

WORSHIP KIT - April 3, 2022

PRELUDE “Holy, Holy (Lord God Almighty)” Owens and Nicea

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, our redeemer, in our weakness we have failed to be your messengers of forgiveness and hope. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, that we may follow your commands and proclaim your reign of love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL INTROIT**

“Spirit of the Living God” TWC 297

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

LEADER: We hear God calling us in a far and distant voice.

ALL: God offers hope when we have lost our way.

LEADER: Our souls wait for the refreshment God offers.

ALL: Christ comes among us to light our way and unbinds us that we may see and believe.

***OPENING HYMN** “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty” TWC 2

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

To set the mind on the flesh is death. Focused only on our own interests, we cannot see God. The law of God is foreign to us, and we are hostile to its demands. Come now to the promise of life as we confess our sin.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Out of the depths we cry to you, God. Hear our prayers, the confession of our neglect, the admission of our desire to rule in your place. Like the House of Israel in Ezekiel's time, we are cut off from communion with you. We are like dead people, going through the motions of living. We cry out for forgiveness and a new start. We long to know you and to live in reverence before you. By your steadfast love, redeem us from our iniquities and raise us up to serve you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

***SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Pause)**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Jesus says to us, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see that glory of God?" Arise, in faith and trust, knowing that God will give life to our mortal bodies through the spirit who dwells in and among us. We are not slaves to the flesh. God has made us to be instruments of self-giving love, who find life by giving it away. As God has invested in us, we are free to invest ourselves in ministry to others. Praise God!

***GLORIA PATRI**

TWC 805

1st SCRIPTURE READING

Philippians 2: 1-11

SOLO

“If My People Will Pray”

Jimmy Owens

Vocalist: Philip Aley

2nd SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 18: 1-5

SERMON

“A LITTLE HUMILITY”

Jim Gilchrist

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ... (Philippians 2:3-5).

Not long after we moved to Carlisle, I got a phone call from a man I didn't know. He said, "Jim, do you like to play squash?" I said I'd played racquetball but never squash. "Would you like to learn?" he asked. I said, "Sure," and that was the beginning of a good friendship.

I was pretty athletic in my day. When I was 12, I was on a baseball team that went to the Bronco League World Series, and my college volleyball and touch football teams won our university's championships. Now I was in my forties, and I thought, "This old guy will teach me a game I've wanted to play, and I'll just take it easy on him."

The man who called was Joe, one of nine retired ministers who attended Second Presbyterian Church, where I was the new senior pastor. The first day on the court at Dickinson College, Joe positioned himself near the center and effortlessly hit the ball wherever I was not. The faster I moved and the harder I lunged, the more he sent the ball someplace else. I was running all over the court, while all that was moving on Joe were his wrist and his smile. He never broke a sweat.

This went on for months, with my scoring a few points and Joe's winning every game by a wide margin. One day I finally asked him, "How old are you anyway?" He thought for a moment and said, "Well, I guess I'll be 84 on my next birthday."

More months went by, and I gradually improved, until one night my wife and I were playing bridge with a couple of women from the church and Gwenn asked, "How was your game today?" Wanting to impress the women around the table, I said rather proudly, "I beat him!" Lois, who was on the committee that called me to the church, looked up from her cards and said, "Yeah, but the guy is 95 years old." I answered indignantly, "He is not 95, he's only 85!" As the words came out of my mouth I thought, "That's the most pathetic self-defense I've ever heard."

I've had lots of opportunities in my life to think about pride and its opposite, humility. One of my favorite scriptures is Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." I'm so familiar with that proverb because the reminder has come so often.

"Pride" is a funny word. It means some things that are good and other things that are not so good. My dictionary defines pride, first, as "a sense of one's own proper dignity or value; self-respect," and "pleasure or satisfaction taken in an achievement." Those are good things, and we all value them. But the dictionary also defines pride as "arrogant or disdainful conduct or treatment; haughtiness," and "an excessively high opinion of oneself; conceit."

How is it that the same word can mean both good things and bad? Like so many other aspects of life, it has to do with finding a middle ground between extremes. Psychologists would say that a lack of self-respect, or letting others walk all over you, is unhealthy; but on the other hand, so are arrogance and conceit and an unwillingness to listen to anybody else. We all know people who are often in error but never in doubt.

Christianity teaches that we humans are made in the image of God, and our self-worth comes ultimately from our being known and loved by God. At the same time, pride in the negative sense has always been one of the deadly sins in Christianity. In fact, it's the first and worst of the deadly sins because, if I am the center of my life and everything revolves around me, then nothing else can be at the center – not even God.

Everyone knows that it's bad to be arrogant or conceited, but part of what makes this negative pride so deadly is the way it hides behind other things. Pride has a whole closet full of disguises, so that those who are most full of vanity and self-righteousness hardly ever know it.

The opposite of pride, and its antidote, is humility. Humility has a bad reputation in some circles. Some people think it means being weak, or not being assertive enough. But that's wrong. Humility is in fact a sign of

strength. It's strong enough not to need all the blustery pretensions of pride. Only insecure people have to go around telling others how great they are. If we know we belong to the almighty God who loves us, why do we need to puff ourselves up? If we trust in God's goodness, why should we have to brag about our own?

Humility is not false modesty. Someone has said that humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's just thinking of yourself less. C. S. Lewis said that truly humble people take the same delight in someone else's accomplishments as they take in their own, because they care more about the achievement than about whose achievement it is. In fact, my dictionary defines humility as a kind of freedom: freedom from pride or arrogance. Think how liberating it is, not to have to put on a show all the time, pretending to be greater or better than we really are. Humility involves a certain wariness about our own claims to knowledge or wisdom or virtue. It's a readiness to listen to others, even if they see things differently, on the chance that they might know something we don't know.

Walter Hooper was C. S. Lewis's secretary for the last year of his life, and he gave a talk at the Yale Divinity School while I was there in the 1970s. Hooper was a young American in awe of Lewis when he went to work for him in England, and one day he asked his hero what it was like to be the greatest living apologist for the Christian faith. Lewis, who was ordinarily a rather jovial man, suddenly became very stern and said, "There are some things one can never be too careful not to think about." The fact is, Lewis probably *was* the greatest defender of the faith in his day. But precisely because he had drawn so deeply from the wells of Christianity, he knew that nothing good could come from thinking too highly of himself. The pitfalls of pride were too familiar, and all too treacherous for the soul.

In recent months we've had the Winter Olympics in China and the Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Besides the dazzling displays of ability, some of the most compelling parts of the games are stories about the athletes themselves. Last summer Simone Biles, probably the greatest gymnast of all time, gave up her place in some events because she wasn't in the right frame of mind, and she wanted to cheer on the girls who might win if she did not compete. At the same time, former swimming star Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian ever, appeared in ads encouraging people to seek help for depression and other emotional conditions, because he himself has struggled with such things. And Krista Tippett interviewed Abby Wambach, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and Women's World Cup soccer star, who praised a Canadian for breaking her career high scoring record. Wambach said she was glad somebody came along to break her record, because it meant that other girls and women were rising to meet new challenges.

Olympians are among the most capable and competitive people on the planet, but sometimes they show a kind of humility in celebrating the achievements of others, or using their unique combination of celebrity and vulnerability to help other people deal with their own challenges and struggles.

Last summer, I got a phone call one day, asking if I could fill in for a team that was a player short in the Northern Allegheny County Senior Softball League. For me, in my advanced stage of life, it was like being called up to the majors, so of course I said yes. As a twelve-year-old shortstop, I was a homerun leader, and I could throw runners out all over the field; but when I tried out for the league last spring, I could hardly hit the ball into the middle of the outfield, and what I threw out in the infield was mainly my shoulder. When I showed up that day to play old guy softball, I noticed that there were two first bases, side by side; and approaching home plate was another long white line, parallel to and a few feet away from the baseline. I asked what that was about, and some other players, all in their 60s and 70s, explained that these were to keep us from running into each other and thus to avoid disaster. At the end of the game, our team captain said a prayer, and the gist of it was to thank God that we all had a good time and no one had died.

A little humility is good for the soul, and it's good for the body, the mind, and society too. Humility is good for the body because it keeps us from doing dumb things that are likely to get us hurt. It's good for the mind because it can calm our relentless obsession with how we're doing, and whether we're good enough, and how our status might be rising or falling with the people around us or on social media.

Humility is good for society because it cuts through the arrogant self-righteousness that's so rampant these days – the kind that claims all virtue and goodness belong to whatever group we happen to be in, and all evil and foolishness come from some other group that we think is not like us. We have so many challenges to meet in our time – issues involving race and justice and the health and wellbeing of individuals and of our entire planet, for example – that we can't afford the paralyzing pride and tribalism that keep us from coming together to do the things that God would have us do. As the Old Testament prophet Micah reminds us, "God has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?"

And humility is good for the soul because, like every other good thing, it points beyond itself, all the way to God. Humility points us to Christ, who, though he was equal with God – the strongest, wisest, and best One of all – did not count that equality as something to be exploited; but instead, he emptied himself out and became like us, sacrificing himself on a cross to redeem our foolish, self-centered ways.

Such powerful humility is hard for some of us to grasp. Even the first disciples, who walked with Jesus and heard what he said and witnessed the wonderful things he did – even they could be clueless enough to ask which of them would be greatest in heaven. They were slow to catch on, as we are slow to catch on, to the fact that the status symbols of this world – winning trophies and medals, making lots of money, holding some powerful position or prestigious title – mean nothing at all from the perspective of heaven. What matters to Christ and his kingdom is the quality of our soul, what it loves and how it loves, because all these other things will pass away, and only the soul will last forever.

When we learn the strength of true humility, a marvelous thing begins to happen. God lives in us more richly, and uses us more fully, and we become happier, more productive, and yet more peaceful human beings, because a power so much greater than ourselves is at the center of our life. Then we start to discover the best of both worlds: the joy of knowing God here and now, and a taste of the world to come, where all the things that used to puff us up will just seem silly, and loving God and one another will be more than enough to make us glad.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (Unison) Nicene Creed**
(printed on the insert in the pew)

***HYMN "O God, Who Gives To Humankind" TWC 399**

COMMUNION SERVICE

THE THANKSGIVING

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord!

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"The Lord's Prayer"

TWC632

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

COMMUNION MUSIC

"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"

COMMUNION PRAYER

God, our help and strength, you have satisfied our hunger with this eucharistic food.

Strengthen our faith, that through the death and resurrection of your Son we may be led to salvation, for he is Lord now and forever. Amen.

CALL TO OFFERING

Merciful God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord. Especially we pray for the church of Jesus Christ in every land, the stewardship and healing of creation, friends and family members, neighbors in special need, the wisdom of your Spirit for this day, (Offer prayers for those on your heart). Eternal God, our beginning and our end,
be our starting point and our haven, and accompany us on each day's journey. Use our hands to do the work of your creation and use our lives to bring others to the new life you give to this world; in Jesus Christ, redeemer of all. Amen.

OFFERTORY MUSIC : "If My People Will Pray"

Jimmy Owens

***DOXOLOGY**

TWC 809

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Lift us up, O God, from the graves of our self-interest as we invest ourselves in sharing the good news with the world. Increase our gifts of time and treasure, that all who are drained of hope might have their minds set on the Spirit. May the Spirit raise them to new life as we celebrate the resurrection Jesus promised to Lazarus and to all who trust and follow where God leads. Amen.

***HYMN "Breathe On Me, Breath Of God"**

TWC 295

BENEDICTION

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:**

"God Be With You Till We Meet Again"

TWC 840

***POSTLUDE "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty" Nicaea**

***Please stand if you are able**