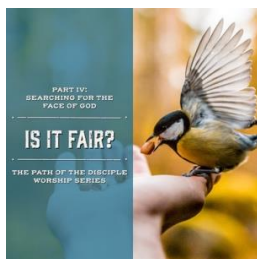


*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.
May we together experience the presence of God*

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord



Prelude

Welcome

Announcements – Joys/Concerns

“Is that fair?” This is a question we find ourselves asking starting as kids and it lives with us all the way into adulthood. We claim to want fairness, or at least we want fairness in a way that benefits us. Fairness in our favor, we might say. Deep down, however, the truth is that we don’t really want fairness; we want mercy. At least that is what we want from God. At the same time, we want to deal fairly and be dealt with fairly as we live and work in the world.

So, how do we deal fairly with our neighbors? What ministries can we celebrate or launch as a sign that we are engaged in relationships of fairness? Do we acknowledge our privilege over those who have less in terms of access, goods and services, and in terms of treatment by those in authority? This need not be a source of shame, but rather an opportunity to use what we have to be fair, to be gracious and merciful like the God we follow, in our dealings with the wider community.

Where are those opportunities? What stories can we tell that inspire us to do good in the world? What testimonies can we share that open our eyes to the possibilities and realities of how the world works? All questions we should carry in our hearts and minds as we walk through our days.

Today, as we worship, let us give thanks and praise to God who has gone beyond fair in offering salvation and grace to all of us sinners and gave us a way where there was no way. God loves us even when we haven’t been all that loveable. Let our praises be sung and spoken with grateful hearts as we acknowledge the gifts of the Spirit and the blessing that service brings.

Let our worship be a reminder that we often see the face of God within us. Let this be a time where we find encouragement as we celebrate how we have moved closer to the kingdom in how we live with one another, how we praise and rejoice in one another, and how we challenge and then support one another. Come, let us go beyond fair and move into grace manifested in love in all our relationships.

A Call to Worship

Beloved disciples, welcome! We gather as people reconciled to one another and God through grace, a gift freely and lovingly given that we do not earn or deserve. We receive the marvelous work of grace in our lives, and we wonder, "Is it fair?"

No! God's grace is not fair, but a gift of God's mercy.

We gather as neighbors who have experienced difficulties of every kind. We feel uncertain, fearful, and overwhelmed, and we wonder, "Is it fair?"

No! Our difficulties are not fair, and God's grace meets our uncertainty with mercy and love.

We gather as a community that knows the suffering of our neighbors. We look at the effects of poverty, food insecurity, and trauma in our neighborhoods, and we wonder, "Is it fair?"

No! The suffering of our neighbors is not fair, and God's grace calls us to respond to suffering with mercy and justice.

We gather as people who question how to live into God's abundance and flourishing in a world built on scarcity and greed, and we wonder, "Is it fair?"

Yes! God's life of abundance and flourishing is fair, because it is merciful. May God's grace form us into people of mercy, justice, compassion, and truth-telling as we gather today.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Precious Lord, strip away the mask I wear during the week to "get by." Lay my soul bare before you today. Let me see genuine love. Show me the loves that hates evil and holds onto what is good. Strip away the mask that holds my emotions in check when I should share your love with someone. Let me see the joy of giving to others. Show me the power of blessing those who persecute me. Strip away the mask that grins and lies and lets the world think otherwise about a child of God. Amen.

Praise Hymn UMH #128 "He Leadeth Me, O Blessed Thought" (verses 1-3)

Author: Joseph H. Gilmore

Composer: William Bradbury

**1. He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.**

Refrain:

**He leadeth me, he leadeth me,
by his own hand he leadeth me;
his faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me.**

**2. Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom,
sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
by waters still, o'er troubled sea,
still 'tis his hand that leadeth me. [Refrain]**

**3. Lord, I would place my hand in thine,
nor ever murmur nor repine;
content, whatever lot I see,
since 'tis my God that leadeth me. [Refrain]**

Gospel Reading..... Matthew 15:10-28 (NRSV)

Things That Defile

¹⁰Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: ¹¹it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." ¹²Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" ¹³He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind.^[a] And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." ¹⁵But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." ¹⁶Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach and goes out into the sewer? ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters'^[b] table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that moment.

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

Children's Sermon

Faith Hymn UMH #402 "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian"

Arranger: William Smith

Copyright: Adapt. And arr. 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House

**1 Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart;
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.**

**2 Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart, in my heart;
Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.**

**3 Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart, in my heart;
Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.**

**4 Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart, in my heart;
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.**

Message

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Merciful God,
In love You created us,
and in love, You sustain us, day after day.
So it is with confidence that we bring our prayers to You,
knowing that You will hear and respond.
We pray for those who are estranged from their spouse or family,
Friends, or neighbors;
who find it difficult to forgive past wrongs done to them;

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who for years have carried feelings of guilt or regret
for something they did or something they neglected to do;
who find it difficult to ask for forgiveness or forgive themselves;

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who find themselves far away from You,
struggling to overcome their doubts or disillusionment,
and who wonder how to find their way back;

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those watching someone they love try to cope
with serious illness or injury,
and who long for Your miraculous intervention;

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the many others in our world who are suffering this day—
from grief, or loneliness, hunger, poverty, violence, or illness;

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Sustain all those who look to You in hope.
And strengthen us—Your people—
so that we may be love for all those who find themselves alone.
In the name of Jesus Christ we join together in the prayer he taught us to pray, Our
Father...

Offertory/Doxology

Offertory Prayer

Creator and architect of the universe, we want to believe that your love for us means you will go before us on life's path and clear the way, making it easy to travel, but our experience doesn't always bear that out. We know you see a bigger picture than we do. As we bring you our offerings this day, we affirm your presence with us in the pits of despair as well as in the palaces of plenty. We give with gratitude, in Christ's holy name. Amen. ([Gen 45:1-15](#))

Departing Hymn UMH #557 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (verse 1)

Author: John Fawcett

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**Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.**

SENDING FORTH

Beloved, is it fair? As you go today asking this question, remember: whether your answer is yes or no, there is always room for more mercy. May we be blessed to be people of God's grace and mercy in a world preoccupied with fairness. Amen

Postlude