

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MARCH 7th, 2021**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Barton Stone-Mount Hope

Lent 3

“This is the third step on our Lenten Journey. It is on this journey that we will face our greed and selfishness. It is on this journey that God will confront us. Our hearts are ready to receive God. Come, then, and let us move forward toward the Cross. Let us faithfully and confidently follow Jesus. AMEN.”

Offering Prayer

The wisdom of the world
tells us to hoard what we own, O God,
while you invite us to share what we have
with those in need.

Accept these gifts for your purposes,
that we may be your servants in the world. Receive these,
our offerings in Jesus name. Amen

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATION

CALL TO WORSHIP (based on Psalm 19)

Weary and overwhelmed, we gather.

God’s holy word revives us.

Simple and confused, we yield.

God’s word gives us wisdom.

Blind and uncomprehending, we await.

God’s word enlightens our eyes.

More precious than gold is God’s word.

Sweeter than honey are God’s commands.

OPENING HYMN: #315 Holy, Holy, Holy

1 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;

holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

2 Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee;

casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,

which were, and art, and evermore shalt be.

3 Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,

though the eye made blind by sin thy glory may not see,

only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,

perfect in power, in love, and purity.

4 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea;

holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,

God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we come to you this day with so many things laying claim to our

lives, our hearts, and our spirits. Open our ears and our hearts to hear

your words of healing love. Prepare us to be faithful disciples for you.

For we ask this in Jesus’ Name. AMEN.

ANTHEM

CHILDREN’S TIME

CHILDREN’S SONG

PRAYER OF PRAISE

The world finds no proof of God.

But the heavens tell of God's glory.

God's message is foolishness to the world.

But God's folly trumps human wisdom.

The freedom of the world brings us death.

But obedience to God's ways brings life.

When we open our eyes, we see your glory, O God.

Sun, moon, and stars proclaim your magnificence.

When we open our ears, we hear your word, O God.

The voice of creation reaches the ends of the earth.

When we open our hearts, we receive your truth, O God.

You fill us with joy and light forever.

When we open ourselves, we praise your holy name.

Praise God's holy name.

We gather in the name of Christ crucified.

The Word made flesh brings life to God's people! Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 20:1-17

New Revised Standard Version

The Ten Commandments

20 Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³ you shall have no other gods before^[a] me.

⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation^[b] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident

in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹² Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ You shall not murder.^[c]

¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ You shall not steal.

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

John 2:13-22

New Revised Standard Version**Jesus Cleanses the Temple**

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

MESSAGE: A New Twist on an Old Story

If you ask people who regularly attend church services why they go, in my completely unscientific and purely subjective experience, a lot of them will tell you that they find church comforting. The ritual, structure, and familiarity of it can provide a peaceful rhythm that helps us center and calm ourselves.

Often, when this story of Jesus in the temple is told, the crowds of people in the temple get a bad rap. They're buying and selling in the temple courts, making a holy place into a Walmart. Commentaries speculate about all sorts of things that could have been problematic about this, like using Roman money in temple business, or extorting people whose resources were scarce and who had to travel a long way to fulfill their temple obligations.

We tend to assume from our spectator seats over 2,000 years in the future that the people involved in this scene knew they were doing something bad, and that they were intentionally defiling the temple. But I've been thinking about this and I'm not convinced that is true. Given normal human behavior, I think it's more likely that this marketplace was set up gradually over time, and grew in a way that no one really noticed. For the Jewish people of that time, sacrifices at the temple were not optional; they were just part of the fabric of religious practice. So, when someone had to travel a long way, it wasn't practical for them to bring an animal with them for their sacrifice. Someone else noticed this and thought, "Hm, maybe it would be helpful for people to be able to buy animals right here." And that guy turned out to be right, and he made a bit of a profit, so someone else started doing it. And then the priests found out about it, and maybe at first, they thought it wasn't a good idea, but over time they realized how much more convenient it was, and the sellers were giving part of their profit to the temple...so I suspect that slowly, people just came to accept that this was the way it was supposed to be.

I don't think they knew they were doing something that would be offensive. Maybe they were just there doing what they thought they were supposed to be doing: participating in the rituals of their religion. But in the middle of these people who are just trying to do what they think is the right thing, Jesus causes an enormous disruption. This is not the gentle Jesus meek and mild that we often see in paintings or portray in our minds. This is Jesus with a whip, driving animals out into the streets, overturning tables, spilling coins across the floor. And that's not even the most disruptive thing that he does. It seems like having a meltdown on all the merchants and causing this huge scene would be the most disruptive thing he could do. But the more disruptive thing is not what he does, it's what he says. After all this physical disruption, Jesus then associates himself with the Temple, essentially saying that he is the

place where God lives on earth. They don't know it yet, but he hasn't just overturned some tables. He's overturned the whole temple ceremonial system. Pause...

We often tend to pursue faith for comfort. God can be a deep source of stability and peace in the midst of very upsetting times, and I think this is often what we are looking for from our relationship with God.

Like the people in the temple, we can easily get accustomed to patterns that don't honor God. We can become part of systems that exploit, and we don't even notice it. But Jesus has been known to charge right into the middle of those comfort zones and shake things up.

I've certainly experienced my share and more of comfort from God. My faith has been an anchor when life felt like a storm. But to be honest, my experience of God has more often been disruptive. My faith has startled me and shook me up, and I think I thought that at some point, that would stop, and I'd settle into the quiet, constant faith. But instead, God always seems to have some new way of disrupting me, and calling me to be transformed. God is always giving me challenges that test my faith and the faith of others. God has way of disrupting the gentle smooth roads that we are on.

The very nature of disruption means that we're never really ready for it, but I do know when Christ invites us to follow him there will always be disturbances on the road of life. Christ calls us to be ready ... for we never know what will come our way.

So, I ask you.... it is possible to live in a way that allows greater space for the unexpected occurrences of living and sometimes disruptions from God? It is possible to hold our possessions, plans, and dreams lightly. To know

that at any moment, Jesus might step in and overturn them.

When we understand that, then we understand that the journey and road of life might be disrupted along the way.

And in being disrupted, we also become a disruption. In saying that I ask you to be the example of the one we follow...Jesus. So, drive out oppression with justice. Overturn violence with peace. Interrupt despair with hope, death with life, hatred with love. When we allow ourselves to be disrupted by God, the world can be disrupted as well, in all the ways that it most needs.

Because...when Jesus steps in and turns the tables in our lives, we must be prepared to stand firm in our faith and seek out the new direction that Christ is leading us in.

HYMN: #766 As a Deer Pants for Water

1. As the deer panteth for the water
So my soul longs after You
You alone are my hearts desire
And I long to worship You

[Refrain]

You alone are my strength, my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my hearts desire
And I long to worship You

2. I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye. **R**

3. You're my friend and You're my brother
Even though you are a King
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything. **R**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray for the whole world
for all creation, for every living creature
for plants and flowers,
for animals and for fragile human beings.
Gracious God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for those who suffer
the sick and dying, for sorrow,
and for the loss that separates us
from the love of the eternal God.

Gracious God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the nations of the world
for all people,
for the land and water that sustains and renews life.
Gracious God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the leaders of nation and cities;
May they remember to lean into you
and to listen to your words.
Gracious God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Gracious God, protect those who have no place to live
and no one to love them.
Help them to know you, and to know love.
Gracious God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

We offer up our prayers of concern particularly for those we love:
family, friends, and others.
Fill us with Your Spirit.
Gracious God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For all the blessings of this life we offer thanks,
help us to have generous hearts and giving spirits.
Help us to be your hands in the world.
Gracious God, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #626 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Come unto me and rest;
 lay down, O weary one, lay down
 your head upon my breast."
 I came to Jesus as I was,
 weary and worn and sad;
 I found in him a resting-place,
 and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Behold, I freely give
 the living water; thirsty one,
 stoop down, and drink, and live."
 I came to Jesus, and I drank
 of that life-giving stream;
 my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
 and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "I am this dark world's light;
 look unto me, your morn shall rise;
 and all your day be bright."
 I looked to Jesus, and I found
 in him my star, my sun;
 and in that light of life I'll walk
 till travelling days are done.

SENDING FORTH

Go forth with the Lord at your side, seeking goodness and compassion.
 Bring the words of hope and peace to all whom you meet. Go in peace.
 AMEN.

CHORAL AMEN**POSTLUDE**