
Worship Service

BY TODD L. LAKE

Quiet Reflection:

Chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues. There is no getting away from it: the old Christian rule is, "Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence." Now this is so difficult and so contrary to our instincts, that obviously either Christianity is wrong or our sexual instinct, as it is now, has gone wrong. One or the other. Of course, being a Christian, I think it is the instinct which has gone wrong.

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Prelude:

"Be Thou My Vision"
(verses 1, 2a, 4b, and 5)

Be thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art—
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my Wisdom, and thou my true Word,
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
high King of heaven, my Treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

*Call to Worship:*¹

My soul's desire is to see the face of God, and to rest in his house.
My soul's desire is to study the Scriptures,
and to learn the ways of God.
My soul's desire is to be freed from all fear and sadness,
and to share Christ's risen life.
My soul's desire is to imitate my King, and to sing his praises always.
My soul's desire is to enter the gates of heaven,
and to gaze upon the light that shines forever.
Dear Lord, you alone know what my soul truly desires,
and you alone can satisfy those desires. Amen.

Hymn:

(George Matheson wrote the text of the hymn, "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go," on the day of his sister's marriage. He was undergoing, by his own admission, "the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering." It turns out that twenty years earlier, he had been engaged to be married. But his fiancée broke the engagement when she learned that he was going completely blind.)

"O Love That Will Not Let Me Go"

O Love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.

O Light that followest all my way, I yield my flickering torch to thee;
my heart restores its borrowed ray, that in thy sunshine's blaze its day
may brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain
that morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be.

The Old Testament Reading: Genesis 2:18-25

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:1-8

Prayer of Confession (from Psalm 51):

(A Psalm of David,
when the prophet Nathan came to him,
after he had gone in to Bathsheba.)

O God,
I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
And done what is evil in your sight,
So that you are justified in your sentence and blameless
When you pass judgment.

Assurance of Pardon (from John 8:7-11):

Listen to the words of Jesus: "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.... Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you. Go your way and from now on do not sin again."

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer:

People may stand and offer their sentence prayers and words of praise to God. We will close by reciting the Lord's Prayer together.

Hymn:

"Sacred the Body"

Sacred the body God has created,
temple of Spirit that dwells deep inside.
Cherish each person; nurture creation.
Treat flesh as holy, that love may abide.

Bodies are varied, made in all sizes,
pale, full of color, both fragile and strong.
Holy the difference, gift of the Maker,
so let us honor each story and song.

Love respects persons, bodies and boundaries.
Love does not batter, neglect, or abuse.
Love touches gently, never coercing.
Love leaves the other with power to choose.

Holy of holies, God ever loving,
make us your temples; indwell all we do.
May we be careful, tender and caring,
so may our bodies give honor to you.

Ruth Duck (text with tune pp. 56-57 this volume)

The Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:27-32

Sermon:

“Sex and the City (of God)”

Hymn:

“O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus”

O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me!
Underneath me, all around me, is the current of thy love—
leading onward, leading homeward to thy glorious rest above!

O the deep, deep love of Jesus—spread his praise from shore to shore!
He who loves us, ever loves us, changes never, nevermore!
How he watches o’er his loved ones, died to call them all his own;
how for them he’s interceding, watching o’er them from the throne!

O the deep, deep love of Jesus, love of every love the best!
’Tis an ocean vast of blessing, ’tis a haven sweet of rest!
O the deep, deep love of Jesus—’tis a heaven of heavens to me;
and it lifts me up to glory, for it lifts me up to thee!

Responsive Prayer of Commitment:

Leader:

We gather as women and men, single and married, to affirm that we are not our own, for we have been bought with a price that we might glorify God in our bodies. We have received, as members of Christ's body, the gifts of both singleness and marriage.

People:

Lord, teach us to talk openly and pray often about the challenges and rewards of married and single life.

We pray for all who are single, that they might take full advantage of serving Christ with undivided loyalty.

Grant them the grace, in the midst of a faithless world, to be faithful in mind and body to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, grant those who are married the willingness to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Help them strive for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Knit their hearts together in love.

Grant them the grace, in the midst of a faithless world, to be faithful in mind and body to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for those who are struggling against sexual temptation and desire chastity, that we might welcome them as sisters and brothers in Christ.

Grant them the grace, in the midst of a faithless world, to be faithful in mind and body to our Lord Jesus Christ.

All:

May we, as a family of faith and the household of God, learn to strengthen marriages, celebrate fidelity in singleness, and strive together to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to you.

For we ask it in the name of your Son our Lord, who both celebrated the wedding at Cana and lived in singleness during his time on earth. Amen.

*Offering**Doxology**Dramatic Reading:*²

“Laying Siege to Love,” Hadewijch (13th Century)

He who wishes to become Love performs excellent works,
For nothing can make him give way;
He is unconquered, and equal in strength
To the task of winning the love of Love,
Whether he serves the sick or the well,
The blind, the crippled or the wounded—
He will accept this as his debt to Love.

To serve strangers, to give to the poor,
To comfort the sorrowful as best he can,
To live in the faithful service of God’s friends—
Saints or men on earth—night and day,
With all his might, beyond possibility—
If he thinks his strength will fail,
Let him trust henceforth in reliance on Love.

By valiant confidence in Love
We attain all that is needful for us:
Love gives counsel to the sorrowing.
And comforts those who are sorrowing.
If anyone places his reliance in Love alone
And wishes to trust no other,
That is a sign that he contents Love.* [*pleases, makes Love content]

He who wishes to serve Love alone,
With all his heart and all his powers,
Has wisely laid out the whole siege,
So that he may wholly capture Love.

Invitation

Hymn:

“My Jesus, I Love Thee”

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine,
for thee all the follies of sin I resign;
my gracious Redeemer, my Savior art thou;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love thee because thou hast first loved me,
and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;
I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow:
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus 'tis now.

*Choral Benediction:*³

“And Can It Be”

Amazing love! how can it be
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

*Postlude***NOTES**

1 Robert van de Weyer, *Celtic Prayers*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 37. Used with permission of Hunt and Thorpe/Thorpe Publishing.

2 “Laying Siege to Love,” from *Hadewijch*, trans. by Mother Columba Hart, Copyright © 1980 by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York. Used with permission of Paulist Press, www.paulistpress.com.

3 “And Can it Be?” (SATB with keyboard), Campbell-Whitworth, published by Carl Fischer, Inc., SG 141.



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