

Unsettled but Unafraid: A Liturgy for Worshipping at Home

Week of June 14, 2020

St. Simons Presbyterian Church

Although we are not able to gather in-person for worship, we are able to gather in spirit. This week's liturgy is designed to be used alongside the worship video, although it can be used on its own. Use it individually or as a family. If you are using it in a family setting, consider giving each person one part to lead. If using individually, try to carve out 10-minutes to quietly read, reflect, and pray through. No matter how you worship, God will show up. Liturgy this week was compiled by Rev. Annie Franklin Arvin with a reflection written by Ruling Elder, Fred Griffith.

Opening Psalm - Psalm 116: 1-2, 12-19

I love the Lord because he hears
my requests for mercy.
I'll call out to him as long as I live,
because he listens closely to me.
What can I give back to the Lord
for all the good things he has done for me?
I'll lift up the cup of salvation.
I'll call on the Lord's name.
I'll keep the promises I made to the Lord
in the presence of all God's people.
The death of the Lord's faithful
is a costly loss in his eyes.
Oh yes, Lord, I am definitely your servant!
I am your servant and the son of your female servant—
you've freed me from my chains.
So I'll offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to you,
and I'll call on the Lord's name.
I'll keep the promises I made to the Lord
in the presence of all God's people,
in the courtyards of the Lord's house,
which is in the center of Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord!



Scripture - Genesis 18: 1-15 (included in video)

The Lord appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he sat at the entrance of his tent in the day's heat. He looked up and suddenly saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from his tent entrance to greet them and bowed deeply. He said, "Sirs, if you would be so kind, don't just pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought so you may wash your feet and refresh yourselves under the tree. Let me offer you a little bread so you will feel stronger, and after that you may leave your servant and go on your way—since you have visited your servant."

They responded, "Fine. Do just as you have said."

So Abraham hurried to Sarah at his tent and said, "Hurry! Knead three seahs^[a] of the finest flour and make some baked goods!" Abraham ran to the cattle, took a healthy young calf, and gave it to a young servant, who prepared it quickly. Then Abraham took butter, milk, and the calf that had been prepared, put the food in front of them, and stood under the tree near them as they ate.

They said to him, "Where's your wife Sarah?"

And he said, "Right here in the tent."

Then one of the men said, "I will definitely return to you about this time next year. Then your wife Sarah will have a son!"

Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were both very old. Sarah was no longer menstruating. So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, I'm no longer able to have children and my husband's old.

The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Me give birth? At my age?' Is anything too difficult for the Lord? When I return to you about this time next year, Sarah will have a son."

Sarah lied and said, "I didn't laugh," because she was frightened.

But he said, "No, you laughed."

Questions for Reflection

1. In this story, God appears to Abraham under the oaks of Mamre at his tent. Where or how has God appeared to you lately?
2. Abraham shows hospitality to the three men that appeared outside his tent by offering them water to wash their feet and a meal. What ways do you show hospitality to your neighbor? How has your neighbor shown you hospitality?
3. Sarah laughs when she is told she will have a son. Why do you think Sarah's response is laughter? Why do you think Sarah denied laughing?
4. God suggests an idea to Abraham and Sarah that they absolutely did not expect. When has God shown up in an unexpected way in your life?

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer (included in video)

In this week's prayer, you'll notice an opening and a closing with supplications in between. With each supplication you are invited to offer your own specific prayers before moving on to the next supplication.

God of compassion,
Your spirit moves in the world in ways we can't imagine.
So we laugh.
We laugh when you speak to us,
Yet you continue to speak, to provide, and to sustain.

Trusting in your spirit that is always with us, we offer to you these prayers:

- for your creation...
- for our world leaders...
- for our national leaders...
- for our community...
- for our church and the greater Church...
- for those in turmoil...
- for those grieving and mourning...
- for those who are sick and ill...
- for those who are alone...
- for those seeking peace and justice...

We give you these prayers trusting in your Spirit that stays with and brings us laughter as we say together the prayer Jesus Christ taught us:

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 us our debts as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

To Ponder Prayerfully

"Humor is a prelude to faith
and laughter is the beginning of prayer."
-Reinhold Niebuhr

God's Humor

A Reflection by Fred Griffith, SSPC Member and Ruling Elder

I was 55 years old and Melissa was still 36. We had been married for over a year and were very content in a small home we had remodeled and restored. Life was fairly uneventful with the exception of rescuing a malnourished nine month old mixed breed Labrador/English Pointer found in Everett City north of Sterling. Thus the name Everett stuck and as I write this he is anything but malnourished and is well into his fourteenth year. Our first son as we refer to him. Having two older daughters that Melissa had grown to know in our seven years of dating prior to marriage, and me being nineteen years her senior, we had discussed children but pretty much given up the thought. Besides, we had Everett.

After all, "life" was growing old together, teaching Everett simple canine good behavior, playing cards in the afternoon as the sun went down over our outside deck, cooking outdoors on warm summer days, and joking about any subject that came to mind. So it was with trepidation on one of these evenings that I looked at my bride as she sat quietly holding back tears. What could possibly be wrong as she had been experiencing this behavior for several days and I was genuinely concerned. She looked at me with quivering lips, moisture rapidly rising in her eyes and said with a cracked voice spilling out of her mouth, "I I thi thi thi think I'm preeeggnaannnt! Bwaaaahhahhh!"

This became a glorious if not an amazing moment of revelation to me. So many thoughts began to bombard my psyche. Thrill, fear, pride, fear, excitement, fear, did I say fear? I'm an old guy! I'd been through this. We had just gotten the news that my oldest daughter was engaged for crying out loud! Didn't this happen somewhere in the Bible? Abraham and Sarah were really old but then that was "Bible Years." Who knew how old they really were? God declared to them they would have a son. Abraham was aghast, astounded, unbelieving! Sarah laughed and when God challenged her she denied it.

Now fast forward almost thirteen years later. We have a wonderful daughter so smart she makes me look like Forrest Gump. Well behaved, loved by many, and is truly a gift of God to us. Not a day goes by now that Melissa and I look at one another in amazement and ask each other what would we be doing now without her? Not having nearly as much fun or wondering at the marvels of God's power or learning more about life than we ever would if she weren't with us today. God truly is amazing and I think the lesson we learn here from Genesis, Chapter 18:1-15 is that He can do ANYTHING and just when we think he must be crazy, He proves once again our mere mortality is but a whisper of all he knows about us. And isn't it nice that a higher power knows what is best for us...if only we would stop and listen and laugh. For truly God DOES have a sense of humor.