



Gifted & Entrusted I

October 11th, 2020

Twin Towers United Methodist Church

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WORSHIP GUIDE

Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, some paper or a notebook, something to write with, your computer/connected device (if you intend to listen to music online), etc. Feel free to adapt this worship guide in any way that makes best sense to you and those you might be gathered with. (Consider inviting someone – a friend, a family member – to worship with you.) Commit to spending the next hour with God.

PRELUDE - Listen and sing along to a song or hymn that blesses your spirit!

WELCOME – Welcome to this time of worship! You are invited to pause for a moment and consider: How have you experienced God’s goodness, care, and love for you recently? Think of a particular moment and return to it in your mind, imagining yourself back in the midst of it. You might see the people who were with you, hear their voices or other sounds, recall you smelled and what you felt. When you are ready, take a deep breath in, letting the love and gratitude you experienced fill you once more.

OPENING HYMN - “God is So Good”, TFWS 2056

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7veY0pdAnk>

God is so good (3x)

God’s so good to me.

God cares for me (3x)

God’s so good to me.

God loves me so (3x)

God’s so good to me.

OPENING PRAYER – *You are invited to take a deep breath as you pray:*

God, you *are* so good to us.

We thank you for waking us up this morning,
for breath, for life, for a new day.

We thank you for this moment,
set apart from others,

to remember you, to center in you, to sense your nearness and grace,
to be called into partnership with you once again
in the work of healing and wholeness.

We thank you for the ways you love and care for each of us,
even when we don't know it or can't see it.

Shape us into grateful people:

people who see your good at work around us,
who trust your good is present,
who savor and celebrate your good,
and who, in turn, share your abundant good with all.

We pray this in the name and way of Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE - I Chronicles 29:1-20 / NRSV

Our reading today comes from the final chapter of I Chronicle. David has just given instructions to Solomon for the building of the temple and is now making offerings towards this enormous building project.

¹ King David said to the whole assembly, “My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great; for the temple will not be for mortals but for the Lord God. ² So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones, and marble in abundance. ³ Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: ⁴ three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, ⁵ and for all the work to be done by artisans, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. Who then will offer willingly, consecrating themselves today to the Lord?”

⁶ Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. ⁷ They gave for the service of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. ⁸ Whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the Lord; King David also rejoiced greatly.

¹⁰ Then David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; David said: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴ “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. ¹⁵ For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. ¹⁶ O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own. ¹⁷ I know, my God, that you search the heart, and take pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. ¹⁸ O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you. ¹⁹ Grant to my son Solomon that with single mind he may keep your commandments, your decrees, and your statutes, performing all of them, and that he may build the temple for which I have made provision.”

²⁰ Then David said to the whole assembly, “Bless the Lord your God.” And all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the Lord and the king.

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

LISTEN - There’s a great scene from the movie, Finding Nemo, when Marlin, Nemo’s father, and Dory encounter a group of seagulls on their quest to find Nemo. Let’s watch...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4BNbHBcnDI>

“Mine, mine, mine!”

If you’ve ever met a toddler, you know that they sound a lot like those seagulls! They walk around holding onto things and declaring to anyone who will listen, “mine!” Developmental psychologists tell us that this is entirely normal even if it is a challenge to parents (and everyone else). In fact, the “mine phase” is an important developmental milestone because it points to an

emerging sense of self and independence, of being our own person with the ability to control our possessions. Put another way, our sense of “me” emerges alongside our sense of “mine”. And while most of us outgrow the absolute possessiveness of our young childhood, learning to share and give along the way, we never completely outgrow our desire for possessions, nor defining ourselves, at least in part, by what we own, by what we have. Despite having left behind our toddler years decades ago, there is a part of us, whether we’re willing to admit it or not, that can relate to those seagulls. We know possessiveness...be it to a house, a car, the things in our house, the money in our bank, our collection of fill in the blank (books, baseball cards, antiques, vinyl records, stamps, etc.) or all of those things. And it’s not because we’re selfish or greedy or stingy. Not at all! It’s simply because we know ourselves as *owners* of these things. We are, after all, the ones who bought them, worked for them, earned them, inherited them. Our names are the ones on the deeds, the registration forms, the bank accounts.

But what if, our faith and our discipleship invites a radically different perspective of ourselves. What if being a lover of God and a follower of Jesus means that we are not owners - not of what we have nor of what we are - but stewards? What if being a lover of God and follower of Jesus means that we are invited to open our hands, a little more every day (rather than clenching them tight), and be delighted to see all that we have and all that we are as gifts, gifts from God that have been entrusted to us. What if being a lover of God and follower of Jesus means that as we grow and deepen in faith we will release - more and more and more - these gifts that have been entrusted to us to honor God and to bless others, to fulfill the purposes of God?

Today, we begin a new worship series, “Gifted & Entrusted”. Over the next 6 weeks it is my prayer that we will live these questions together. I believe these questions can help us grow in our love for and trust in God, and call us into deeper submission in following Jesus. It is my prayer that during this season, your eyes might open-wide in wonder and joy as you witness anew just how extravagant God is, how good God is to you, and feel empowered to use all that you have at your disposal, all that you been gifted and entrusted with, to pass that goodness on, to reveal and unleash God’s kingdom at work, right here and now in our midst.

As mentioned earlier, I have never encountered Chronicles as a text used in worship. Not a single passage from First Chronicles is included in the common lectionary, the 3 year cycle of scripture readings that many follow as a worship and preaching guide. One lonely passage from 2nd Chronicles is included during Lent in cycle B. It is a work that chronicles (surprise) the history of God’s people, from Adam all the way through to the return of Israel from the

Babylonian exile. Written some time after Israel's return, when the nation is in the midst of much hardship and turmoil, the writer seeks to frame the people's history to uplift their hope for their long-awaited messianic king and the rebuilding of a glorious temple worthy of housing God in their midst. They do this by focusing on King David and his lineage, and on the priesthood of Aaron and his lineage.

Right before we enter our reading for today, King David has gathered everyone of importance - the leaders, the officials, the commanders, the warriors, everyone - and declared that his son Solomon, will not only follow him on the throne, but has been ordained to build the first temple. David then maps out the plan for this temple. When we catch up with this great assembly, David is declaring what he himself will contribute towards the building of this temple and then invites the gathered to do the same, "Who then will offer willingly, consecrating themselves today to the Lord?" (vs. 5). David's ask is met with great response: gold, silver, bronze, iron, precious stones come forth! Suffice it to say, between David and the gathered assembly tons - literally hundreds of tons of precious materials - was committed to this enormous building project. David then gives thanks and praise for this outpouring.

David's words have given me pause over the last few weeks. I know that the more cynical among us might dismiss David's words as great fundraising strategy, flowery words said by a powerful leader after he "milks" his people for resources. Others might find them beautiful and heartfelt, but wonder: how do I claim these for myself, what do they mean for me? Still others might be girding themselves for the ask that they sense I will inevitably be making: here we go again...Emily's going to ask me to give! However you heard them earlier, I invite you to listen again / for in David's words I hear a spiritual orientation that is fundamentally different from the "mine, mine, mine" of the seagulls and of our 2 year old selves.

David begins by pointing to and celebrating God...not all those who just gave. He does so by naming God as the source: "...[F]or all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours...Riches and honor come from you...In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all." (29:11b-12) He then takes it one step further: "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you....O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided...comes from your hand and is all your own." (29:14, 16).

This is fundamentally a spiritual orientation. One meant not to negate our effort, our time, and our ingenuity in the material world, but to put it into context, and to keep God at our center, to keep God as our true north. We know how easy it is for this not to be the case, especially when it comes to that which we have, all that we consider “mine.” David points us to an orientation that opens us up to God as generous, even extravagant, and to experiencing grace in our lives. It invites us away from attachment, fear, and scarcity - the ways of death, / and towards trust, gratitude, freedom, and abundance - the ways of life. Too many of us live in fear of not having “enough”, of “running out”, and of coming up short. There’s no room for gratitude, freedom, or generosity in that. This then, is also an orientation that empowers us, frees us to grow in generosity, to declare not “mine, mine, mine,” but “yours, yours, yours”. This, Friends, is the orientation that is embodied in the one we seek to follow, in Jesus. We hear it’s echo when Jesus tells his disciples not to worry, but to trust, and to seek first God’s kingdom.

What about this orientation is beckoning to you, I wonder, and what do you resist? Where do you sense an invitation in it towards the fullness of life? Friends, as we begin this new worship series, I want to invite you to sit with David’s words, particularly his question in verse 14: “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?” What makes our generosity possible, David asks? And then to try on his response: “Everything comes from you; all we’re doing is giving back what we’ve been given from your generous hand.” May our pondering and prayer lead us, like David, to bless the Lord our God!

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE – *Spend time in prayer. What did you hear for yourself through today’s scripture and reflection? Talk to God about it. Then lift up the joys and concerns that are in your heart. You might write them down, speak them aloud, or pray them in silence.*

Joys –What are you grateful for in this last week?

Concerns – What do you want to hold in God’s love and light?

I would be honored to pray with you and for you.

Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give me a call if I can do so.

SHARING OUR GIFTS– *How might you offer yourself and all that you have to God this week? How are you being invited to practice generosity? Spend a moment listening for God’s direction.*

You are invited to contribute financially towards the purpose and ministry of TTUMC. We are a congregation committed to being conduits of God's healing in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing, impact the last and the least. You can contribute by mailing in a check, dropping off cash, or giving online via PayPal (visit www.twintowersumc.org). Take a moment and do that now.

CLOSING HYMN - "God, We See What You Have Given"

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| 1. God, we see what you have given;
Signs of grace are everywhere!
All around are gifts from heaven —
Gifts enough for all to share.
We are stewards of your bounty,
Called to give as we've received;
And your blessings have been plenty
From the day we first believed. | In a manger — gift from heaven!
On a cross — with love and pain!
You proclaimed we are forgiven;
Now you send us in your name. |
| 2. We are stewards of the richness
That you send from heav'n above.
For in Christ, you gave up greatness,
Humbly showing us your love. | 4. We are stewards, sent out sharing,
Offering you our very best.
Through our serving and our caring
May we give as we've been blessed.
God of love, may faithful living
Be much more than Sunday talk.
Send us loving, serving, giving;
Help us daily walk your walk! |

BENEDICTION - As you go from this place into a new week, may your eyes catch sight of God's grace glimmering here, there, and everywhere. May your heart swell knowing how much you are loved and cared for. And may your hands be always open and ready to share all that you are and all that you have. Go in peace and serve our God!

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!



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Scripture for Sunday, October 18th - **Psalm 24 & Genesis 1:20-31**