



Traditional
February 4

Beloved
Taken
Blessed
Broken
GIVEN

Prayer Concerns: Joe Bush; the family of Keith Combs in his passing; the family of Betty Haynes in her passing

Today's Sanctuary flowers provided by Don & Susan Travis to the glory of God in honor of their new grandson, Elijah Michael Hoffmann.

Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Joan Nevill. Organist: Barbara Waite. Communion Music provided by Temple Choir; Flutist Lisa McCarty

Ushers February 4: Kathy Zelle, captain; Chuck Taylor, Warren Heinsohn, Jack Buttrum, Ed Ancona, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)

Ushers February 11: Greg & Linda Stilwell, captains; Chuck Taylor, Jacque Hardin, Dick Osmon, Nelson & Joyce Rivers

Greeters February 4: Patricia Helm, Nancy Hughes, Janet Kissel, Sue Anderson

Greeters February 11: Marty Van Stone, Betty Schofield, Carla Bolin

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

Luke Rausch

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"My Shepherd, You Supply My Need" by E. Childs

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Be still and know that God is.

People: God was, also, in the beginning.

Leader: And when all human striving has ceased,

People: God will still be.

Leader: From everlasting to everlasting, the Lord is God.

People: God alone is worthy to be worshipped.

CHORAL INTROIT

"This Is My Commandment." by Anonymous

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*HYMN #384

"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling "

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Please turn to those around you and pass the peace of Christ.

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray as one.

PASTORAL PRAYER

All: Risen Lord, You are the true Vine and we are the branches. By Your Spirit, produce the fruit of love, patience, and peace in us. Prune all selfishness from us and fill us with Your mercy. And now, O God, hear us as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13 "Pray then like this: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'"

GIVING TITHES & OFFERING

"My Song Is Love Unknown" by B. Culli

*DOXOLOGY *The congregation stands as the Ushers return the offering to the Altar.*

#95 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"One at the Feast" by Craig Courtney/Pamela Martin

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READINGS

John 3:17-21

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

FAITH WE SING #2086

"Open Our Eyes"

MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton

"Given"

Well Happy Super Bowl Sunday everyone. No one mentioned that yet. I see that you all have your Patriots jerseys ready to go. No? No? No Tom Brady? No? OK. All right. Well, I thought I'd bring it out just because you know.. I'm sure you have all your like melted cheese nachos and various healthy things ready to go and your DVR set for all the great commercials we're going to see, right? Oh man. You guys are just really passionate about the Super Bowl the day I can I can tell.

Well, today we're going to be finishing up our sermon series on the beloved and we based this sermon series on one of my favorite books, Henri Nowen's Life of the Beloved. Basically, what we've been talking about is what it means to live our lives as a child of God. And what Nowen suggests is that to be a child of God means that we have been taken, blessed, broken, and given. To be taken is to say that we are chosen by God. And that means basically, we are all entirely unique and therefore God's presence is given to us in unique ways. We've been blessed by God which is to say that blessing is much more than just the good things that happen to us within our lives. To say we are blessed means that we are valued by God. Broken- just as we are all unique our brokenness is unique to each of us as well. And it's important for us to realize that each and every person's brokenness is unique to them because that frees us from the need to kind of project our brokenness onto the lives of others, and it frees us basically just to try to understand the pain that someone else is going through which is always the more helpful thing to do. And today we're finishing up with given and the whole goal of the Christian journey is basically to be given. And so as we dive into this last sermon, let us begin with the moment of prayer. Help us to be present today oh god. And I ask that you would take the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts and make them to be acceptable in your sight. I pray this through Christ who is our rock and redeemer. Amen.

I think we could say basically that the theme of our scripture lesson today is to be given. The story behind the story is that Jesus had just spent three years with his disciples giving his life away for the transformation of the world. Together Jesus and the disciples had seen the poor are fed. They've seen the blind begin to see. They've even seen water turning into wine. And now what we find just before John 15 occurs is that Jesus has now told his friends that their time together is limited. Soon he's going to be betrayed and crucified and no longer is he going to be able to be with his disciples. In so many words and in so many ways what Jesus has just done for John Chapter 15 occurs is let the wind out of the disciple's sails. By the time we get to our passage this morning, what we find is Jesus is kind of giving the disciples his last will and testament- this is what he wants for them as his followers. And it's pretty clear the instructions that he gives. He says to his disciples that he prays that they would love one another- that there is no greater love than to give one's life for one's friends and that this is the fruit that will last. To be clear this is really not a new command in scripture- to love. In fact it is echoed throughout the entirety of scripture. The Old Testament even has like 36 examples of this verse to love your neighbor as yourself. But I think what makes this verse in some ways unique is who Jesus says it to. He says it to Judas, the one who is going to betray him. He says it to Peter, the one who's going to deny him, and in saying this to these guys, what he's teaching us is that we are called to a love that knows no boundaries, a love that is even extended to one's enemies- people that we may or may not disagree with. To say it simply, I think as I look at this versus, it calls us to give our lives away no strings attached.

We as Christians are called to live a given life if you will. Now I know there's many things that may or may not come to your mind when you hear the word given. For me most of the time when I hear the word given I think about things that I do. Like time talents treasures- things that I do. These are the things that I give and we as the church of course encourage people to give. We encourage you to give up your time and to give of your gifts and to give of yourselves to the very church that you're a part of, and that's a good thing; but the thing I would suggest this morning is when we as Christians think about the word given, what we need to understand is it's fundamentally first and foremost an attitude of our hearts. We've not really given until we are able to give from the heart.

I think about something that happened to me a few months ago. I was asked to do a charge conference at the local United Methodist Church which is a really exciting meeting and I was pumped to be a part of that situation. A charge conferences is like a meeting where we elect church officers and also we set the pastor salaries. So you're always guaranteed the pastor of the church is going to show up for that meeting right. So I was there at the charge conference and in the course of our conversation one of the people in the church asked me and they said Andy how do you get young people to come to church. Now, first I was kind of humbled by that because I thought you'd think I'm still young and that's good I'm going to roll with this. I mean the gray in my beard and the frosting in my hair reminds me I'm not quite as young as I feel anymore. Then I thought, I'm going to roll with this. And so I reflected for a moment. I looked at the person that asked the question and I said you know I can't speak for all young people. I can't. But what I can do is speak for me. And if I were looking for a church I said to her, I said I would look for a church where people actually liked to be together. A place where they wanted to be. It's one thing to come to a place of worship. It's one thing to be a part of a church. It's another thing entirely to find joy and to want to be there. This is what I mean when I use the word given: it's much more than what we do. It's an attitude of our hearts. We want to be there. We find joy in being there.

To be given is to experience a transformation of our hearts in such a way where we are grateful for the opportunity to live this life that we've been given, and so the next question that comes to my mind then is how do we cultivate this right. How do we cultivate this givenness from our hearts? And this is the hard part about it all because I think to cultivate a sense of givingness in our hearts it is in some way tied to the brokenness of our lives. Which is to say, I think we find a joy in living many times through going through great suffering within our lives. I hate to say it but I think it's kind of true. I mean think about it this way.

Chief Justice John Roberts is a kind of an important guy in our legal system I guess. He was once asked to give a commencement speech for his ninth grade son. All the students gathered around and got up on the podium and he began to speak. And he looked at the kids and he said you know I wish you all bad luck, which I'm sure is not what they anticipated hearing that day at their commencement. I've been to many commencements and I've never heard anyone say something like this. But he says I wish you all bad luck. And then he goes on to explain I hope in your life you experienced long loneliness so that you appreciate friendship. I hope and your life you will be betrayed so that you'll know the importance of loyalty. I hope in your life that they will be treated unfairly so that you can appreciate the importance of justice. I hope for you that you will learn the art of reading your misfortunes in such a way that they might teach you to find a sense of gratitude and joy in the living. Oddly enough. I think it's the pain and brokenness in our lives that teaches us joy. And what we as Christians are called to is to harness the energy of the pain in our lives in order that we can appreciate the many good gifts that God has given us. And yet, the next question that comes to my mind and the bigger question I suppose is this so what do we do with the brokenness then that has no end in sight? What do we do about the tragedy that is definitely a part of our world? I think about the many good friends I've gone through the brokenness then and a pastor who died painful deaths through cancer. I think about the person who suffers from mental illness where the medicine's not working. I think about that girl that was sliding down the hill in Newburgh and was tragically killed. What's our response to this type of brokenness as Christians? I've got to tell you I don't have a completely clear answer, but what I can share with you is this: when the broken this we experience in our life has no end in sight, I choose to see it through the lens of eternity. I choose to see it through the lens of eternity, and I trust that this love and this life that God has given us transcends even the pain and brokenness of this world. And there is a day coming where the pain will be.

I admit I don't talk much about eternal life. I think part of the reason why I don't talk much about it eternal life of my sermons is quite frankly because it's a mystery beyond it completely. I mean I realize that I can't use words to describe this thing where God heals us and we enter into full communion with God. I can't and I know I can't talk about it completely. The other reason why I don't like to talk about it is this. I mean I see the billboards and I 69 that's like 1-800 truth and I think oh my gosh now I'm really motivated to go to church. Thanks for that. In other words, the eternal life is used in abusive ways within the church within the Christian faith. But I think it's important for us to trust and to realize that we do believe in a God who will make things right. And we do trust in a God whose love is bigger than even the pain and brokenness of our world. And as we trust in that I think oddly enough we can find a sense of joy and contentment even in the midst of pain that we don't have an answer for.

Thomas Merton probably said it best when he was asked about eternal life. The people in the retreat said Thomas what do you think about eternal life and he responded by saying, well I don't think most of us will be there. And by that he meant we will be so transformed. We won't even recognize ourselves.

Friends we are beloved children of God. We are taken entirely unique, blessed, and eternally valued, broken, and we all have pain in our lives. All in order that we might be given and find the joy of living, because in the end that's the greatest gift we have to offer -joy in living, peace within our heart, contentment and well-being within our lives. This is the stuff that bears fruit that will last. And this, this is the stuff that comes from putting our trust in the god whose love transcends us all. I pray that as we prepare our hearts for a Holy Communion, you might experience full communion with God this day and always.

*HYMN #378

"There Is A Balm In Gilead"

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"Hispanic Praise" by D. Janzer