



Connect Share Explore

Traditional Worship • September 16

- Prayer Concerns: Nancy Hitch, Kenneth Stevens
- Today's Sanctuary flowers given by David & Jean Freeze to the glory of God in memory of their parents.
- Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Don Travis. Organist: Barbara Waite. Additional music provided by the Temple Brass.
- Ushers (16): Eric Eades, captain; Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Ushers (23): Eric Eades, captain; Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, John Oberhelman, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Greeters (16): Warren & Rosemary Heinsohn, Janet Kissel
- Greeters (23): Pat & Ken Haynie, Tom Harvey

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC English Folk Song Suite R. Vaughan Williams/Jiri Janlanueva 1. March "Seventeen Come Sunday"; 2. Intermezzo "My Bonny Boy"; 3. March "Folk Songs from Somerset"

WELCOME
PRELUDE "Promised Land" by R. Simpson

CALL TO WORSHIP
Leader: We come to Your house, O God, to thank You for all that is good.
People: We come to Your house, O God, to cry out for what is wrong.
Leader: We come to Your house, O God, to find restoration.
People: In God's house, there is refuge for all.

CHORAL INTROIT "Come, We That Love the Lord" by Aaron Williams

***CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT**
***FIRST HYMN #303** "The Day of Resurrection"

***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.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Make Our Garden Grow" from "Candide" by Leonard Bernstein/Christopher Dedrick

CALL TO PRAYER
Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.
Leader: Let us listen for God in the silence.

PASTORAL PRAYER
All: Eternal One, we give thanks that You are a God of mystery - You show up in the places and the people we least expect. Forgive us when we think we have all the answers. May we, like children, never cease to be surprised by Your grace. And now, O God, hear us as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

GIVING OFFERING "Exsultate Deo" by Palestrina/Stephen DeCesare #94 in Hymnal

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

ANTHEM "Here I Am, Lord" by Daniel L. Schutte/Ovid Young

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READING Luke 17:20-21
20 Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE TFWS #2203 "In His Time"

MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton Explore: Asking the Right Questions

Well good morning that Methodist Temple. I trust and I hope that you've had a wonderful week, a life giving week. Here's my question for you as we get started. Where have you seen or experienced Christ in your life this past week? I as that question a lot of times at the beginning of meetings or different groups of men. I say, 'Where are you seeing Christ?' So, where have you seen or experienced the presence of Christ within your life this last week? For me it came in the form of a picture. I know you probably know where I'm going with this- it's one of my girls. Last week weekend I was gone- there she is- last week I was gone. The girls were going to a birthday party for my niece up in Brown County Indiana. While they were getting ready for the birthday party, our littlest one, Ella, disappeared. No one could find Ella. Everyone was looking for Ella. Where's Ella at? And finally they walked into the dining room and there is Ella. She had climbed up on the dining room table, and she was already eating the cupcakes because sometimes you want your cake and you go ahead and eat it too. There's Ella enjoying her cupcake. And for me, I just I don't know, I see Christ in that. I don't know how I do, but I see Christ in that -just a kid enjoying something as simple and as wonderful as a cupcake. I can just imagine what her mother did whenever she saw that. And that brings me joy as well.

I really do hope that you've seen or experience the presence of Christ somehow in your life- that you've had joy this past week, that some sort of give some sort things you're thankful for this past week. We always need to be looking for that we always need to be looking for that. One of my mentors Dr. Kim Mullard had this beautiful line that can summarize so much of our life. He says that in the end we become what we count. Right? We become what we count. Every day has reason for concern. Yet, but every day also has reasons for joy. And so let us count those reasons for joy. Let us become what we count.

Well these last few weeks we've been talking about what we hope and what we dream to become as a congregation, and more than anything else, our dream or vision or hope for our church is that we would be a safe and non-judgmental community for people to connect, to share, and to explore. And last week we began the conversation about exploration and what it means to explore. More than anything else, what I suggested last week when I talked about explore is that it's about the questions. It's not necessarily about having the answers when it comes to the faith journey. Instead it's the questions that keep us on the right path. Well today I'm going to kind of talk about the other side of the exploration question. Today I'm going to talk about a way, if not the way, that we able to explore in such a way that we can find the face of God within our lives.

As we get started let's pause for a moment to prayer. Oh God help us today to be present to you even as you are here present and speaking to us. Amen.

So our scripture lesson today is a short little story, a short little moment, from the Gospel of Luke. The story goes, of course, that there is a Pharisee- and the Pharisee in those days is kind of like a religious insider. He comes to Jesus and asked him the question, 'Jesus when is the kingdom of God going to come?' Translation: what the Pharisee was asking is, Jesus when is God going to do something about the mess the world's in? The Pharisees question in many ways is our question. That's basically what he was asking Jesus. When you get to do something about this mess? I mean come on, look around. There's all kinds of problems. God please intervene. When's it going to happen Jesus? That's the question that he's asking. And to that question, Jesus famously responds- I love this verse; it's one of my favorite verses in all the Gospels- 'well the kingdom is not something you can predict. You can't say look, there it is. But instead, here it is, Jesus says to the Pharisee, 'the kingdom of God is already among you.' It is another translation of this passage says the kingdom of God is even within you. In other words what Jesus, I think is saying to the Pharisee in this moment, you're already in it knucklehead. You're already in it. Wake up and see. You're already in the midst of the Kingdom of God.

Maybe a modern translation of what Jesus is saying is that you're already in the phenomena, the activity of the presence of God. I like that better. Kingdom seems like a place we go. You know, we live in Evansville. We drive to Newburgh. It's like a place we go. We go from this kingdom to that kingdom kind of thinking. I think more to the point of what Jesus is getting at is that the kingdom is a phenomenon that we already find ourselves in the midst of. And when he invites us to do is to say yes to the presence of God that is already in our midst. And the way that we say yes to the activity of God that is already in our midst is this: you only have to die to yourself and invest your life in the lives of others. And you'll find it.

You want to know how to say yes to the kingdom, the phenomena of the presence of God in your life, my life? Here it is: I, You, We only have to die to ourselves and invest our lives and the lives of others. Then we'll find what we're looking for. The story that comes to my mind happens just before the story we just heard. The story before the story, if you will. The story before the story is there's this there's this story about Jesus, and he's on his way to Jerusalem. Jesus is on his way to the big city in Luke 17. It says as Jesus on his way to the big city, he found himself in the region between Galilee and Samaria. Stop. Let me translate that for you. Galilee is like the land in the middle of nowhere. It's like the country. Samaria is the place no one really ever wanted to go. Basically, Luke's telling us that Jesus is on his way to the big city, and on his way to the big city he found himself on the corner of nowhere and the place no one wanted to go. And as he was staying there at the corner of nowhere in the place no one wanted to go, the story goes that there were ten lepers that come up to Jesus. Now leapers, well that's the people that no one wanted to touch. Let me just put all together again. Jesus at the corner of nowhere and the place that no one wanted to go had ten people came up to him- they were lepers, the people that no one wanted to touch. And so what does Jesus do? He heals them. He makes them well. Luke ends the story by saying this: that of the ten lepers that were healed, one of them went back to Jesus to say thank you for the gift that you've given me.

Now I've preached on this story. This is like my go to text for stewardship, right? I mean this is the one. We should be grateful like that leper for all the gifts that God has given us. And we should, right? We should be grateful all the gifts God's given us. One of the reasons we come to worship and one of the reasons we give is so we can be like that one leper and say thank you to God for the gift you've given us. I've talked about this, but the thing that occurred to me this past week as I was reading this story was, we're Christians. We're Christians which means that we should follow Christ, which means that not only should we try to be like the leper in the story, but we should also try to be like Jesus. This means that we should be willing, like Jesus, to stand on the corner of nowhere and the place that no one wants to go and be a healing presence for the people that no one wants to be in contact with even if it means nine out of ten of them don't even thank us. Let me just say that again. This story is also about us following Jesus who calls us to stand on the corner of nowhere and the place no one wants to go be in contact with the people no one wants to be with and be healing presence for them, to give our lives away for them even if it means nine out of ten of them don't even say thank you. When we give ourselves away in this way, hear me when I say this, you will find what you're looking for.

Now if you didn't get it there, the story after the story we just heard- so there's a story before the story the story after the story we just heard- is kind of scary parable about the end of the world. But then in that parable there's this line that Jesus says. He says, if you want to secure your life, you'll lose it. If you give your life away, you'll find it. So much of the time we just want to accumulate stuff for ourselves. So much of the time we just want to live for us. And the more that we live for us and the more we live as if we're the center of the universe and the more that we just focus on our things, if you will, our issues, the more we lose the life that we're looking for. But the more we give it away the more we discover the treasure that we are seeking.

In a word, what Jesus is calling us to, I think more than anything else, is humility. Now I know when you hear the word humility you might think weakness or you're a doormat or you let people run you over, but from a Christian perspective, humility teaches us who we are and what we are to become. The word humility finds its origins, its roots in a Latin word for dirt- humus. I think not talking about the delicious vegetable dip. Humus is the same it's the same word that we get the word human from. And when humility reminds us is without God's presence in our lives, we're nothing but dirt. What makes us is God is breathing us into existence. And so next of her abilities, all of our talents, all of our anything really is a gift given to us from God. It's freely you is to go to make us us. That's who we are. All that, what are we to become? Well, we're to become like the God who's made us us. We are to give ourselves away to others in the way that God has given God's self to us so freely. When we're giving ourselves to others in the way that God has given to us, we're stepping into the flow of the phenomena of God's activity and presence within your life, within my life.

Now my hunch is you've experienced this at some point in your life- this joy that comes from giving ourselves away. You might been on a mission trip and experienced it. You might sing in the choir and have experienced it. You might have done a number of different things and experienced it like going to the homeless shelter. When were totally forgetting ourselves and giving ourselves to others, we experience the kingdom. We experience it.

For me, it was an ordinary thing that happened a couple of weeks ago where I experienced this joy of giving myself away. A couple weeks ago I was on vacation. Remember I was gone? The reason why I took the week off is because it is my wife's birthday. I was earning points doing that. I was taking that week off and being a real martyr here because it was her birthday week. Her birthday was August 29, a Wednesday. The Tuesday before her birthday, August 28, Leslie had to work. That meant that the entire Tuesday before her birthday, myself and the girls were able to plan Leslie's birthday extravaganza complete with text messages. It was like, it really was even extravaganza, it was like a birthday scavenger hunt. This is what happens when you leave me home alone with the girls. I get all these crazy ideas. So I had a list of 12 text messages that I gave her to give her instructions about how she could find her birthday gifts. It was so much fun. We went to the fresh market and we got her her favorite muffins- they're the pistachio green ones. She loves those things. And so we went and got them. Well, we had four of them, but then I went and picked Paige up from school and they had to eat one on the way home. So we had three of them for the next day.

Then we went got the balloon. We got the balloon for Leslie and this is what happens when you take a 4 year old with you to get your birthday balloon for your wife, her mom? You get a a unicorn/obnoxious balloon. We walked in there Snucks, and I said 'Paige, what balloon do you think we should get for your mom? And she's like 'unicorn!' It is like the biggest balloon you've ever seen in your life. It was the biggest balloon in all of Schnucks. Huge! It was so big that when I put the unicorn balloon in the grocery cart, I had to like lean over to see where I was going in for fear I might run into someone. So everywhere you went, there's a unicorn going through Schnucks with the 4 year old.

Then we went and got her a birthday card. I was trying to get Leslie this really nice fluffy and loving birthday card. And Paige- this is what happens when you take a four year old to do this stuff with you. Paige got her a Minnie Mouse birthday card. It wasn't even a birthday card. You look at the front and it says congratulations. And then you open it up, and it said for your new baby girl. And I'm like well, I guess I'm ground to make this and a birthday card. I scratched out the message and I'm like Congratulations, I hope you have a happy day with your husband and your new baby girls, or something like that. It was so much fun.

Later on, I'm thought, what else can I do? And so I decided to get her a massage at Massage Envy. And I called and I set up an appointment. And they said that there is this other misuse name Erin that would be available on Leslie's birthday. So we had it all planned out. It was so much fun. Leslie woke up and I started giving her texts like 'go into the kitchen and you'll be greeted by Minnie Mouse'. There's her card. And then we went to the zoo. We're feeling kind of wild, let's go to the zoo. That kind of thing. And then we went to the go to go to your husband's office and you'll find what you're looking for and there's a massive unicorn balloon in the office. And then I said some about massage, so she went and got a massage. And she came back she had this look on her face, and I said well how'd it go? She said when you made that appointment, who did they say that was going to be my masseuse? I was like, a lady by the name of Erin. She's like, you idiot. There was a guy by the name of Aaron. He had hair longer than me. I'm like, oh maybe we should go to target next. It was so much fun!

But here's the thing that happened after it was all said and done. It occurred to me. I've been doing this for two days. And it occurred to me how much joy there was in all that. Here's why: I wasn't even thinking about myself. I was conspiring to give myself away to her- conspiring to give myself away. I truly believe this is what Jesus is talking about when he says, 'knuckleheads, you're already in it. If you want to find, it's not something you figure out. It's something you live into, and you live into it when you freely give yourself away and you get over yourself long enough just to think about how you can invest your life in the life of someone else.'

I do find myself thinking, what would a church look like that did that? We would be the local conspirators. We just seek to give ourselves away to our community. We don't even look for them to necessarily come back to church here. That's kind of selfish if you think about it- that that always taints the well. It does. It always taints the well of Christian service when we do what we do to try to get something back from them. A lot of times the thing we try to get back from them is we wanted to come back to church; then really it's about us trying to fill up the whole place so we can live our own glory days again. It's the truth. But a church that would actively try to give ourselves away to our neighborhood and community, that would be infectious for this part of the city, in a good way.

Did you know that the two number one groups of people who live in our neighborhood- projected to grow in our neighborhood- are first, single mothers. I give we're equipped to do some good for single mothers. We really are. Here's the second one- people 65 years and older. We're equipped to give ourselves away to this group too. Here's the third group, I'd say it's pretty large in Evansville- people that used to go to church. People who used to go to church. We have more churches per capita in the city of Evansville than the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. The city Charlotte, North Carolina, tradition says, is the belt buckle of the Bible Belt. We have more churches in the city of Evansville per capita than the belt buckle of the Bible Belt, which means this: we've got a lot of people who go to church. We've got a lot of people who used to go to church. Just to be candid, they have been hurt by the church because every once in while our ego gets the best of us and we hurt people in the name of religion and Jesus, don't we? What would it mean for us to give ourselves away to these folks? Even if they don't say thank you, it changes. It changes you. It changes me. It changes our community.

Connect. Share. Explore. Do you know I explore comes a last? Because you really never see the face of God until your connecting and sharing with others. Well let us do what we believe God has called us to do.

***LAST HYMN UMH #707** "Hymn of Promise"

***CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "All Glory Be To God On High" by A. Arnsdorf