

Prairieland Parish

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**



**Opening Meditation**

How do we view the commandments? We honor them; we treasure them; we wish there was more obedience to them in the world out there. But do we see them as descriptive of our lives? Rather than seeing them as normative to everyone, what if we decided to see them as something we chose to be the guide for our lives? And what if we wanted to move from beyond the letter of this law into the spirit, what might that look like?

What if instead of “thou shall” and “thou shalt not,” we translate the words as “You are...” Then the law becomes a reminder of who we are.

You are the people who have one God.

You are the people who respect boundaries.

You are the people who value worship and giving honor to God.

These might then become, not commandments from the outside, but descriptions of our inner intentions and experience.

Christ as the cornerstone is another way of describing this inner-shaping process. Christ is what gives the church its shape, its definition and mission. Christ is what gives each of us our mission in life and reason for living.

So, today let us sing of Christ as our foundation and give praise to the one who shapes our living. Let our prayer time be one of inviting the Spirit to guide us into the right paths, even as we lift up others in our care, so that they too might know the light that directs our path.

Today as we gather to worship, let us do so with the mindset of inviting the Spirit to work in us and through us to become workers in the vineyard, producing the fruit of the kingdom in ways that invite and encourage the body of Christ around us and the wider community of which we are a part.

**A Call to Worship**

Come! Now is the time to worship!

**We come to worship God who guides us.**

After delivering the Israelites out of bondage, God continued to guide them, giving them commandments to shape and form their life with God and one another.

**God guides us as we learn to pattern our lives after the rhythms of God's grace.**

Jesus tells a story of a vineyard owner and his tenants who choose violence instead of giving the owner the fruits of the harvest, challenging us to choose—will we reject the Cornerstone or find in Jesus our sure foundation?

**God guides us as we learn to pattern our lives after the rhythms of God's grace.**

Too often we fall back into the pattern of rejecting what is good for us, forgetting that the life of faith is always about following God who provides for us and loves us.

**When we follow God's guidance, we learn to live God's new pattern of life described in the commandments and demonstrated by Christ.**

Come! Now is the time to worship!

**We come to worship God who guides us for the long haul.**

#### **PRAYER FOR THE DAY**

**Liberating God, you give us commandments not as a burden to bear but as an invitation to live the life you have for us. Grant us open hearts ready to accept your invitation, that we might become a people who bear the fruit of the freedom and new life you give us. Amen.**

#### **Praise Hymn UMH #410 "I Want a Principle Within"**

*Author: Charles Wesley (1749)*

*Adapter: J. Stimpson*

**1. I want a principle within  
of watchful, godly fear,  
a sensibility of sin,  
a pain to feel it near.  
I want 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 mountain 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.**

**Gospel Reading..... Matthew 21:33-46 (NRSV)**

**The Parable of the Wicked Tenants**

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. 37 Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;[a]  
this was the Lord's doing,  
and it is amazing in our eyes?'

43 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."[b]

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

This is the Word of God, for the people of God, **Thanks be to God!**

**Children's Sermon**

**Faith Hymn UMH#398 "Jesus Call US" (verses 1-4)**

*Author: Cecil Frances Alexander (1852)*

*Composer: William H. Jude (1874)*

**1. Jesus calls us o'er the tumult  
of our life's wild, restless sea;  
day by day his sweet voice soundeth,  
saying, "Christian, follow me!"**

**2. As of old the apostles heard it**

**by the Galilean lake,  
turned from home and toil and kindred,  
leaving all for Jesus' sake.**

**3. Jesus calls us from the worship  
of the vain world's golden store,  
from each idol that would keep us,  
saying, "Christian, love me more!"**

**4. In our joys and in our sorrows,  
days of toil and hours of ease,  
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,  
"Christian, love me more than these!"**

### **Message**

#### **Prayers of the People**

As God's people, called to love one another, let us pray for the needs of the church, the whole human family, and all the world. That churches of all traditions, may discover their unity in Christ and exercise their gifts in service of all, we pray to you, O God.

That the earth may be freed from war, famine, and disease, and the air, soil, and waters cleansed of poison, we pray to you, O God.

That those who govern and maintain peace in every land may exercise their powers in obedience to your commands, we pray to you, O God.

That you will strengthen this nation to pursue just priorities so that the races may be reconciled; the young, educated; and the old, cared for; the hungry, filled; and the homeless, housed; and the sick, comforted and healed, we pray to you, O God.

That you will comfort and empower those who face any difficulty or trial: the sick (especially N., N.), the disabled, the poor, the oppressed, those who grieve and those in prison, we pray to you, O God.

That (insert specific prayer concerns of the congregation) , we pray to you, O God:

That you will accept our thanksgiving for all faithful servants of Christ now at rest, who, with us, await a new heaven and a new earth, your everlasting kingdom, we pray to you, O God.

Merciful God, through Jesus Christ and in the mystery of the Holy Spirit  
We come to the Lord this day in voice and prayer as we unite saying: Our Father...

## **Offertory/Doxology/ Offertory Prayer**

*Generous and giving God, you have offered us a deep and soul-satisfying relationship with you, one that extends far beyond our earthly journey; and too many of us have opted for a "faith-lite" experience. One day a week or a couple of times a month has been a better fit. We have rejected what you so generously offer us, even as we dwell in and are sustained by your vineyard. As we offer our gifts this day, may we better receive the relationship you offer us and may we walk more closely. In Christ's holy name, we pray. Amen. (Matthew 21:33-46)*

## **Departing Hymn UMH # 368 "My Hope Is Built"**

*Author: Edward Mote (1834)*

*Composer: William B. Bradbury (1863)*

**1. My hope is built on nothing less  
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.**

**Refrain:**

**On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.**

**2. When darkness veils his lovely face,  
I rest on his unchanging grace.  
In every high and stormy gale,  
my anchor holds within the veil.  
(Refrain)**

**3. His oath, his covenant, his blood  
supports me in the whelming flood.  
When all around my soul gives way,  
he then is all my hope and stay.  
(Refrain)**

**4. When he shall come with trumpet sound,  
O may I then in him be found!  
Dressed in his righteousness alone,  
faultless to stand before the throne!  
(Refrain)**

## **SENDING FORTH**

Go forth today as a people who bear the fruit of the kingdom that in living a life patterned after God's grace, you may share the hope, joy, and love you receive from God with your neighbors wherever you go. Amen.

## **Postlude**