



Silent Meditation

“When we enter the story of the Gospel of Mark, we enter a world of conflict and suspense, a world of surprising reversals and strange ironies, a world of riddles and hidden meanings, a world of subversive actions and political intrigues.

And the protagonist – Jesus – is the most surprising of all.”

~David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, Donald Michie

“The whole Gospel [of Mark] is a story about the reign of God coming to displace another reign, and that other one will not relinquish its power without a fight.”

~Matt Skinner

“What’s certain here [in Mark] is this: the reign of God Jesus keeps talking about is certainly not going to be about maintaining business as usual.”

~Matt Skinner

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 6, 2021, 10:55am

Prelude "Bells of St. Mary's" by A. Emmett Adams

Welcome and Announcements Cheri Dennis

One: Let us begin in the name of God our Creator, Jesus our redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our guide and comforter.

Many: Amen.

Introit "Come Share the Lord" by B.J. Leech

* Call to Worship Phil Kaveler

(Based on Psalm 138, The Message. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson)

One: Come, let us worship our God with joy and thanksgiving. Everything in us says:

Many: Thank you!

One: At worship in this sacred place we say it again:

Many: Thank you!

One: For your love, for your faithfulness;

Many: Thank you!

One: When earth's rulers hear what you have to say, O God, they'll sing of what you've done:

Many: **How great the glory of God!**

One: Finish what you started in us, God. Your love is eternal—stay with us, now, that we may say:

Many: Thank you!

** All rise in body or spirit*

Here in this place, the new light is streaming,
Shadows of doubt are vanished away:
See in this space our fears and our dreamings
Brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in, our spirits inflame.
Call to us now and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
We are the old who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human-race.

Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in, the proud and the strong:
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.

Here we receive new life in the waters,
Here we receive the bread of new birth:
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt for the earth.

Give us to drink, the wine of compassion,
Give us to eat the bread that is you:
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

Not just in buildings, small and confining,
Not in some heaven light-years away,
Here in this place the new light is shining,
Now is God present, and now is the day.

Gather us in and hold us forever,
Gather us in and make us your own,
Gather us in, all peoples together -
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Litany of Confession (*from 1 Samuel 8:4-11*)

Cheri Dennis

One: Leadership and governance is on everyone's mind these days. Competing visions of the common good strive for our attention. Like the people of Israel in today's text, we may be tempted to seek rulers whose ways are not the ways of God. When we forget that God's ways lead all to the blessings of justice and mercy:

Many: Lord, have mercy.

One: When we forget that God's ways lead all, especially the most vulnerable, to blessings of safety, health, meaningful work:

Many: Christ, have mercy.

One: When we forget that God's ways lead all to the blessings of the shared abundance of God's beloved creation:

Many: Lord, have mercy.

Assurance of Pardon (*from Mark 3:34-35*)

Cheri Dennis

Jesus reminds us: "Who is my mother, and who are my sisters and brothers? All those who do the will of God are my brother and sister and mother." In Christ we are forgiven all our failed efforts at community, and invited afresh to rejoin the family of God, seeking blessing for all.

Litany for Passing the Peace

Cheri Dennis

(by Mary Luti, Emerge | Blessings and Rituals for Unsheltering)

One: We cannot touch just now,

Many: not yet.

One: We cannot shake, embrace, slap each other on the back or kiss,

Many: not yet.

One: We cannot move around the space, up and down the aisles, jostle each other, trip over kids, reach down the pew to greet the elderly gent who can't get up, scan for the couple who came last week, hope this raucous time will go on and on - or pray that it won't, and the organist will cut it off with the intro to the next hymn - we can't,

Many: not yet.

One: But the peace that passes understanding is not like a virus. It doesn't need contact to infect. It's like the Spirit and the wind; it goes wherever it wills, wherever we send it.

Through webs and nets and wires, it googles and zooms to everyone whose heart needs peace, and to every place there is no peace. And we will share it now:

The peace of Christ be with you!

Many: And also with you!

Children's Message

Cheri Dennis

Song

"Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying"

CHILDREN PRAYING

Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love, send us power, send us grace.

Pastoral Prayer

Cheri Dennis

* 1st Gospel Reading

Mark 3:20-35
(from the NRSV)

Phil Kaveler

Then he went home; and the crowd came together again so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He is out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" - for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit." Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

Many: **Alleluia! Thanks be to God.**

* Hymn 63

“Holy Spirit, Truth Divine”

MERCY

Holy Spirit, truth divine, dawn upon this soul of mine.
Voice of God and inward light, wake my spirit from it's night.

Holy Spirit, love divine, glow within this heart of mine.
Kindle every high desire, purify me with your fire.

Holy Spirit, power divine, fill and nerve this will of mine.
Boldly may I always live, bravely serve, and gladly give.

Holy Spirit, law divine, reign within this soul of mine
Be my law, and I shall be firmly bound, forever free.

* 2nd Gospel Reading

Mark 3:22-30

Cheri Dennis

(from The Message Bible)

The religion scholars from Jerusalem came down spreading rumors that he was working black magic, using devil tricks to impress them with spiritual power. Jesus confronted their slander with a story: “Does it make sense to send a devil to catch a devil, to use Satan to get rid of Satan? A constantly squabbling family disintegrates. If Satan were fighting Satan, there soon wouldn't be any Satan left. Do you think it's possible in broad daylight to enter the house of an awake, able-bodied man, and walk off with his possessions unless you tie him up first? Tie him up, and you can clean him out. Listen to this carefully. I'm warning you. There's nothing done or said that can't be forgiven. But if you persist in your slanders against God's Holy Spirit, you are repudiating the very One who forgives, sawing off the branch on which you are sitting, severing by your own perversity all connections with the One who forgives.” He gave this warning because they were accusing him of being in league with the devil.

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us.

Many: Alleluia! Thanks be to God.

Sermon

“The Mission of Jesus: Tying Up the Strong Man”

Cheri Dennis

* Offering Dedication *(in unison)*

Generous God, take our gifts this day and use them so that we may be part of your great work in this world. Through our giving, bring justice and love closer to all, not just in our community but in the world beyond these walls. Strengthen our church and the whole United Church of Christ so that we grow together each day into a powerful voice for healing and peace. Amen.

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

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Preparation

Cheri Dennis

Let us prepare our hearts, open our minds and give thanks to our God. Creator God, in the beginning you put life into the emptiness, light into the darkness and saw that it was good. You created people to live on the earth, to love and be loved, to care for this creation and be fruitful. And you saw it was good, very good. And when we failed to praise you for a harvest of plenty, to obey your commands and care for the world that you put in our hands, you sent us Jesus to show us the way. May this meal nourish us, strengthening us to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free. Thank you, God, for inviting us to share in your mission to bring peace and abundant life to your creation. Amen.

Hymn 336

“Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face”

MORECAMBE

**Here, O my Lord, I see you face to face;
Here would I touch and handle things unseen;
Here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace,
And all my weariness upon you lean.**

**Here would I feed upon the bread of God;
Here share the cup, the gracious gift of heaven;
Here would I lay aside each earthly load,
Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiven.**

**Too soon we rise; the symbols disappear;
The meal, but not your love, is past and gone.
This joyful feast confirms that you are here,
Now and forever, as our shield and sun.**

Words of Institution

Cheri Dennis

We remember that on the night Jesus was handed over, while at supper with his friends, he gave us a pledge of love that does away with death.

Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying:

“Take and eat, all of you: This is my body, surrendered for you.”

And when the supper was over, Jesus took a cup filled with wine, gave thanks for it, and shared it with them, saying:

“Take and drink, all of you: This is the seal of a new covenant, my poured-out life. I will drink this cup with you again at the table of God's joy in the New Day that is coming. Whenever you do these things, remember me.”

Come, eat, drink. Christ is the giver of this feast, and all are welcome, whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey.

(To open the individual communion elements, carefully remove the clear top layer of plastic first. This reveals the wafer. Then carefully remove the foil layer to reveal the juice. Wrap the empty container in the napkin and place in the trash basket when you leave the sanctuary.)

* Prayer of Thanksgiving *(in unison)*

We thank you God, for refreshing us at your holy table. We thank you for our Christian family in this community and around the world. May we always be reminded to see the world through Christ's eyes, and to work for a time when all may share together at Your table. Amen.

* Hymn 76

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”

THE ASH GROVE

Sent forth by God’s blessing, our true faith confessing,
The people of God from this dwelling take leave.
The Service is ended, O now be extended
The fruits of our worship in all who believe.
The seed of the teaching, receptive hearts reaching,
Shall blossom in action for God and for all.
God’s grace did invite us, and love shall unite us
To work for God’s realm and to answer the call.

* Benediction

Cheri Dennis

* Benediction Response

“Song of Hope”
Argentine folk melody

CANTO DE ESPERANZA

May the God of hope go with us every day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;
Working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Postlude

“Ashokan Farewell”

by J. Unger

(Songs in this service are used by Permission. CCLI License #11439355; CSPL164710)

WE COULDN'T PROVIDE OUR WARM WELCOME WITHOUT THE HELP OF:

Lisa Cloninger, Brian Hankins, Henry Hankins,
Laura Hankins, Meg Houlihan, Kathleen Smith

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

THIS IS GOD'S HOUSE WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME

I am overjoyed to be able to announce that, barring any guideline changes from CDC, Holy Covenant UCC is open for both the 9:45 Sojourners Class and the 11am worship service. Child Care and Children's Church is available. Here are a few other things to remember.

- Wearing a mask is recommended.
- Safe distance seating. The ushers will seat you.
- Child Care (nursery to 3 yr. old) available.
- Children's Church for the entire hour will be held in the Conference Room.
- Please greet each other in the parking lot before and after church, instead of the Gathering Space.
- There will be no before service coffee or after service refreshments at this time.
- No robust congregational singing. Hum or sing softly with a mask.

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to me. All are invited to come but your decision to return to in-person worship is up to you. We look forward to seeing you when you are ready. Our online live streaming continues as always.

Shalom, Cheri



[Just a few weeks has passed since] the one-year anniversary of the murder and death of George Floyd at the hands of a white police officer. While this past year has been one of many upheavals--the pandemic, which has caused illness and death alongside disruptions of work, school, social activities and family relationships; ongoing police brutality and anti-Black violence; the Black Lives and Say Her Name movements; rising unemployment--the impact of each of these on people of color has been extra and different than it has for white members of our community. The differential cost has included extra strain and stress, more symptoms of depression and anxiety, more financial strain and deep fatigue.

Those of us who are not people of color cannot fully understand these impacts. However, we do want to learn how to best support those who have been most affected. We also want to work harder to do the complex and much-needed work of changing systems of oppression. Every bit we can learn is valuable and important. Every step we can take to bring awareness and change can help.

With its focus on mental health, the WISE team is one of the ministries of the church where some of this learning and support can occur and we are exploring opportunities to grow, learn and provide support. One of the ways we will do this is to collaborate with the Racial Justice Team and the Sojourners Class around the topic of Black fatigue in the coming months. Please share your input with Meg Houlihan (megmhoulihan@gmail.com), Holly Middleton (hsmiddleton@gmail.com) or any member of the WISE team. We welcome all levels of participation, views, ideas, concerns and opinions as we embark on this important "all hands on deck" work.

“THE SMALLEST ACT OF KINDNESS IS WORTH MORE THAN THE GRANDEST INTENTION” ~Oscar Wilde

With much gratitude for every offering, we hope you will find these methods of giving easy to navigate:

Mail a check securely to our Post Office Box:

Holy Covenant UCC
PO Box 481286
Charlotte, NC 28269

Make your offering online through our website:

holycovenantucc.org/give/



Try our new app in the My Church App. Download it here!

<http://customchurchapps.com/my-church-app/>

Find the GIVE button at the top of the home page of the weekly e-newsletter that will allow you to make a one time, or recurring contribution of any amount, and designate where those funds are to be used.

THANK YOU! Your support helps build our stories about how we are living out God's love and expressing love of neighbor, children and creation, our 3 Great Loves.

MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY VIA ZOOM, WEDNESDAYS *12:30PM*

Join us in our weekly Wednesday bible study. We'll continue our exploration of Paul's missionary journeys, as written in [Acts 20](#). Think about Paul's intended audience. In what ways are we like and unlike the early churches?

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81153885298?pwd=ZXIzVG80Yko5N2dWNnloVG12ckJndz09>

Meeting ID: 811 5388 5298 Passcode: 750474

SOJOURNERS CLASS - NOT YOUR TYPICAL BIBLE STUDY, SUNDAYS AT 9:45AM

Now both in-person in the Conference Room, or virtually via Zoom available for your convenience.

[Click here to join the Zoom meeting.](#)

Meeting ID: 876 7340 9762 Passcode: 523903

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

If any Holy Covenant families or friends are interested in receiving supplemental materials and activities for children, please contact Laura Allison at Education@holycovenantucc.org.

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to prayers@holycovenantucc.org.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Tom & Kathy Habel, Jana Harrison, Helen Lambert, Karen Long, Irene Mikkelson, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Jerry & Marion Rhyne, Cynthia Simpson, Mamie Stokes, Anita Taylor, Debbie Winston

Friends & Family Members

Michael & Beth Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Cecelia Ciciollo (Dominic Ciciollo), Al (Bo) Dennis (Keith Dennis), David & Cecelia Griffin (JP Griffin), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Will Hong (Jim Hong), George Jongeling (Darline Warren), Bob Lyon (Melissa Noll), Bonnie Lee (Kathleen Wagner), Thibault Ossenbühl (Melissa Noll), Vernon & Andrea Powell (Robert Shepherd), Darrell & Jackie Reichert (Diane Neese), Kathryn Vickery (Ed Vickery), Wanda Williams (John Rapp)

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