

Worship Service

BY EMILY R. BRINK

GATHERING

Prelude

Gathering¹

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Call to Worship: based on Psalm 118

Let those who fear the LORD say,
 "Our God's steadfast love endures forever."
Out of my distress I called out,
 the LORD answered me and set me free.
**The LORD is my strength
and my song and my salvation.**
I shall not die but I shall live
 and recount the deeds of the LORD.
Our God's steadfast love endures forever.

**This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Greetings and Welcome

God greets us with these words from the prophet Isaiah:

I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 42:6-8

Welcome to all who have come to join us in worship today. Whether you are a life-long member or first-time visitor, we pray that that you will know the love of God in this service.

Our focus today is on Jesus' call to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. That command extends to those whom, we might think, are not deserving of our love, even those in prison. Let us sing our great Redeemer's praise.

Hymn of Praise²

"Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing!" (verses 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8)

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me.

He speaks, and, listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your Savior come,
and leap, ye lame, for joy.

Glory to God, and praise and love
be ever, ever given,
by saints below and saints above,
the church in earth and heaven.

Charles Wesley (1739)

Tune: AZMON

Prayer of Adoration

Loving God,
we thank and praise you for calling us your children,
for taking us by the hand and protecting us,
showing mercy to the poor, to those in prison,
and to all in need of your love.

Accept our praises,
hear our prayers,
and equip us for service in the world you love.

We offer you now our hands and our hearts,
all that we are,
that you may receive all the glory,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Call to Confession³

“God Gave Us Hands”

When God made us humankind, God gave us hands.

God gave us hands to build, *but we learned how to damage.*

God gave us hands to stroke, *but we learned how to hurt.*

God gave us hands to help, *but we learned how to wound.*

God gave us hands to give, *but we learned how to steal.*

God gave us hands to invite, *but we learned how to reject.*

God gave us hands to care, *but we learned how to be indifferent.*

God gave us hands to protect, *but we learned to kill.*

God gave us hands to pray, *but we learned to curse.*

For this, God sent someone whose hands
build,
stroke,
help,
give,
invite,
care,
protect,
and bless.

But the rest of the hands nailed him to the cross –
Pilate's hands,
powerful hands,
religious hands,
betrayers' hands,
our hands,
my hands.

Silent Reflection

Prayer of Confession

All are invited to open their hands as we pray.

Merciful God,
We come before you with open hands, dirty hands.
For the times we have caused hurt,
for the times we have rejected others,
for the times we have cursed in our hearts,
for the times we have condemned others,
forgive us we pray.
Wash us clean, so that we may learn to be your loving people.
Thank you for holding us and the whole world in your hands.
We pray in the name of Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord. **Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear this good news:

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16-17

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Song of Praise

"I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me"

I'm so glad Jesus lifted me,
I'm so glad Jesus lifted me,
I'm so glad Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah,
Jesus lifted me.

Satan had me bound; Jesus lifted me,
Satan had me bound; Jesus lifted me,
Satan had me bound; Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah!
Jesus lifted me.

When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah!
Jesus lifted me.

African-American spiritual

Tune: I'M SO GLAD



PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

Prayer for Illumination

God, our Rock and our great Redeemer,
by your Holy Spirit open our minds
and lead us into your truth,
for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 23:1-9

You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness. You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.

When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.

When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free.

You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Psalms 146

"Praise the Lord! Sing Hallelujah!"

Praise the Lord! Sing Hallelujah! Come, our great Redeemer praise.

I will sing the glorious praises of my God through all my days.

Put no confidence in princes, nor on human help depend.

They shall die, to dust returning; all their thoughts and plans shall end.

Happy is the one who chooses Jacob's God to be his aid.

They are blest whose hope of blessing on the LORD their God is stayed.

Heaven and earth the LORD created, seas and all that they contain.

He delivers from oppression; righteousness he will maintain.

Food he daily gives the hungry, sets the mourning prisoner free,
raises those bowed down with anguish, makes the sightless eyes to see.
God our Savior loves the righteous, and the stranger he befriends,
helps the orphan and the widow, judgment on the wicked sends.

Praise the Lord! Sing hallelujah! Come, our great Redeemer praise.
I will sing the glorious praises of my God through all my days.
Over all God reigns forever; through all ages he is King.
Unto him, your God, O Zion, joyful hallelujahs sing.

Psalm 146, versified in *The Psalter* (1887), alt.
Tune: RIPLEY⁴

New Testament Reading: Luke 10:25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Sermon

**RESPONSE***Hymn of Response*

“When Asked, Who Is My Neighbor?”

When asked, Who is my neighbor? We hear the Savior say:
the one in need of mercy, both near and far away.
O Christ, still come in mercy to everyone in need,
your Spirit working through us, your love in word and deed.

Some live this day with anger at wickedness displayed.
Some live this day with grieving that justice is delayed.
O God of every neighbor, on both sides of the walls
that shield us from each other, bring justice to their cause.

Some rue the day that brought them to live with deep regret,
some cannot shake their sorrow, some struggle to repent.
O God of love and mercy, we long for your embrace.
You offer us forgiveness; help us receive your grace.

Corruption in high places, those choosing not to see
the violence of power, effects of poverty –
O God, see our frustration; rise up and stop the wrongs
of neighbor against neighbor to whom our love belongs.

Remember now your promise to come again in might
to take away all sorrow, to set all things aright.
O God, show us your glory; turn evil into good
until your love and justice reach every neighborhood.

Emily R. Brink (2012)

Suggested Tunes: MERLE’S TUNE or MUNICH

(pp. 41-43 of this volume)

*Testimony*⁵

Prayers of the People

Loving God, we praise and thank you for the love and mercy you have shown each of us in Jesus Christ. You have fed us with your Word, and challenged us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We thank you for the testimony we have heard, and for the testimonies we could all offer of times when people reached out a helping hand to restore us to a right path and to provide care when we were in need.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, all of us have been in need of mercy, sometimes when we did not even know it. Sometimes we think we are just fine on our own—when we are young and strong, or in good health, or with good employment, and especially when we have good models to lead and guide us according to your Word. For these good gifts we give you thanks. But we acknowledge that these are gifts that not all have. Many have learned the hard way how dependent we are on you and on our neighbors. We pray for all those who have recently and suddenly lost the security they have been used to.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we also intercede for all those who need fresh assurances of your love and mercy. We pray for the sick and sorrowing, the lonely and those who are far from their loved ones. From our own community of faith we pray for your compassion on [*names from the congregation*]. May they know your love through our love shown to them.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of justice, we remember before you all prisoners and those who care for them, that they may see in each other your image. We especially pray for prisoners who have been unjustly accused. May those in positions to review evidence seek justice for all, so that your will be done.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of the nations, we pray for all those persecuted because of their religious or political beliefs, or their ethnic identity. Protect them we pray. We also pray for leaders of the nations and communities of this world, that they know their authority comes from you. Move all, we plead, to seek peace with justice, not with violence, so that all your people may live in safety.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Incarnate God, we pray for all refugees displaced by conflicts and natural disasters – so many in so many places around the world. We also pray for those who sought to find work far from home, only to become victims of human trafficking and sex trafficking. Thank you for all who do the difficult work of seeking new homes of safety and shelter. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray all these things in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who was also a refugee, who was persecuted, who died that we might live, who rose to reign as the King of Kings, and who will come again to establish his reign of perfect peace. **Amen.**

Offering and Offertory

Doxology

“Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven” (verses 1, 2, 3, and 5)

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to his feet your tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.

Praise him for his grace and favor
to his people in distress;
praise him, still the same forever,
slow to chide and swift to bless.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Widely yet his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him,
you behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise with us the God of grace.

Henry Francis Lyte (1834)

Suggested Tunes: LAUDA ANIMA or LAUDA ANIMA (Andrews)

Blessing

Go now in peace to love and serve our God and each other.

May the grace of Christ, which daily renews us,
the love of God, which enables us to love our neighbors,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which unites us,
fill you with all peace. **Amen.**

Postlude

NOTES

1 An option is to sing this Scripture text as adapted by Edith McNeill in “The Steadfast Love of the Lord,” copyright © 1974, 1975, 1986, Celebration (CCLI #522161).

2 In the spirit of “a thousand tongues,” consider singing this hymn in several languages. Settings in English, French, and Spanish can be found in *Global Songs for Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2010).

3 The origin of this dramatized call to confession is unknown. I first saw it in an ecumenical service planned by African Christians; the leader of that service said he had received it from Hungarian Christians. For a dramatized performance of this call to confession and the following prayer of confession, see the closing service of the 2011 Calvin Symposium on Worship online at <http://vimeo.com/19672086> (beginning at 24:11). You will note that “hands” played a large part in the visual aspects of the service.

4 This text has been associated with RIPLEY since their pairing in *The Psalter* (1887). Alternate 87.87 D tunes like ABBOTTS LEIGH and HYFRYDOL provide options for organ preludes.

5 Invite one or more members of your congregation or community to give their testimony about how God provided a Good Samaritan for them. The testimony in the context of this service might involve a returning citizen (a term much to be preferred over “ex-offender”) or a prison chaplain.



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