

Worship for January 24, 2021

The beautiful flowers in our sanctuary this Sunday are in memory of our parents, Lee and Margaret McKee, by Elizabeth Bolick, Joy Hilton, and Don and Phyllis Monteith.

Call to Worship – Psalm 100

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing! Know that the Lord, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name! For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.”

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we come to You in praise and prayer this morning, expecting to feel Your Holy Spirit soften our hearts, engage our minds and lead us to do Your will and work in the world. Be with us, Heavenly Father, so we might see the light of Christ’s love in and through our worship of You. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Call to Confession

First John teaches us that, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But that if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In humility and faith, let us offer up to Almighty God our prayer of confession.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we’ve become too friendly with the world. We’ve allowed right and wrong, good and evil to be determined by others instead of by Your Holy Word. Wandering through life like sheep without a shepherd, we’ve become accustomed to the comforts of society rather than disciplining ourselves according to Your Will and your Way. Forgive us, Heavenly Father. Restore us again to the joy of Your salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit...*a few moments for personal confession of sin*...Amen.

Declaration of Pardon

Brothers and sisters in Christ, hear the good news! Through His life, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has restored us fully in our relationship with God the Father. Friends, believe the Good News of the Gospel, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Amen.

Music

Prayer for Illumination

Father God, we pray that as we draw near to Your Word that You would open our ears to hear. Be a lamp unto our feet, guiding us more and more to Jesus. Use this reading and proclamation of Your Word to move us, change us and send us out into the world to declare Your everlasting protection and love. Amen.

Old Testament Reading – *Proverbs 19:11*

“A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.”

New Testament Reading – *Romans 12:14-21*

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Sermon – ***“When Resentment Strikes”***

With as many stupid things as I’ve said at the wrong time to the wrong people, it’s a wonder to me that I’ve only been in one real fight in my entire life. It was my 9th grade year and I’d gotten under the skin of one of my middle school friends at the Homecoming Dance. I can hardly remember what set us off but our ill-feeling simmered throughout the weekend. Monday morning came and, with it, first period Algebra with Ms. Cox. Getting there early, I took my assigned seat knowing that, soon, my nemesis, Brett, would come to his desk, which, as fate would have it, was exactly behind mine.

You can probably imagine what happened from there, right? Brett comes in, says something snide, I return the favor. The next thing I recall we’re both standing up facing one another. I’m fairly certain that Brett threw the first punch, but I honestly don’t remember. I do remember the other students pushing all the desks away from us, into a kind of make-shift circle.

Thank goodness for two things. First, that neither Brett nor I had any real idea how to fist fight. We both threw looping, overhand punches that, even when they landed, did little harm. The second blessing that morning was that Ms. Cox, normally a late arriver to her first period class, surprised everyone by being seven minutes early. Her shrill cry, “Stop that NOW!” jarred both Brett and I away from the fisticuffs, turning respectfully towards her.

Of course, we were sent to the office, both seething mad at each other. The handler of such matters, no kidding, was a man named Mr. Justice. He told us we’d both serve detention that day. Now I don’t know if it was pre-planned or not, but the detention proctor selected Brett

and I to clean the campus of litter for the remainder of the hour. It was during that time that Brett and I mended our fences, agreed not to continue the hostilities. Although we were never as close as we'd been in middle school afterwards, we had no problems with each other and, on occasions, even went to movies together with a larger group.

Perhaps it was that brief flash of anger, that fight, which relieved us of our pent-up emotions. I can't speak for Brett, but after returning home from the high school dance, I thought about little else but him. What I should've said, what I could've done. Safe to say, in that interaction at the Homecoming Dance, I'd developed a pretty severe resentment towards him.

But, like I said, the physical exertion of the fight and the reconciliation which ensued was just the kind of relief needed. Please, however, don't get me wrong, I am NOT suggesting that the most expeditious means to resolve a resentment is a brief bout in the ring. Quite far from it. I do, however, believe, that resentments are poisonous stuff, to be sure and require our active and immediate attention.

Friends, I confess it before you – I may have only been in one actual fight, but I've had as many resentments as there are silly videos on Tik-Tok.

“Resentment is often defined as anger and indignation experienced as a result of unfair treatment, and it's a relatively common emotion. Those who experience resentment may have feelings of annoyance and shame—they might also harbor a desire for revenge.”

Sound familiar?

So, my guess is we all have one or two festering in our minds at this very moment. Perhaps it's annoyance at an acquaintance for not inviting you to their party. Maybe a resentment arrived at your door when that idiot cut you off needlessly in traffic. It could be the case that your resentments are much more significant, an ex-spouse, a boss that fired you. Who knows? It could be anything under the sun to be honest about it. In my experience, I've heard people confess resenting all number of things – people, of course, but also institutions, companies, even God Himself. If that sounds like you and you're willing to admit it within the confines of your heart – well, welcome to being a member of the human race.

In some regard, it's just our nature being fallen creatures. Somehow, in our brokenness and in our pride, we're like little Roombas of resentment. We scurry along the contours of our life collecting resentments like crumbs of Doritos and abandoned pieces of string.

But resentments, I'm convinced, can be dangerous things, left unchecked. They have the tendency to keep us up at night. They're the kind of thing that creates separation between friends, spouses and relatives. Resentments are all emotion without any real action. As such, they build up like black tarry goo on our souls.

Christian author Fredrick Buchner puts it this way – “To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are

giving back is, in many ways, a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is none other than you!”

Christian apologist Lee Strobel adds, “Acrid bitterness inevitably seeps into the lives of people who harbor grudges and suppress anger, and bitterness is always a poison. It keeps your pain alive instead of letting you deal with it and get beyond it. Bitterness sentences you to relive the hurt over and over.”

Yes, resentments can snatch the joy from our lives, quicker than Swiper the Fox from Dora the Explorer. But what do we do about them? Better still, how can we live mostly free of them?

Thankfully, the Bible offers us a great many insights into doing just this thing.

I read to you now from Romans 12:14-21: *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

Powerful stuff, eh?

Sometimes even I forget that while the Bible does devote many chapters and verses to describing the glory of God or the nature of our forgiveness and all sorts of other theological topics, it is also an infinitely practical book. Within the pages of the Word, we find not only good advice, but Godly advice. Our Father’s guidance on how to live as a Christian within this fallen world.

And the wisdom isn’t just shared in propositional form, like it is within our reading today. So, too does it show up, Old Testament and New, within narrative sections as well.

To that end, I want to introduce you to an Old Testament person, named Shimei. Shimei lived during the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon. Shimei was a vassal, for lack of better words, of the First King of Israel, Saul. Now, for those of you who aren’t quite familiar with that time, let me quickly bring you up to speed.

Saul, anointed by the prophet Samuel, is God’s chosen to be the King. Unfortunately, Saul doesn’t quite hold up his end of the bargain. He does some things contrary to God’s wishes. As a result, he’s deposed. In his place, God places by the youngest son of a sheep herder. David.

We all know about David, right. Slays the Philistine giant, Goliath with just a sling and some stones. Well, he’s declared to be the King. He’s anointed with oil. And, after a lengthy fight with Saul, David assumes the throne, so to speak. Unfortunately for Shimei, he stood on the other side. In other words, his side lost.

Well, we all know what that's like, right? Nobody likes to lose, especially when there are real stakes on the board. But, hey, losing is a part of life so best lick your wounds and move on. Unless, of course, you get one of those nasty things we've been talking about...a resentment.

And boy, does Shimei get one. And, pretty soon, it leads him to make a really bad mistake. I read to you now from the 16th chapter of 2nd Samuel, verses 5 through 8: *"When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually. And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And Shimei said as he cursed, 'Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! The Lord has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood.'"*

Wow, not a terribly bright thing to do. Curse the king.

But we've all been there, haven't we? No, not cursing a king, but hanging onto a resentment so long that, despite our best thinking, it leaps from our minds into terrible action. Sometimes, if we're honest, they come out "sideways" as an old friend of mine used to say. By that he meant that when we're holding onto resentments, we're bound to end up hurting others. Oftentimes our anger spills out onto whomever is closest to us at the time.

Make no mistake about it, Shimei's made a horrific mistake. Keep in mind, this is the King, the man who holds life and death in his hands.

Another man in the room while Shimei is hurling invectives at David feels precisely that way. Abishai the son of Zariah, tells David essentially, "let me go over and deal with this lout." And, by deal with, he means kill.

But David lets the curses and the insults and the stones, presumably, roll off him like water off a RainX coated windshield. Let's listen and hear David's response: *"Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done to me, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing today."*

David, a righteous man, declared King by none other than God Himself, says, essentially, and I'm translating the Hebrew here as best I'm able, "Eh? No biggie."

David is at ease even though a man has insulted him and done injustice to his royal self. It's the kind of thing we can imagine that David would stew over at night, returning time and time again to the slight. But you know what, he doesn't?

We know that because, later in the narrative, Shimei returns to David. He's had a change of heart, at least in theory.

Shimei says this – *"Let not my lord hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. Do not let the king take it to heart. For your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore, behold, I have come this day, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king."*

Now, if David had harbored a resentment, now would be the time to let that anger fly. But, again, he doesn't. David, once again with voices in the crowd calling for Shimei's head, declares him forgiven. "He shall not die today." That's what David, the righteous man says.

So, how did he do this. Was it just because David was righteous that he was able to let this clear affront go? Maybe. But, while David was indeed a righteous man, he, too had a few skeletons in his closet, didn't he?

You see, earlier in the Bible, David came out upon his tower and saw the most beautiful woman in the world. For those of you familiar with the Godfather movie, it was like that thunderbolt that hits Michael Corleone in Italy as he sees his future wife for the first time.

Unfortunately for everyone involved, she's already married. He sleeps with her, nevertheless. Bad, right? Just getting started David is. Learning that her husband in his army, he commands his chief general to put her husband in the vanguard as his forces attack a town. If you've seen enough movies, you know what happens to the first attackers, right? The man dies and, one might reasonably assume, at David's direct command.

Later, that prophet Nathan, comes and confronts David. Tells him a story and then flips it on him. "You are the man," he says and not in a beer commercial way. Rather, Nathaniel is declaring David to be a sinner. One who has rejected the commands of God.

Given this jarring declaration, David repents of his sin.

And in that repentance, David learns a little something about himself. Despite being King, despite being a righteous man, David learned...his stuff stank, too. That is to say that David had a clear understanding of himself as imperfect, flawed, prone to make bad, awful, horrible, terrible decisions.

That's where he found the font of forgiveness. That's where we are able to let bygones be bygones. Knowing himself to be fallen is precisely where I believe David learns to be free of resentments.

You see, the first step in avoiding resentments is acknowledging ourselves as sinners. Not a one of us in this room or watching online is perfect. It just isn't going to happen. But when resentment strikes, perhaps the quickest way around it is to remember Jesus' wisdom from the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7 we read, *"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."*

In addition, here are lots of Scriptures which point us towards the realization that holding on to resentments isn't a good idea.

Proverbs 19:11 – *"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense."*

Sometimes though, when a resentment is lodged deep down within us, encrusted perhaps by years and years of rolling it over in our minds like hotdogs at a convenience store, mere acknowledgement of our own shortcomings isn't sufficient medicine. Thankfully, there are other remedies.

One of the most vital tools we can bring to bear against our resentments is the power of prayer.

When we lie awake in our beds at night, burning with the familiar sensation of a resentment, we can ask God in prayer to remove it from us. **Psalm 4:4** – *“Tremble and do not sin when you are in your beds, search your heart AND BE SILENT.”*

That is to say that we can turn it over to God. Humbly asking him to relieve our resentment.

But, even then, sometimes that resentment will rear its ugly head in the morning. That's when it's time to talk, to God, for sure but also to another human being. The person we talk to isn't really that significant.

I once heard it said that a burden shared is a burdened lessened. That's been my experience, for sure. Many have been the occasions when I've called a friend and “vented.” Sometimes, my friends just listen, other times, they've helped me see my part in the problem. Regardless, there is something vital that happens when we let go of the things in our hearts which trouble us, sharing them with others. In so doing, we draw closer to people because we're being real, not just the image we put up to make it look like we're quote-unquote “fine.”

Finally, take action. WE DO NOT stew.

And, again this makes sense, Scripturally.

Philippians 2:4 – *“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

Proverbs 11:25 says, *“Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”*

After we've prayed, after we've talked to someone else about it, not only will our resentment be relieved, so too will be “watered by God.” In that Holy watering, our restlessness, irritability and discontentedness will be transformed. Changed by the power of the Holy Spirit into peace, joy and love.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, to You alone are due all honor, praise and glory. By the might Your irrepressible Word, You planted this masterpiece of creation upon which our lives are rooted provisioning us with everything we'd ever need, You set-in motion this thing we call life.

As we set about the work of destroying them through our sin, You set about the work of redeeming them through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

By the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, that work continues in and through us. Heavenly Father, we give You thanks for our many blessings just as we joyfully serve You. Mold us yet again, we pray, as instruments of the harvest, fully invested in the work of making disciples with our blood, sweat and tears.

Today, O Lord, many of our hearts are heavy, laden with the worries of the world. Our health, or the health of our loved ones, falters our anxieties proliferate in the era of COVID-19 and our souls ache with the sadness of separation from loved ones. Be with us all, Healing God. Take away our fears, restore our bodies, and the bodies of our loved ones to full and robust health. Remind us all, yet again, of Your power, Your grace and Your everlasting love.

We pray this morning especially for...Steve Gilmore in CMC-Mercy from a fall; Lucille Savelle undergoing tests/awaiting results; Jill Griffin who is now home but still having trouble with last back surgery; Jack McClure who is having surgery on Feb. 10; and all the others listed on our "Prayer Concerns" list.

We make these prayers to You in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray in this fashion...

The Lord's Prayer. Amen.

Offertory Reminder

******If it is possible, we'd like to encourage you to maintain your financial stewardship to our church, especially as we're forced to meet primarily online.*** You can drop a check in the mail to us, put a check in the mail slot in the back door to the church office, use online banking through your personal bank, or use our QR code...to do so, contact Ginger Thompson, our Treasurer, at 704/562-7558 for instructions.

Charge

Know that you live an eternal life in Jesus Christ. Fear not the things of this world. Help others. Share the Gospel!

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Postlude
