



God is still speaking

First Congregational Church, UCC
Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 17, 2020
Rev. Dr. Daniel Ling

Our Mission: Feeding the hungry in body, mind, and spirit
*“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome at First Congregational Church.”*

Welcome

It is a joy to connect with you today. You are here in spirit. God is Spirit. Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.

Statement of Oneness (*unison*)

We were made in the image of God; thus, as we grow in faith and mature in spirit, that image shall shine all the more clearly. Like Jesus, we are children of God; thus, as our birthright, we shall live all our days surrounded by unconditional love. Humanity, the Image of God, is beautiful in God’s sight, part of a magnificent creation; therefore, we are beautiful in God’s eyes.

The Scriptures declare that the entire Kingdom of God is within us. Also, we live our lives immersed in Divinity. We gather to celebrate that sacred and wondrous Truth.

Many hurtful and unjust things happen in our world, motivated by hatred or fear. Yet also there is love in our hearts. Let us declare that love, acknowledge it is of God, and promise to grow in love day by day. Amen

Call to Worship

Psalm 66 (The Message)

One: Take a good look at God's wonders, they'll take your breath away.

All: God converted sea to dry land; travelers crossed the river on foot. Now isn't that cause for a song?

One: Didn't he set us on the road to life? Didn't he keep us out of the ditch?

All: He trained us first, passed us like silver through refining fires.

One: Road-tested us inside and out, took us to hell and back; finally he brought us to this well-watered place.

All: All believers, let me tell you what God did for me. If I had been cozy with evil, the Lord would never have listened. Blessed be God: he didn't turn a deaf ear, he stayed with me, loyal in his love.

***Hymn #527**

For the Fruit of All Creation

For the Fruit of All Creation

1. For the fruit of all cre - a - tion, thanks be to God.
 2. In the just re - ward of la - bor, God's will is done.
 3. For the har - vests of the Spir - it, thanks be to God.

For these gifts to ev - ery na - tion, thanks be to God.
 In the help we give our neigh - bor, God's will is done.
 For the good we all in - her - it, thanks be to God.

For the plow - ing, sow - ing, reap - ing, si - lent growth while we are
 In our world - wide task of car - ing for the hun - gry and de -
 For the won - ders that as - tound us, for the truths that still con -

sleep - ing, fu - ture needs in earth's safe - keep - ing, thanks be to God.
 spair - ing, in the har - vests we are shar - ing, God's will is done.
 found us, most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.

WORDS: Fred Pratt Green, 1970

MUSIC: Traditional Welsh melody, *Musical Relicks of the Welsh Bards*, Dublin, 1784AR HYD Y NOS
84.84.888.4

Though published in the English *Methodist Recorder* only in 1970,
 by 1982 Fred Pratt Green's words had already appeared in fourteen
 hymnals around the world.

Words © 1970 Hope Publishing Co.

THANKSGIVING

Morning Prayer (*unison*)

Thank you, God for giving us the world and all that is in it for our benefit. Help us to see the beauty in our world and the evidence of your love for us. You took the cross, a sign of weakness and hate, and turned it into a

sign of hope and love. You took the empty tomb and transformed it from a place of death into a place of eternal life. As the source of love and beauty, teach us to be lovely and beautiful to all people. Amen

Scripture

1 Peter 3: 13-22 (The Message)

If with heart and soul you are doing good, do you think you can be stopped? even if you suffer for it, you're still better off. Don't give the opposition a second thought. Through thick and thin, keep your heart at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you are living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy. Keep a clear conscience before God so that when people throw mud at you, none of it will stick. They'll end up realizing that they are the ones who need a bath. It's better to suffer for doing good, if that's what God wants, than to be punished for doing bad. That's what Christ did definitively: suffered because of other's sins, the Righteous One for the unrighteous ones. He went through it all - was put to death and then made alive - to bring us to God.

He went and proclaimed God's salvation to earlier generations who ended up in the prison of judgment because they wouldn't listen. You know, even though God waited patiently all the days that Noah built his ship, only a few were saved then, eight to be exact - saved from the water by the water. The waters of baptism do that for you, not by washing away dirt from your skin but by presenting you through Jesus' resurrection before God with a clear conscience. Jesus has the last word on everything and everyone, from angels to armies. He is standing right alongside God, and what he says goes.

Scripture

John 14: 15-21 (The Message)

"If you love me, show it by doing what I have told you. I will talk to the Father, and he will provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can't take Him in because it doesn't have eyes to see Him, doesn't know what to look for. But you know Him already because He has been staying with you and will even be in you!

I will not leave you orphaned. I'm coming back. In just a little while the world will no longer see me, but you are going to see me because I am alive and you are about to come alive. At that moment you will know absolutely that I'm in my Father, and you are in me and I am in you.

The person who knows my commandments and keeps them, that's who loves me. And the person who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and make myself plain to him.

Judas (not Iscariot) said, "Master, why is it that you are about to make yourself plain to us but not to the world?"

Sermon

Gentle Answers with courtesy

Pastoral Prayer

***Hymn #368**

Blest Be the Tie That Binds

1. Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Chris - tian love;
 2. Be - fore God's gra - cious throne we pour our ar - dent prayers;
 3. We share each oth - er's woes, each oth - er's bur - dens 'bear,
 4. When we are called to part it gives us in - ward pain,

the fel - low-ship of kin - dred minds is like to that a - bove.
 our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our com - forts and our cares.
 and of - ten for each oth - er flows the sym - pa - thiz - ing tear.
 but we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet a - gain.

WORDS: John Fawcett, 1782, alt.
 MUSIC: J. G. Nägeli, 1828; arr. Lowell Mason, 1845

DENNIS
 SM

This text was written when 'ties that bind' convinced Fawcett that he should remain with the small Baptist congregation at Wainsgate, Yorkshire, England.

A New Commandment

A new com-mand-ment I give un - to you: that you love one an-oth-er as

I have loved you, that you love one an-oth-er as I have loved you.

WORDS: John 13:34
 MUSIC: Anonymous

NEW COMMANDMENT
 10 12.12

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the comfort and challenge of the Holy Spirit, be with each one of you, now and always. Go in peace and the God of peace go with you. Amen