

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
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WORSHIP SERVICE  
July 5, 2020

Prelude:

Greetings and News of Congregational Concerns and Joys

**Call to Worship:**

Pastor: Praise God, all you, God's servants. Blessed be the name of our God.

**People: From the rising of the sun to its setting let the name of God be praised.**

Pastor: May God's life-giving power be known to all, and God's compassion be told in every place.

**People: God is high above all nations; God's glory fills the whole universe.**

Pastor: The gospel of Jesus Christ turns us around, and we become disciples and apostles.

**People: Listen for the voice of God in Christ, for God's Word comes when we least expect it.**

**Invocation and the Lord's Prayer(Page 12):**

Lift us up into your presence, comforting God, for we are weighed down by life's tragedies. So much that is wrong in the world seems to be, at least in part, our fault. We blame ourselves, or other people, or you, for the calamities that shake our existence. Help us to express our angers and our fears, so we may be ready for the new life you offer.

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.

**Call to Confession:**

God summons us from our false gospels and narrow horizons to see more of eternal truth. Do we recognize the signs of death within us? Our lukewarm faith may be keeping us from the delight and power of true worship. Bring to remembrance, and confess, with me, all that separates us from God.

**Prayer of Confession:**

All-knowing God, we shrink from acknowledging you, for when we do, our sins are exposed. We block out your revelation and deny the word of your prophets. We choose our own traditions in preference to the way of Christ. We deal violently with those with whom we disagree, believing that this is safer than your way of peace. O God, deliver us from our arrogance and fear; forgive our waywardness, we pray. Amen.

### **Assurance of Pardon:**

God set you apart before you were born. In God's grace there is a place for you. Leave your past behind; it is forgiven. Embrace the new future Christ offers. Live and share the faith, now vital and alive in you.

### **The Apostle's Creed(Page 12)**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **The Morning Prayer**

#### Verse of the Day

*“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” Matthew 1: 23*

#### A Prayer for Today

God of grace and mercy,

How your heart must break as you look upon our nation so torn apart by pestilence, fear, injustice and violence. Have mercy upon us. Help us to remember that you have sent your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, to live among us. In Christ, the only perfect human, you showed us who you created us to be. He showed us how to love and seek to do justice and mercy, how to live in peace with all people. He confronted violence and evil with love and triumphed over sin and death. He sent the Holy Spirit to be with us and in us so that we might live as your new creation and love as he has loved us.

Lord, forgive our sin. Give us eyes to see the needs and brokenness of your world and make us agents of reconciliation and peace. The outcry of the oppressed needs to be heard and responded to with love, action and justice. But violence and destruction are never right. Identify and remove those who would perpetrate evil and enmity whoever they may be. Protect the innocent. Protect the peacemakers. Protect the police and National Guard that are called to maintain order in the midst of chaotic situations and raw emotions.

God with us, in Christ you show us the way of love, justice and mercy. Help us to follow Christ, the way the truth and the life, into a new tomorrow that that is informed by your love and the lessons learned in the suffering of these days. Heal our nation. Stop the lawlessness, the pestilence of hatred and illness. By grace may we know your presence with us to light the way through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

PS Pray for our nation.

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## **The Scripture Lesson: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

Matthew 11:16-19

<sup>16</sup> “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

<sup>17</sup> ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;  
we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; <sup>19</sup> the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”<sup>[a]</sup>

Matthew 11:25-30

### **Jesus Thanks His Father**

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus said, “I thank<sup>[a]</sup> you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

## **YOU'RE WATCHING WHAT?**

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

July 5, 2020

Someone has said that cleaning with kids in the house is like brushing your teeth while eating Oreos . . . Isn't that so?

Another person has said that behind every good marriage is a great house cleaning service.

Speaking of cleaning your house, let me ask you a question: what is your go-to technique for relieving stress? Just about everyone feels overwhelmed with stress from time to time.

A mental health foundation in the United Kingdom ran a poll on the effects of stress. Respondents to the poll said that overwhelming feelings of stress led them to overeat, drink and smoke. People reported that stress made them feel depressed, anxious, alone, even suicidal.

Unrelieved stress is a serious condition. We all need healthy techniques for dealing with it. These techniques may be sublime or they may be a little ridiculous.

I read recently that many people are finding temporary relief from their stress by watching videos on YouTube. OK, that's not too surprising. What is surprising is what they are watching on YouTube. They're watching videos of people cleaning their house. You heard that right. There's a whole industry on the internet built around people who create videos on how to organize and clean your house. And these videos are hugely popular, with millions of fans.

Why do people like to watch videos of people cleaning up their house? Many fans of cleaning videos say that watching someone else organize and clean their house makes them feel less anxious, more in control of their own surroundings. Hosts for the most popular cleaning shows regularly get emails telling them how their show helped a fan through anxiety, depression and various life crises.

One young woman said she falls asleep each night to cleaning videos because they clear her head of anxiety and fear. Another young woman says watching the videos "makes my head stop rushing around for a bit." Another fan says, "I think there's a lot of aspects to our daily life that seem chaotic, so watching something in a state of order is relaxing."

That seems like a harmless, if somewhat strange way to deal with stress. But it doesn't tackle the deeper problems in our life that cause us to feel out of control in the first place. That's our topic for today: Dealing with Stress.

By the way, an organization in South Korea has discovered a novel way to help people deal with their stress. This organization stages "living funerals." Again, you heard me right. Participants at living funerals write out a short testament of their last thoughts and wishes. Then they put on a funeral shroud and lie down in a closed coffin for about ten minutes.

The purpose of living funerals, which is a free service offered by the Hyowon Healing Center, is to help people gain a new perspective on life. About 25,000 South Koreans have undergone a living funeral so far. The director of the Healing Center says that some people have reconciled with family or friends after their living funeral. Others have changed careers. Some participants who were contemplating suicide credit their living funeral with changing their minds. The purpose of the living funeral, according to the director, is to realize that "Happiness is in the present."

Happiness is in the present. Most of us would agree with that. But many of us do not live like that. All too often many of us describe our lives as busy, hectic, even crazy. That seems to be the norm. No one has any time anymore. No one gets any rest.

Finish this sentence: "I'll sleep when I'm [what]?" Some people answer with the word, "Dead." "I'll sleep when I'm dead." Might that not be too late?

In our Bible passage today, Jesus challenges the people around him with these words, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus is saying to us that weariness is not meant to be our natural way of living. That's not what God created us for. In fact, no matter how productive our out-of-control schedule makes us feel, it is actually living in opposition to the rhythms of life that contribute to peace, clarity, and purposeful living.

Weariness and burdens blind us to the true purpose of our lives and bind us with a sense of powerlessness. They isolate us. When you are weary and burdened, your focus narrows to what is right in front of you, to what is urgent instead of what is important. This behavior is the norm in our culture, so we don't

question it. That's just the way life is. Except that Jesus says it isn't the way things are meant to be. So, what did Jesus mean by rest for our souls?

I read recently about another group devoted to giving us rest. However, this one's a business. In 2005, a store called MinneNAPolis opened in Minnesota's Mall of America. Notice the name—MinneNAPolis. For 70 cents a minute, tired shoppers can rent a sound-proof room for napping. The rooms have special themes like Deep Space, Asian Mist, and Tropical Isle. Or, if you don't feel like napping, you can sit in the store's massage chair, gaze at a waterfall, listen to soft music and breathe in the "positive-ionization-filtered air." The owners of the store advertise it as "an enjoyable escape from the fast-paced lifestyle." Some people probably find that helpful.

However, rest for our souls is not the same thing as a nap, or a vacation, or breathing in positive-ionization-filtered air while gazing at a fake waterfall. It's not a temporary respite from our stress. Rest for our souls is a re-orientation of our values and perceptions of life to match up with the values and perceptions of God, the One who created us—the Source of our soul.

Listen to Jesus' words again: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Think about those important words for just a few moments.

**The first thing Jesus is saying to us is, "You have a soul."** Or to be more accurate, you **are** a soul. Have you stopped to think about that lately? You are not a random collection of cells. You are not the sum of your current circumstances. You are a work of art, made in the image of God. You have the imprint of the eternal, all-powerful God Almighty within you. Your soul is a mark of God's abundant love for you. It marks you as incredibly valuable in God's eyes. Which leads us to a question: are you experiencing life the way God meant you to experience it? Or do you feel weary and burdened because you are living in a way that is disconnected from your soul?

Mike Jaffee was a young, successful businessman working for a Fortune 500 company. In his mid-thirties, he began to realize that he wasn't fulfilled in his work. He was neglecting his family. He felt disconnected from any greater purpose in his life.

Every morning, Mike's wife would drive him to the train station for his two-hour commute to New York City. Their one-year-old daughter slept in the back seat on the way to the station. Mike worried that he rarely saw his daughter when she was awake, and his wife was practically a single parent.

His success at work wasn't making a meaningful difference in the world. His life was so hectic he barely had time to think. But all of Mike's colleagues and friends lived like this too. Who was he to think that life could be any different?

Then it happened. One morning, Mike decided that he would stay home and eat breakfast with his wife and daughter and take the late train to work. To him, this was a huge sacrifice. All his colleagues came in early and stayed late. He couldn't afford to stand out. But he was just so tired of being controlled by his job and missing out on his family. That morning, Mike and his wife and daughter had a great time eating breakfast together and chatting about their week. Mike took the late train to the office.

Because of this one decision to re-connect with his family, Mike Jaffee was not in his office, which was at the North Tower of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, when the first airplane slammed into the building. His life was spared by a simple decision one morning to spend some time with his family.

Mike Jaffee has written a book about the tragedy of losing his friends and colleagues in the Sept. 11 attacks. It's titled *Wake Up! Your Life is Calling*. He says his mission now is to be a Human Wake-Up Call®, to convince people to live meaningful lives that don't revolve around society's definition of success.

Jesus is the ultimate wake-up call for our soul. Listen to some other statements he made about your soul: "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" (Matthew 16: 26) Or "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." (Matthew 10: 28a) Jesus cares about our souls because he knows that our souls are a reflection of God's image within us. So, I'll ask the question again: Are you weary and burdened because you are living in a way that is disconnected from your soul?

And that's the first thing Jesus is saying in this passage: We have a soul. We are a soul. **Here is the second thing we need to see: We have a Savior.**

We have a bridge between our soul and God. Jesus did not say, "Come to me, and all your troubles will go away." He said, "Come to me, and I'll share your life. You won't be alone anymore." That's what he meant when he said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me . . ."

Jesus lived every moment knowing that there are certain things worth living and dying for, and everything else is just noise. We have a Savior who understands what we're facing. Jesus knows what it's like to be tired. He knows what it's like to be lonely and misunderstood. He knows what it's like to pour your heart and soul into a mission and not see any results. You have a Savior who chose to live as we live—as a human being—so he could show us that our identity, purpose, strength and hope aren't based on our circumstances. They are based on the reality of a loving God living within us.

Let me tell you about a young boy named Caleb who was diagnosed with a nervous system disease that left him for a time with temporary paralysis. You can imagine how Caleb's parents ached to see their precious little boy's slow recovery from this illness.

One day Caleb's dad came to visit him at school. From a distance, he watched as five-year-old Caleb limped across the playground. Caleb's father was heartbroken to see the other kids playing all around his son games in which Caleb couldn't participate.

But then he saw Caleb's best friend, Tyler, come up to Caleb. Tyler could have been off with the other kids, running and jumping and playing. But he chose to walk slowly alongside Caleb for the rest of recess.

Tyler didn't take away Caleb's burdens. He simply walked with him and loved him in his weakness. Jesus does the same thing for us, and having that love and power freely available to us makes any burden easier to bear. "Take my yoke upon you . . ."

We have a soul and we have a Savior. **And finally, Jesus is saying to us in this passage, we have a solution to our weariness and burdens.**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

In the 1970s movie *Freaky Friday*, a frustrated mother and her rebellious daughter suddenly exchange

lives. The mother wakes up in the daughter's body and vice versa. And each one has to live a few days with the priorities, responsibilities and stresses of the other. And so mother and daughter learn to respect and empathize with each other because they've walked in each other's shoes.

If Jesus were to live a day in your life, would he have the same priorities as you do? Would he view your circumstances as you do? Would he get stressed over the things that stress you out? Why not? Because Jesus looks beyond the circumstances of our lives to the greater story that a loving God is writing through us.

I want to tell you about a woman named Rose who has experienced unbelievable stress in her life—stress that should put our anxieties into perspective. Rose is a woman in Rwanda who lost most of her family to the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. This was a horrid conflict in which Hutu citizens of Rwanda murdered more than 800,000 Tutsi citizens in around 100 days. Rose and her two daughters survived the attacks. How does Rose deal with the shock and grief of witnessing such carnage in which she lost members of her own family? She explains it this way, "For this, I have Jesus." Think about those words for a moment: "For this, I have Jesus."

Rose has adopted two children who were orphaned in the attacks. She supports her small family of five by translating Christian tracts into the local language and organizing an annual conference for widows. What inspires her? As she says, "For this, I have Jesus." Her heart breaks for what she has lost, but she is determined to move forward for the sake of her children. How does she face the future with courage? One more time she says, "For this, I have Jesus."

What other source of peace or rest are you counting on besides Jesus? This life can take so much away from us. But there is a part of us that cannot be taken away. It's not affected by outward circumstances or inward doubts. It's that eternal stamp on your personhood that says you were made in the image of God. That's your soul. And God loves you so much that He came in the form of Jesus to share your life and to die for you. That's your Savior. Come to Him and submit your life to his guidance and his priorities, and you will find rest for your soul. That's the solution. You decide: will you keep on living in a way that is disconnected from your soul? Or will you live from the perspective and priorities of a soul that is created in the image of God?

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

For this, we have Jesus.

### **Commission and Blessing:**

Pastor: The miracles of God continue, and some will take place in you.

People: The saving power of Christ goes with us, and we are the ones who may be changed.

Pastor: The Holy Spirit grants new life and the opportunity for greater faithfulness.

People: Our church may be just a breath from greatness, and we may be instruments of its renewal.

Pastor: May others glorify God because of you; may tears be dried because of your caring.

People: We will honor God with our praise and serve God by helping others.

### **Benediction**

The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.