



Gifted & Entrusted IV - Stories & Legacies
November 1st, 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 and centers your spirit!

WELCOME – Welcome to this time of worship! You are invited to pause for a moment and consider: *Who in your life has sought to live God’s love and done it in such a way as to touch and inspire you? How have their stories and legacies been a gift to you?* Today, we meditate on the stories and legacies, especially of the saints, as a gift from God that we are entrusted with. When you are ready, take a deep breath in, out, and arriving in this time of worship.

OPENING HYMN - “For All the Saints”, UMH 711

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OaBgaMcOvM>

For all the saints, who from their labours rest,
who to the world their faith in God confessed,
your name, O Jesus, be forever blessed, alleluia!

You were their leader, true unfailing light,
column of cloud by day and fire by night,
known in the dark by faith, though lost from sight,
alleluia!

So may your people still their footsteps trace,
fired by their triumphs in the well-run race,
longing with them to see your glorious face,
alleluia!

Soon dawns the promised day of Christ our Lord
when all creation rises up restored,
and all our song, from heart and soul outpoured:
"Alleluia!

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

For all the saints, O God, who from their labors of love and justice rest,
we gather this morning to give you thanks.

We remember and celebrate those who have served you and been an example for us
throughout the past.

Their lives and legacies are gifts entrusted to us.

We give you thanks for the joy of being a part of the communion of saints,
with those who have gone before,
and those scattered around the globe.

Open us to your Spirit to continue being the saints you have called us to be.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE - Matthew 23:1-12 & Hebrews 12:1 / The Voice

Jesus spoke to His disciples and to the crowds that had gathered around.

² The Pharisees and the scribes occupy the seat of Moses. ³ So you should do the things they tell you to do—but don't do the things they do. ⁴ They heap heavy burdens upon their neighbors' backs, and they prove unwilling to do anything to help shoulder the load. ⁵ They are interested, above all, in presentation: they wrap their heads and arms in the accoutrements of prayer, they cloak themselves with flowing tasseled prayer garments, ⁶ they covet the seats of honor at fine banquets and in the synagogue, ⁷ and they love it when people recognize them in the marketplace, call them "Teacher," and beam at them.

⁸ But you: do not let anyone call you "Rabbi," *that is, "Teacher."* For you are all brothers, and you have only one teacher, the Anointed One. ⁹ Indeed, do not call anyone on earth "Father," for you have only one father, and He is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither let anyone call you "leader," for you have one leader—the Anointed One. ¹¹ If you are recognized at all, let it be for your service. *Delight in the one who calls you servant.* ¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

So since we stand surrounded by *all those who have gone before*, an enormous cloud of witnesses, let us drop every extra weight, every sin that clings to us *and slackens our pace*, and let us run with endurance the long race set before us.

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

LISTEN -

We are in the midst of a worship series, "Gifted and Entrusted", here at Twin Towers. We began by affirming that all is gift, that all we are and that all we have are gifts from God. This

is fundamentally a spiritual orientation that we are invited to step into and to practice as followers of Jesus and lovers of God. This orientation is not natural to us, easy for us, or supported in any way by our culture that infuses us with the fear of scarcity and celebrates accumulation. But it is a pathway that opens us in our lives to freedom over that fear, groundedness in abundance rather than scarcity, generosity over clenched fists, and gratitude, deep gratitude rooted in an abiding awareness of grace! It does so by drawing out our trust in God, the Source, the Giver. And while we rightfully relish and give thanks for these gifts we are called to remember - always remember - that they were never given merely for our private enjoyment and pleasure, but rather, entrusted to us for God's purposes, to fulfill God's dreams, to reveal God's reign here and now. Having received these gifts then, we must be in the intentional practice of asking God what we do with these gifts. This year, we have chosen to delve more deeply into the gifts of creation, the common good, and this week, stories and legacies. We do so as we celebrate All Saints Day.

And who are saints but those who lived in such a way that they gift us with stories and legacies that strengthen our hearts, remind us who we are deep down, and root us to our longings and hopes in God? Who are saints but those who gift us with stories and legacies that call forth the nearness of God and wrap us in the courage to live more tenderly and fiercely?

I think of Rod sharing a story about his father last week, of how he gave their old car to a custodian at his work instead of selling it. Rod mentioned how he took note of what his father did then and how it gives him pause now. All these years later, that story is still remembered, still matters, still impacts, still inspires. Why? My guess is because it is a story about love manifested in generosity, a story that invites reflection about relationship, care for one another, and daily choices that we make that create a gentler, kinder, sweeter, more just world. That's the gift of a saint in our lives.

I wonder whose stories and legacies you are remembering today? Whose stories and legacies do you hold as gifts, have helped you along the way, given you pause, and inspired brave choices and loving action, instilled a wider faith? I want to invite you to not only recall them this morning, but to hold them close. Too often, we can lose sight of the saints, of their stories and legacies, as we contend with not only daily life but also with competing stories that insist on their opposite: stories that obscure the truth of who we are - individually and collectively, that bind us in fear rather than free us in love, and that cause our world to grow smaller and

meaner rather than wider and more compassionate. There is no lack of ugly and demeaning stories in our world (perhaps especially during an election season). We can lose sight of the saints when their stories and legacies are drowned out by bullies and hypocrites. We can forget that we are surrounded and supported by a cloud of holy witnesses in our quest to live a life of faithfulness when we are so constantly barraged by those Jesus calls “blind guides”.

Which is exactly what seems to have angered Jesus in our scripture reading today. Ever since arriving in Jerusalem a few chapters back, Jesus has been contending with those he calls out as bullies and hypocrites of his day, with those who cared more about saying the right things and sitting at the right tables, than living the right way; who not only burdened others with rules and regulations, but in so doing “[locked] them out of the kingdom of heaven” (23:13); those who did all the “right” things but “neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (23:23). These accusations were levied against the scribes and the Pharisees over and over again in chapter 23. In Jesus’ view, they were no saints, but he wasn’t not angry at them for not being saints, he was angry at them for pretending to be saints. (I encourage you to read the whole 23rd chapter of Matthew.)

Friends, what was true in Jesus’ world is true now, isn’t it? We are not unfamiliar with those who pretend to be saints, who paint themselves with a brush of greatness and righteousness even as they go about causing real harm to real people. We are not unfamiliar with those who “do not practice what they preach” - we were witness to it as a nation in the recent confirmation of the newest supreme court justice. We are not unfamiliar with outright hypocrisy - be it in our political leaders or even, I’m sorry to say, our religious leaders...saying one thing and doing quite the opposite. And while we are not unfamiliar with hypocrisy in ourselves, Jesus is here directing his words to leaders, to scribes and Pharisees, those who had power, influence, and impact on the community’s life. Imagine, for just one moment, if leaders then and leaders now were more like the saints we hold dear than the bullies and hypocrites we detest, who pointed us to love rather than meanness, who are recognized for their service rather than their demands to be served, and who pitched in concretely to help shoulder the burdens of neighbors rather than imposing new ones. Imagine, especially on this eve of an election.

Before you dismiss the impossibility of saintly leaders, I want to call your attention to José Pepe Mujica, former president of Uruguay who retired from politics just about a week ago at the age of 85. He has been called both the “humblest head of state” and the “world’s poorest

president”. There’s not a chance that Jesus’ accusations of the scribes and Pharisees would ever be levied against Mujica. Throughout his term as president, Mujica refused to live in the presidential palace or use their staff but remained at what has been described as his “ramshackle” farm off a dirt road. He also continued to farm, growing chrysanthemums, working the land himself, even as he was the president. Mujica donated 90% of his \$12,000 monthly salary to organizations that served the poor, the unhoused, and small entrepreneurs thus making roughly the same as the average Uruguayan. The year he became president, his wealth was declared at \$1,800 in the form of a 1987 Volkswagon Beetle, a car he continued to drive after he became president. That’s impressive, isn’t it? And these are just a few tidbits about a man who led a country that sets prices for essential commodities such as milk and provides a free computer and education to every child.

So stories and legacies, saints and hypocrites. Friends, may we sing our songs for the saints of God trusting that their faith, their lives, their witness do not point to the extraordinary and superhuman, but rather what is so for every last one of us when we are rooted in God’s Spirit, open to God’s love, committed to God’s reign. May we celebrate and hold dear the stories and legacies of saints that have been gifted to us and live them forward. Amen.

HONORING & REMEMBERING -

This day we celebrate God’s saints, those people who have tried to live in God’s ways, gently and firmly turning the world around – and even upside down – to make it a better place for all of God’s children.

There are saints who have famous names. There are saints whose names we do not know. There are those throughout history who gave their all for what they believed. And there are those who are living among us, who work for justice and peace, for freedom and human rights, who bring laughter and a human touch, healing and wholeness, acceptance and understanding, into a world in need. We give deep thanks for all the saints and pray to be more like them.

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.*

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 Thank You for Our People”, The New Century Hymnal 376, vs., 1, 2, 4

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YILTfURLL5M>

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| <p>1. God, we thank you for our people,
roots dug deep within the soil,
hardy spirits, rich in loving,
strong for struggle, bold for toil.
Faithful Rock of generations,
you whom parents’ parents praised:
Here in hope as we remember
may our song to you be raised.</p> <p>2. Thank you, God, for gentle pleasure:
lessons learned and secrets told,
hope and memories saved as treasure,
passed to young one by the old,
Pranks and glories, songs and stories,</p> | <p>food by loving hands prepared.
God, we bless you for your presence
in our tears and laughter shared.</p> <p>4. By your Spirit of creation
keep us bold for risking still,
eager in anticipation,
ever strong to do your will.
Bind us close to one another,
sharing life and death and birth,
Welcoming as sister, brother,
all your children on the earth.</p> |
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BENEDICTION - Friends, as we go into this new week, may the stories and legacies of those who have gone before us nourish our hearts, encourage our hands, quicken our feet, and give us courage to go into the world as the living body of Christ, bringing healing and hope to all who seek God’s face. **Amen.**

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!



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<https://www.facebook.com/ttuncAlameda/>

SCRIPTURE for Nov. 8th, 2020: **Luke 4:38-44**

PRAYER INVITES:

- **The elections and what comes afterwards**
- **Dine & Connect** - each guest and volunteer.