

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Postlude

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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Music: Peter Hurley

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