

WORSHIP AT HOME

Deny Self | Take Up Your Cross | Follow Jesus

Devotions

Monday

Our devotion comes from Matthew 15: 3. Focusing only on Traditions, holidays, and vows turns worship into lip service. Jesus worships the Father with mercy, grace, and love. Those who repent practice both! Such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Wednesday

Our devotion comes from Matthew 15: 11. It is not what we take into our mouth, heart, and mind that defiles. It is the way we use it to judge, condemn, and sacrifice our neighbors. Such awareness opens the door to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Friday

Our devotion comes from Matthew 15: 19. An eye for an eye teaches us to do unto others as they have done unto us. Jesus says, Do unto others what you would have them do unto you, especially when they catch us in sin. Such is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.



Prelude

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh one. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.

Lighting the Candles

The World is darkened by Sin. Jesus says, you are the light of the World. Let the world see Christ in your darkness!

Special Music

Welcome

Through Christ God welcomes sinners. In Christ God clothes sinners in mercy, grace, and love. In the name of Christ, Welcome.



Opportunities to Worship

Beginning Sunday, March 21 we return to one in-person worship service at 11 am. Our Covid-19 Protocols remain in effect. We will continue our Facebook Live virtual worship and Worship at Home.

Sunday, March 28th we celebrate Palm Sunday.

Thursday, April 1st at 6 pm we will have a drop - in self guided experience of the Good News of Christ Jesus.

Sunday, April 4th we break our Lenten Fast to celebrate resurrected life. Our faith trust that Jesus' resurrection is greater than all our combined sin!

Thank you for your patience, frustration and opposition. Covid -19 is part of our daily lives. It has created much suffering and death. I give thanks for your patience, frustration, and opposition because the Holy Spirit uses it to invite us to be merciful as Christ is full of Mercy.

Prayer

Lord, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about (us) saying, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Holy Spirit, melt our hearts of shame, guilt, and blame. Mold our hearts in our Father's Love. Lord, Jesus, fill our hearts with your mercy, grace, and love. Use our lips to speak the Good News of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

The LOrd's Prayer



Reading Scripture: Matthew 15: 1-12

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, **2** "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

3 Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? **4** For God said, 'Honor your father and mother'[a] and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.'[b] **5** But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is 'devoted to God,' **6** they are not to 'honor their father or mother' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the

sake of your tradition. **7** You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8

“These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

9

They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.’[c]”

10 Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. **11** What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

12 Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”

Meditation

Do not take God’s name in vain. God revealed the power and authority of His name through Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered sin to reveal God’s merciful forgiveness. Jesus’s death reveals God’s Grace is greater than all our sin. Jesus rose from the dead to reveal God is Love and Love is Life. Why do we submit to human rules and call it worship of God?

Message: Keeping Up Appearances

Are we Pharisees, Teachers of the Law, or Disciples of Christ? If we dare to listen to our Elders we will find we are a hodgepodge. For example: Who are the “black and white” legalist among us? Who are the agents among us who lead us to unite in social action? Notice that both use shame, guilt, and blame to create the appearance of unity, conformity, and civility. Our agendas may be vastly different than those who confronted Jesus with keeping traditions. Our methods, however, haven’t changed. We are trained to keep up appearances. Jesus looks past our outward appearances to discern the health of the heart, soul, and mind.

Jesus was asked, “Why don’t your disciples wash their hands before they eat.” The hand washing spoken of has nothing to do with sanitation or health. It is a ritual intended to keep up appearances of being holy, pious, and righteous. We have been taught to keep up appearances.

Let’s briefly explore our traditions.

- We use water to cleanse our food and hands. This is a practice of sanitation.
- We use water for the ritual of baptism. An outward sign of an inward grace. Grace in our hearts and minds transforms what comes out of our mouths and actions.
- We use our judgement of right or wrong to cleanse our choices.
 - You shouldn’t allow your son or daughter to dress that way?
 - What will people think who see you drink alcohol, take drugs, tattoo, cut, pierce, look at porn, play video games, play cards, go to the movies, dance, or listen to rock and roll.
- Our Elders insist we keep up appearances by sanitizing our choices with right and good judgment.
- It is our tradition to shame, guilt, and blame those who don’t keep up appearances.

- Are we saved by grace through faith in Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection or keeping up appearances?

We love traditions like Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Birthdays. Easter is coming. The traditions of our Elders teach us to: wear our Sunday best; attend a church service; listen to the choir's Cantata; cover the cross with flowers; gather around the dining room table to break our Lenten Fast; leave the table in a carbohydrate/fat induced fog to play family feud.

When the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law realized that no amount of shame, guilt, or blame would make Jesus conform to the Traditions of the Elders they crucified him!

The next time we experience shame, guilt or blame lets deny it. Try it and see if this is what Jesus means when he calls his Disciples to deny themselves. Imagine the transforming power of fasting shame, guilt, or blame. Let us take up our crosses along side Jesus. Let us listen to what he says about those who judge, condemn and kill him. "Father... they do not know what they are doing." The presence of shame, guilt, and blame is a clear sigh that we have a cross to bear. In spite of keeping up appearances it proves that we do not know what we are doing.

Food goes into the mouth and out into the sewer. Shame, guilt, and blame goes into the heart, mind, and soul. It either comes out of our mouths to play family feud, eat us alive, or bless those who curse us!

With our mouths we call ourselves Christian. Look,"I am like Christ. " When people look at us do they see, hear, and experience Christ and the power of resurrection. Or do they see we are merely keeping up appearances through what Isaiah calls "lip service". Discipleship is heart , soul, mind service. Jesus teaches his disciples to cleanse everything that makes its way into their hearts, souls, and minds before it comes flying out of their mouths.

Jesus cleanses judgement, with mercy. His Be Attitude reveals righteousness that exceeds the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

Jesus cleanses sin, with grace. His Be Attitude reveals righteousness that exceeds the traditions of the Elders. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The pure in heart see Jesus dying to sin and rising to life!

Jesus cleanses hearts, souls, and minds with unconditional love experienced as patience, kindness, not insisting on its way, or keeping count of wrongs... His Be Attitude fulfills the Law and Prophet, and the Rituals and Traditions of our Elders. "Blessed are you when people revile and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Jesus says it not what goes in our mouths that defiles. It is what makes its way into our hearts, souls, and minds that comes out of our mouths to curse, judge, condemn, harm, and separate us.

This is my 27th year as a pastor of the United Methodist Church. I deeply value our rituals, traditions, and work to right social injustices. Looking back I see how these things give us an outward appearance of being "United" in our methods. When we leave our worship services and break fast to play family feud we reveal the truth of Jesus' Word, "Father...they do not know what they are doing." The Good News is that Jesus shows us His Way of Righteousness. He meets those who cause his suffering with Mercy. He pays the penalty of sin with Grace. He rises from the dead to life eternal. This is the way of repentance. Everything else is the broad road that leads to destruction.

One in Christ,

Robert

Special Music

Tithes and Offerings

Money is World currency. Mercy is Kingdom of Heaven currency. As Jesus says, “The measure we give is the measure we receive.”

Benediction

Postlude