

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.
May we together experience the presence of God*

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord



**Prelude
Welcome
Announcements/Joys & Concerns**

Learning the rules is a common exercise. Jesus knew that, which is why he took the time to talk about the rules in the Sermon on the Mount. He knew he was in a rule-based society, so he decided to take a look at the rules and to mess with everyone’s head at the same time. “You thought you knew the rules?” he seems to say. “Well, listen to this!”

“You have heard that it was said . . . But I say to you”.

As we read through these verses today, tell me you aren’t overwhelmed a little bit. I mean, my goodness. Rules are one thing. But this . . . This seems a bit much. Extreme rules. Intense rules. Rules only for those who are really into rules. Or something like that. I mean, we’ve evolved as a society, haven’t we? We’ve kinda let most of this stuff slide. No big deal, we say. Live and let live, we believe. To each his/her own, we believe.

But should we? We don’t want to be sticks in the mud, yet reading these verses, it seems like this higher standard is something more than adding to the list of rules. It is as if Jesus is trying to get us to realize something about ourselves and about our relationships. And that something might be as simple as “pay attention.” Or “these relationships are precious, treat with care.” Or maybe even “community is a gift from God, don’t waste it, don’t abuse it, don’t ignore it.”

You see, it seems to me that all these rules, all these higher ways of living are teaching us about community, about relationships. And Jesus is saying that we ought not take anyone for granted. We ought not run the risk of hurting anyone. We ought not treat anyone as less than a child of God. Maybe these aren’t rules so much as a way of creating a community that resembles the kingdom of God.

Hmm, creating a community. The community of faith can be about the little details of daily living or about revolutions and transformation. And maybe even both at the same time.

Let us center today on how we can be a caring community of hope and affirmation because we are a Christ-breathed community of transformation and spiritual growth.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Are you awake? Are you alert?

Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

Are you watching the signs?

Are you interpreting what is happening today?

Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

Do you see opportunities for ministry?

Do you see the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the needy?

Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

Come, let us worship and let us work in the reign of God.

Christ has extended the invitation:

let us work together in the reign of God on earth.

PRAYER

Discerning God,

help me consider this day

how I live my life

and how I choose the direction I take.

Discriminating God,

help me understand

how crucial are the words I speak to others

as I seek relationships in my life.

Disturbing God,

help me find clarity in my relationship with you,

with others, and maybe especially with myself.

For one thing is certain, you are a loving and merciful God

My way to salvation is through you. Amen.

***HYMN OF PRAISE UMH #400 "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"**

Author: Robert Robinson (1758)

Alterer: Martin Madan (1760)

Meter: 8.7.8.7 D

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1 Come, thou Fount of every blessing,

tune my heart to sing thy grace;

streams of mercy, never ceasing,

call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,

sung by flaming tongues above.

Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it

mount of God's redeeming love.

2 Here I find my greatest treasure;

hither by thy help I've come;

and I hope, by thy good pleasure,

safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
bought me with his precious blood.

3 Oh, to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it;
seal it for thy courts above.

We Hear God's Word

Gospel Reading..... Matthew 5:21-37
New Revised Standard Version

Concerning Anger

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder,' and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister,^[a] you will be liable to judgment, and if you insult^[b] a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council, and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell^[c] of fire. 23 So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court^[d] with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Concerning Adultery

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin,^[e] tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.^[f] 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin,^[g] cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.^[h]

Concerning Divorce

31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Concerning Oaths

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you: Do not

swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.[i]
The Word of God for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

Children's Sermon

FAITH HYMN UMH #410 "I Want a Principle Within"

Author: Charles Wesley (1749)

**1 I want a principle within
Of watchful, godly fear,
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near.
Help me the first approach to feel
Of pride or wrong desire;
To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.**

**2 From Thee that I no more may stray,
No more Thy goodness grieve,
Grant me the filial awe, I pray,
The tender conscience give.
Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake.**

**3 Almighty God of truth and love,
To me Thy power impart;
The burden from my soul remove,
The hardness from my heart.
O may the least omission pain
My reawakened soul,
And drive me to that blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole.**

"Message"

PRAYER RESPONSE TO THE WORD

(inspired by Matthew 5:21-37, Deuteronomy 30:15-20)

O God, send your Spirit upon us and light our path,
that we may travel the road you have prepared for us.

Having heard your scriptures proclaimed,
and your word revealed,
enable our hearts and minds to more fully understand
your goodness and your grace.

Help us break free from ideas that no longer bring life,
that we may embrace the life-giving work of your Spirit.
Challenge us to forsake paths that ask little of us,
and help us resist the evils and temptations of this world,
that we may truly follow the way of kingdom living.
in the name of the servant Christ, who taught us to pray...Our Father...

Offertory (UM Hymnal 95) Doxology

(Wykoff only)

Offertory Prayer

Holy God, as we offer to you gifts from the abundance you have provided us, we recognize that the offering that concerns you is more than what is in our wallets and purses, but in our hearts. Help us to furnish our hearts with love, mercy, justice, compassion, and forgiveness so they might be a place where you feel welcome and at home. Help us present this offering as well. In Jesus, we pray. Amen. (Matthew 5:21-37)

Departing Hymn UMH #411 "Dear Lord, Lead Me Day by Day"

Author: Francisca Asuncion (1983)

Publication Date: 1989

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEiPxIN3Xc4>

Verse 1

**Dear Lord lead me day by day
Make me steadfast wise and strong
Happy most of all to know
That my dear Lord loves me so**

Chorus

**Praise to God fount of love
Praise from morn till the set of sun
Praise at home praise in church
Praise to God everywhere on earth**

Verse 2

**Dear Lord lead me day by day
Make me follow and obey faithfully
Your words of life
That Your love ever abide**

Verse 3

**Now with confidence I sing
Joyous praises to our God
And with upright heart I give
Tender care and sympathy**

Benediction

When Jesus said, "But I say to you," he was raising the bar; he was calling for more than the law requires. He was calling us to righteousness. Let us go from here determined to follow his call by the Spirit's grace and live as disciples every moment of our lives. Go with God. Amen.

***POSTLUDE**