

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &  
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God Ministry of Pastoral  
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**REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE**

Linden Park Community

*"God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the  
arrival would be worthwhile"*

**Offering Prayer**

God of abundance,  
you fill us with good things;  
you satisfy our thirst;  
you meet our every need.  
From you our blessings flow.

Accept these our gifts. Also, the work of  
our hearts, our hands and our love.

Use them to answer the help our church, our community and  
a world in need. Amen.

**PRELUDE & WELCOME**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATION**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: Come, let us worship God who provides for us.  
P: Even though we whine and complain, God hears our cries.  
L: Lift your voices in praise, for God has come to comfort you.  
P: Thanks be to God who forgives and heals our wounded souls.  
L: Come, celebrate God's steadfast love.  
P: Open our hearts, O Lord, and let us truly listen to your words.

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**OPENING HYMN: Will You Come and Follow Me**

- 1 Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?
- 2 Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?
- 3 Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean,  
and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?
- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

5 Christ, your summons echoes true  
 when you but call my name.  
 Let me turn and follow you  
 and never be the same.  
 In your company I'll go  
 where your love and footsteps show.  
 Thus I'll move and live and grow  
 in you and you in me.

### OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, we come this day to worship with so many things on our hearts and minds. We are drawn away by problems and cares. Heal our spirits. Open our hearts. Help us be your disciples. AMEN.

### CHILDREN'S STORY

**CHILDREN'S SONG:** Gonna Serve

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

How quick we are to say yes to you, O Lord, and then we turn around and forget our bold words of commitment. We really want to serve, but we are very weak and are easily drawn away by cares and fears. We pledge ourselves to working for your kingdom but find ourselves pulled this way and that by other demands on our time and energy. Forgive us, O Lord, when we so quickly drop our commitments to serving you. Heal our spirits and give us the bold courage to truly be your disciples. For we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God knows our hearts and our spirits. God sees our struggles and forgives our weakness. Know that it is in God's healing love that you live and move and have your being. Rejoice, for God is with you always. AMEN

### \*CHORUS: "IN MOMENTS LIKE THESE"

In moments like these, I sing out a song,  
 I sing out a love song to Jesus.  
 In moments like these, I lift up my hands,  
 I lift up my hands to the Lord.  
 Singing, I love You, Lord. Singing I love You, Lord.  
 Singing I love You, Lord, I love You.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

#### Matthew 21:23-32

<sup>23</sup>Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?" <sup>24</sup>Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>25</sup>John's baptism-where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' <sup>26</sup>But if we say, 'Of human origin'-we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet." <sup>27</sup>So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>28</sup>"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' <sup>29</sup>"I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup>"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. <sup>31</sup>"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

**MESSAGE**

Authority issues. Have you ever known anyone with authority issues? Authority is the theme running throughout today's gospel (Matthew 21:23-32). The chief priests and elders take issue with Jesus' authority. The two sons challenge their father's authority. They're not the only ones with authority issues.

**Authority**

In our usual understanding of authority issues the obvious question in today's gospel is whether we recognize and submit to the authority of Jesus and the Father. That question, however, is so obvious that I have to wonder if it is really not the question at the heart of today's gospel. It is so obvious that I think there has to be something more going on. To jump on that question as the obvious and only question to be answered only reveals our misunderstanding of what true authority is.

More often than not we are confused about authority. We misunderstand it to be based on credentials and expertise, a thick resume, years of education, successes and accomplishments, status and reputation, or the position held in relationship to another. We assume that authority comes from outside a person and that it is given them by their circumstances. In this understanding some have authority and others do not.

"Who do you think you are?" "What gives you the right to tell me what to do?" Or to use a phrase from my childhood, "You're not the boss of me!" That represents our usual way of understanding authority issues. We don't like someone else teaching us, correcting us, or telling us what to do. We hear that in the challenge of the chief priests and elders to Jesus, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" We see it in the refusal of the two sons to go to the vineyard.

There is, however, another authority issue at play in today's gospel. That issue is our failure and sometimes our refusal to recognize, claim, and exercise the authority within us; to go to the vineyard. That's the authority issue I believe this gospel is holding before us today.

So, let me push you a little bit on this authority issue, okay? If you think God is the boss of you, you've misunderstood authority. Let go of that idea. God is not the boss of you. God is not the boss of me.

God is not the boss of us. God is our author. Every day God authorizes us to enter and sends us into his vineyard, to act in this world with his authority and on his behalf through the gifts he has bestowed upon each one of us.

True authority always comes from within. It is an interior God-given quality not an exterior circumstance. That's what the chief priests and elders failed to understand. I think that's why Jesus was always so aggravated with the religious leaders at times. They chose to exchange their God-given authority for human power. Sometimes we do too. That's what's happening in much of our world today.

Think about the people who hold authority for you. They are not concerned about themselves. They do not dominate or control you. They inspire you. They call forth from you faith, hope, and trust. They expand your world, open new possibilities, and bring forth life and gifts in yourself that you never knew were there. They cause you to re-evaluate your life, change your mind, and live differently. That sounds an awful lot like Jesus and it's very different from those who exercise power.

There are people in this pastoral charge who have no leadership position, title, or theological credentials and yet they have such great authority. I see it in their compassion and gentleness. I hear it in the way they pray. I feel it in their love for me and others. They too show me the way to the vineyard of my life. That's what authorities do. But it's not about them. It doesn't come from them.

All authority originates in God, but it is not exclusive to God. God shares his authority with us. The authority God shares with us is nothing less than his own divine attributes. It is the expression and manifestation of God's life in and through our own.

That shared authority exists in us and is revealed by us as the many and varied talents, the gifts, God has instilled on each of our lives. That means every one of us has authority. As your minister, I do not have more authority than you. I do not have better authority than you. I just have a different authority. God gives each of us gifts and authority unique to our lives. God is generous, extravagant, with the gifts he gives and the authority he shares. We all have God-given gifts and authority. There is no one without authority. The difference isn't that some have authority and others don't. The difference is that some recognize and exercise their authority and others do not. Regardless, God knows and sees the authority he has given us and waits for us to see and know it too. And when we do, we change our mind and go out into the world...the vineyard.

So, let me push you a little bit more on your authority issues, okay? What is the authority God has given you? What gifts, what divine attributes, has God bestowed upon you? Are you living from that authority and sharing those gifts? Have you gone to the vineyard or are you simply mouthing the answers you think God wants to hear? Something to think about.

**HYMN: Be Thou My Vision**

- 1 Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart;  
naught be all else to me save that thou art,  
thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping thy presence my light.
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife;  
I ever with thee, and thou in my life;  
thou loving parent, thy child may I be,  
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3 Be thou my battle shield, sword for the fight  
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,  
thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower;  
raise thou me heavenward, O power of my power.
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance, now and always;  
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5 Great God of heaven, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

**PASTORAL PRAYER**

Lord of hope and healing, you have heard the cries of our hearts. You know that we do want to serve you, and yet when things get tough, we buckle and cave in. We lack the courage and strength to work for you. You have reminded us that you will be continually with us and we need

to place our trust in that fact. Your love will sustain and heal us. Your mercy and grace will give us courage and strength, joy and peace. As we have come before you this day, offering our prayers for those near and dear to us, let us remember that you constantly lift and carry us in your love. Bring us to the knowledge of your mercy and powerful love that will never leave us. Prepare us for ministry in areas of need and desolation. For we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

**CLOSING HYMN: Blest Be the Tie That Binds**

- 1 Blest be the tie that binds  
our hearts in Christian love;  
the unity of heart and mind  
is like to that above.
- 2 Before our Maker's throne  
we pour our ardent prayers;  
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
our comforts and our cares.
- 3 We share each other's woes,  
each other's burdens bear;  
and often for each other flows  
the sympathizing tear.
- 4 This glorious hope revives  
our courage on the way;  
that we shall live in perfect love  
in God's eternal day.

**SENDING FORTH**

Go bravely and boldly into this world of confusion and pain. Bring God's healing words of love and forgiveness. Know the power of mercy and grace in your life, and use those wonderful gifts to serve God by serving the people. Go in peace. AMEN.

**GO NOW IN PEACE**

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