

Unsettled but Unafraid: A Liturgy for Worshipping at Home

Week of June 21, 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 Kate Buckley, Parish Pastor.



Opening Prayer

God who is all around us,
remind us you are near.

Open our ears to your joy in the chirping birds.

Soften our hearts to feel for your people.

Quiet our anxious minds.

Calm our nervous hands.

Breathe your Spirit throughout these words, these reflections, and these prayers. Amen.

Scripture - Matthew 10:24-39 (included in video)

“Disciples aren’t greater than their teacher, and slaves aren’t greater than their master. It’s enough for disciples to be like their teacher and slaves like their master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, it’s certain that they will call the members of his household by even worse names.

“Therefore, don’t be afraid of those people because nothing is hidden that won’t be revealed, and nothing secret that won’t be brought out into the open. What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, announce from the rooftops. Don’t be afraid of those who kill the body but can’t kill the soul. Instead, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Aren’t two sparrows sold for a small coin? But not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father knowing about it already. Even the hairs of your head are all counted. Don’t be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

“Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. But everyone who denies me before people, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

“Don’t think that I’ve come to bring peace to the earth. I haven’t come to bring peace but a sword. I’ve come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. People’s enemies are members of their own households.

“Those who love father or mother more than me aren’t worthy of me. Those who love son or daughter more than me aren’t worthy of me. Those who don’t pick up their crosses and follow me aren’t worthy of me. Those who find their lives will lose them, and those who lose their lives because of me will find them.

Questions for Reflection

1. Jesus directs the disciples to tell in the light what they hear in darkness and to announce from the rooftops what they hear whispered. What might God be whispering to you in the darkness to announce on the rooftops?
2. Jesus tells the disciples not to be afraid several times in this passage. What might the disciples be afraid of? Do you have any of those same fears? How does Jesus respond to those fears in this passage?
3. This idea of Jesus being a sword-bringer is often contradictory to our notions of Jesus as a peacemaker. In what ways is Jesus a sword-bringer? In what ways does Jesus make peace?
4. What does picking up a cross and following Jesus look like in your life?

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

God of love,

You are here with us.

You are here leading us, guiding us, and teaching us to bring about real and just peace.

Empower the church throughout the world and in our nation
to break down the barriers that divide us

So that in your truth, we may serve you in one common ministry.

Guide the rulers of nations and the leaders of this nation. Move them to set aside their
own fear and greed.

Inspire them to strive for peace and justice.

Hear the cries of those who are hungry and suffering. Give us, who consume most of
the earth’s resources, The heart to reorder our lives,

That all may have their share of food, medical care, shelter, and dignity.

Restore among us the earth you made to be our home. Give us respect for your
creation, that, living in harmony with everything you have made, Your whole creation
may bring praises to you.

Look with compassion on those who suffer- Those with incurable diseases,
Those unjustly imprisoned,
Those who live without hope.

Sustain those who are desperate for your healing touch. Comfort those whose heart
breaks in grief.

On this Father's Day,
We give thanks for our Dads-
For the people that raised us, were patient with us, and taught us in your way. We pray
too for those who this day is not day filled with joy and love.
May you, O God, be a companion and a healer.

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.

Sending and Benediction

May you go out into the world this day
Seeking God's justice and peace
Alongside our teacher and redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

God Knows Us

A Reflection by Kate Buckley, Parish Associate for Congregational Care and Visitation

*"The world often seems divided between false hope and gratuitous despair.
Despair demands less of us, it's more predictable, and in a sad way safer.
Authentic hope requires clarity-- seeing the trouble in this world -- and imagination, seeing what might lie
beyond these situations that are perhaps not inevitable and immutable."
-Rebecca Solnit*

God knows us. Already.

We can fight it. We can pretend we have ourselves all put-together. We can convince
ourselves that we are upstanding of our own self-will. Merit-worthy behavior; accolades;
possessions.

We have this tiny, dark inkling. A suspicion that goes all the way back to Eden; when we first decided that we weren't enough as God made us. That maybe we aren't worthy of love. That maybe, if someone were to know the down deep "us," they would leave. Or turn away. We could be found out – the real us.

Want to know the best news ever? God knows us. Already.

As terrifying as it is to be known fully, completely, in all our imperfections and our secrets and our dark places... we are already known. Absolutely, completely. Recognizing this, not running from it, is the path to wholeness.

We can stop denying our faults. We can let them bubble up to the surface, get a few rays of sunlight splashed onto them. Their power diminishes as our faults and our sinful corners transform from a humiliated hushed whisper to an emboldened, humble pronouncement from the rooftop.

Our insidious fears that keep us isolated from God are not just personal. We all have individual hurdles and obstacles that keep us from the sunlight of God's grace. But we have systemic ones, too. Blind spots and denial that we think protect us. But really, they cause us to miss the full picture of who we are and who we can become.

Be still and know. Do not be afraid.

Your keeper, the one who knows the hairs on your head and the wrinkles on your forehead and the shameful crevices you hide – that keeper, your keeper, has promised to keep you.

In your spiritual immaturity, God watches over you with fresh patience every day.
As you experience pain and loss and anger and frustration, God watches over you.
As you emerge from the murkiness of self-pity or arrogance, God watches over you.
As you blossom and flourish, God watches over you.
As you step back into the mud, off the path of grace and mercy, God watches over you.

God keeps you. Neither death or life, angels or presidents, current events or days to come... There is no height or depth. There is nothing in all the universe that will separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God knows every single one of your secrets. God knows every single one of your hair follicles. And God keeps you. From your first breath to your last -- all the glories and the failures in between. God is watching over you, rooting for you, cheering you on as you dare to leave the prison of insecurities by the wayside. To emerge into the daylight, eyes open and arms outstretched ready to love the world.