



June 14th, 2020
Roadmap to Resilience I

Twin Towers United Methodist Church

1411 Oak Street, Alameda, CA 94501

510.522.6744 ** twintowers.office@gmail.com ** www.twintowersumc.org

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 - “” UMH 437

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDXNHPeRB0k>

WELCOME – Today we begin a new worship series: Roadmap to Resilience. The name comes from Governor Newsome’s reopening plan for the State of California. That plan lays out key public health metrics that must be met in order for different sectors and segments in our communities to open back up. These public health metrics include things like the ability to test for COVID-19 and implement contact tracing, the ability to protect those at high risk of COVID-19, and the ability of businesses, schools, and childcare facilities to support physical distancing. These are key indicators to our State’s ability to weather this pandemic well. But what about us? What are key indicators for us that point to our ability to weather this pandemic well? And what grace, what tools, what resources does our faith offer so that we weather well not just this pandemic, but all the challenges, struggles, and traumas that life, without fail, brings our way? These are our guiding questions over the next 4 weeks.

As we begin, pause for a moment and reflect: what do you hope to get out of this series? In what ways has faith been a resource to you? And what questions are you asking right now about resilience and faith? Please take some time note your thoughts in a journal or aloud with family.

OPENING HYMN - “This is My Father’s World” UMH 144

Listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEBmj7JO_Os

*I This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas-- His hand the wonders wrought.*

*2 This is my Father's world: the birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere.*

*3 This is my Father's world: O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world: Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King: let the heavens ring!
God reigns; let earth be glad!*

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

This is your world, O God,
a world deeply loved,
a world stunningly beautiful,
a world so filled with signs of your wonder and majesty,
and also a world deeply in pain.
In this time when indeed the wrong seems so strong,
root us in a radical trust -
 trust in your presence,
 trust in your power,
 and trust that your reign will come, is coming, is here even now.
Root us in a radical trust that spurs us on to take radical risks -
 risks that heal relationships,
 risks that make way for justice,
 risks that reveal your love,
 risks that nourish liberation
 for us and for your world.

We pray in the name and way of Jesus, the one who came to set us free. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE - **Psalm 8** (The Message)

Our scripture today comes from what some might consider the prayer book of the Bible, while others might call it the hymnal. The Psalms contain prayers and hymns that have been used in worship by God's people down through the ages. Psalm 8 is attributed to king David and considered a hymn of praise "for God's exaltation of the human creature." In it, the psalmist asks a key question that I invite us to ponder this morning, "What are human beings that [God] is mindful of us, mortals that [God] cares for us"?

O Lord, our Lord,

your greatness is seen in all the world!
Your praise reaches up to the heavens;
² it is sung by children and babies.
You are safe and secure from all your enemies;
you stop anyone who opposes you.
³ When I look at the sky, which you have made,
at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places—
⁴ what are human beings, that you think of them;
mere mortals, that you care for them?
⁵ Yet you made them inferior only to yourself;
you crowned them with glory and honor.
⁶ You appointed them rulers over everything you made;
you placed them over all creation:
⁷ sheep and cattle, and the wild animals too;
⁸ the birds and the fish
and the creatures in the seas.
⁹ O Lord, our Lord,
your greatness is seen in all the world!

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

REFLECT -

Recently, on Nextdoor, an app that seeks to connect neighbors and facilitate helpful exchanges, an interesting conversation unfolded. It began with one person sharing their gratitude for the hundreds of people that had shown up last Friday for a youth-organized, youth-lead protest march through the streets of Alameda in solidarity with George Floyd. After several affirmations piped up, the next commenter wrote, “I wish the protesters could have been more courteous. I was unaware of the march and so was stuck in my driveway for over 30 minutes waiting for them to go by. They made me late for my appointment.” And the back and forth was off. From this woman’s perspective, stuck in her driveway, delayed for her appointment, the protest - regardless of what it was about - was an enormous nuisance and inconvenience. From another’s perspective, the protest was not only uplifting and important, but it rendered the other’s inconvenience null and void. “Maybe we all need to feel a little more ‘inconvenienced’ by racism and police brutality,” one poster wrote back. Same event, vastly different perspectives, entirely distinct experiences. I share this recent exchange to highlight what is, perhaps, an obvious point: our perspectives matter! What we

see, how we see it, and how we interpret what we see matters. It matters because it shapes the way we experience the moment, how we feel about it, and ultimately, what we do with it. If resilience is the spiritual grit and internal strength that moves us through challenge and adversity, then surely resilience begins with how we see things.

And so it is that the theologian Marcus Borg names vision - our way of seeing - as a core principle of our faith. Grounded in the work of fellow theologian H. Richard Niebuhr, Borg suggests that there are 3 ways we see the whole, see reality, see what is, and each of these deeply impacts not just how we engage and respond to life, but relate to and experience God.

The first way is to see reality as hostile and threatening...and thus to take a defensive posture to all of life, including towards God. The world is dangerous and out to get us. We must fend off the dangers.

The second way to see reality is as indifferent. It is neither out to get us nor here to support us. In response, we take control, rely on ourselves only, and build up what security we can.

And the third way is to see reality as life-giving, nourishing, or gracious...and thus trust and give ourselves to it.

Which do you think comes closest to your general way of seeing and responding?

While each of these ways might find expression in scripture and Christian community, Borg argues that it is the third way of seeing - seeing reality as gracious - that “leads to the kind of life that we see in Jesus and in the saints, known and unknown. Or, to use words from Paul, it leads to a life marked by freedom, joy, peace, and love”, (and I would add) even in the face of difficulty and challenge. It is this third way of seeing that “leads to radical trust”, that “frees us from the anxiety, the self-preoccupation, and concern to protect the self ... It leads to the ‘self-forgetfulness of faith’ and thus to the ability to love and to be present to the moment. It generates a ‘willingness to spend and be spent for the sake of a vision that goes beyond ourselves,’” Borg writes.

Might we then consider resilience to begin with the way our faith invites and calls us to see? Might one of the most powerful resources we have in our faith be to see grace rather than fear, to see love rather than indifference?

The Psalmist asks in our scripture today, “What are human beings that you, God, are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” As I sat down with the psalmist’s

profound question and answer, it surfaced two common ways I think we often fail at seeing. One is lurking in the question and is rooted in seeing ourselves as nothing, as specks in the universe, utterly insignificant, helpless, and meaningless. It discounts our power, impact, and influence. And in the responses, the potential misunderstanding is to see ourselves as ultimately important, essential, and central, given that we are only “a little lower than God”. Both ways of seeing harm ourselves and harm others and relegate God to the sidelines. Both fail to honor what is at the heart of what the psalmist points to - the awe born of seeing what God sees, the awe born of being seen by God. And what does God see? A world to love, a humanity to care for, and a creation to flourish. *Is that what we see?*

A while back, Milo and Imani and I started working our way through “The Jesus Storybook Bible”. We are now on our 2nd time through. It begins like this: “God wrote, ‘I love you’ - God wrote it in the sky, and on the earth, and under the sea. God wrote this message everywhere! Because God created everything in God’s world to reflect God - to show us what God is like, to help us know God, to make our hearts sing.” For the rest of the book, through every story, the author, Sally Lloyd Jones, points to the “Never-Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love” of God.

What if we entered this new week, grounded in and trusting that we are - at every moment, no matter what - beheld, seen with the eyes of the fiercest Love? And what if, we in turn, looked around ourselves and saw everywhere the love letter that is still being written, that we are helping to write? Might it call us into the fray of all the challenges before us: of ensuring that our black and brown siblings are seen as beloved; of doing the hard work of removing the specks and logs of prejudice and bias clouding our vision; of refocusing again and again on the grace that is with us and before us?

May we enter this new week with open eyes, with clear eyes, and with eyes that seek God’s love and grace.

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 –Where are witnessing God’s presence and love in yourself and in the world?

Concerns – Where are you yearning for God’s presence and love...for yourself and for the world?

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 - “How Majestic Is Your Name” TFWS 2023

Listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dugb_8SIWU0

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. (2x)

O Lord, we praise your name.

O Lord, we magnify your name:

Prince of Peace, mighty God;

O Lord God Almighty.

BENEDICTION -

So now we leave this time of worship

And while so much of the road ahead is uncertain, the path constantly changing, we know some things that are as solid and sure as the ground beneath our feet, and the sky above our heads.

We know God is love.

We know Christ’s light endures.

We know the Holy Spirit is here,

found in the space between all things, closer to us than our next breath, binding us to each other, and empowering us for the purpose, until we meet again.

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!

You are invited to spend the next stretch reaching out. Pick up our directory and consider calling someone you don't yet know well or someone who might not know others. It doesn't need to be complicated. Perhaps something as simple as, "Hi! I'm calling to say 'hello'. How have you been?"



If you are on Facebook, please like and follow our page:

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

Scripture for Sunday, June 14th - **Psalm 86**

This week, please continue praying for direction and wisdom as we discern our work towards racial justice here at Twin Towers UMC.