



First Presbyterian Church

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Order of Worship, October 10, 2021

In Person or On-line via Zoom

Leading in worship today: Pastor Mark Southard, Liturgist Laura Southard

Greetings and Announcements

Call to Worship

(One) I will tell God's story to family and friends; I will offer praise in the center of the congregation!

(All) Let us raise our hallelujahs together, God's children one and all! Because God has never turned away from our suffering or hidden away when we were in need.

(One) God has been right here listening, a breath away when we cry out for help. To our great comfort, I raise my voice in praise.

(All) In the presence of the congregation we honor you, O God!

Opening Prayer

O God, you have made heaven and earth and all that is good; and in Jesus Christ you show us that the secret of joy is a heart set free from selfish desires. Help us to delight in simple things and to rejoice always in the richness of your bounty; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

* **Hymn #12** "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"

Service Note: As Christians we are commanded to love each other. In these strange days of unseen and sometimes unknown viral threat, one of the ways we do that is by protecting each other. If you choose to attend in person, our Session asks that you wear a mask and distance by family in our Sanctuary.

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise 12

1 Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
2 Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
3 To all, life thou giv - est, to both great and small.
4 Thou reign - est in glo - ry; thou dwell - est in light.

in light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might:
In all life thou liv - est, the true life of all.
Thine an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight.

most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
thy jus - tice, like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove;
We blos - som and flour - ish like leaves on the tree,
All praise we would ren - der; O help us to see

al - might - y, vic - to - rious, thy great name we praise.
thy clouds, which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
then with - er and per - ish; but naught chang - eth thee.
'tis on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee!

Call to Confession

Once, daunted by the challenges of faithfulness, Jesus's disciples asked urgently, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For humans it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God." Trusting in God who longs to mend our broken places, let us turn to God in prayer.

Prayer of confession (unison)

Holy God, sometimes it hurts too much to look honestly at the world and ourselves. We grow tired of the constant bad news, so we put on a brave face and gloss over the ache of violence, sickness, disaster, and human callousness that plagues our globe. With those we are closest to, we sometimes pretend that we feel okay, that we are not worried, that we have a plan. We even lie to ourselves, not fully admitting the impact of our actions on one another or ourselves. Forgive us, O God, when we try to hide our hearts from you. Fuel our trust that we might approach you with our full selves— authentic in our gifts, and our fears, and our shortcomings. Give us the courage to walk together through the trials of life, rather than soldiering on alone. And help us to sense your faithful presence through the days when there feels like more shadow than sun.

(time for silent reflection and prayer)

Assurance of pardon

The Lord is compassionate and merciful, very patient, and full of faithful love. As high as heaven is above the earth, that's how large God's faithful love is for God's children.

As far as east is from west— that's how far God has removed our sin from us.

In Jesus Christ, we are all forgiven.

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

An Introduction to the Word for all Ages

Prayer for Illumination

First Reading Job 23:1-9, 16-17

Second Reading Hebrews 4:12-16

(L) This is the word of the Lord

(P) Thanks be to God

Gospel Reading Mark 10:17-31

Sermon: "When God Seems Distant"

* Hymn #834 "Precious Lord, Take My Hand"

834 Precious Lord, Take My Hand

1 Pre - cious Lord, take my hand; lead me on, help me
 2 When my way grows drear, pre - cious Lord, lin - ger

stand; I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
 near; when my life is al - most gone,

Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the
 hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I

light; take my hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.
 fall; take my hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.

Affirmation of Faith - (The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1)

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

That I am not my own, but belong— body and soul, in life and in death— to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

God of our joyful days and our aching days, we give thanks that we can trust you with the heaviest parts of our hearts, and so we bring to you the burdens of our complicated world, and we ask you to lighten the load. Yet, even in the midst of an avalanche of challenging news, we spot the sliver of moon in the night, and so our prayer of longing is punctuated by gratitude.

Hear both, our cries for relief and our warbling song of joy, O God. Sometimes our words of lament get stuck in our throats, but we yearn for a better world — one that brings to life your plans for wholeness and well-being to fulfillment for all. Heal our warring madness, and teach us the ways of peace with our global neighbors, within our polarized society, and in our local communities. Breathe life into the lungs of those who are trampled down. Turn the hearts of oppressors. And stir our compassion and energies when indifference sets in for other people's struggle. We raise to you the cries of those who may be feeling forsaken: those longing for relief from natural disaster, women and girls in societies which limit their opportunity and access to power, refugees who long for welcome and safety, overburdened healthcare workers, and all who wonder if someone — anyone — will take notice of their pain and extend comfort and hope.

Thank you for small signs of kindness and possibility in days that are bleak — the red bird perched on a bare branch, one hand brushing another in kindness, the familiar tune of "Happy Birthday," the smell of baking bread. Sometimes our words of lament get stuck in our throats, and so, O God, we carve out this silence for our hearts to speak to yours, to trust you with our wounds, our dreams long buried, our yearnings for those most dear and the fractures in our relationships, Listen to our thoughts and our silence, O God.

(time of silence)

Thank you for small signs of possibility and fresh hope that sparkle amidst the fog of ache — laughter that surprises us, children's imaginations, a perfect crisp apple, the first promising notes of a song we know by heart. We are grateful that you hear our prayers whether we are brimming with joy, seething with anger, crying out for justice, or sighing with grief.

Hear us now, as we turn to the reliable words of the prayer for all our days, the one that Jesus taught us to pray,

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”

Call to Stewardship

Even in the midst of our darkest days and deepest longings, we are assured of the presence of God. In gratitude for our God who is big enough to hold our loving praise and our cries of woe, let us offer signs of our thanks with the gifts of our time, talent, and treasure.

Offertory - Janice Shinn

(We are called to share good things with others - but not the virus, so you will find the offering plate at the rear of the sanctuary. You are invited to place your offering there as you leave the service today.)

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, all that we have is yours. Accept these gifts — signs of our gratitude — as we return them to you. Show us how to use them that they may point to your abiding love, which is our eternal hope. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

As you go forward from this place, whether it is with a spring in your step or with resolve for the slog, God goes with you, before you, beside you, and surrounding you.

You may entrust the shiniest parts of yourselves to our faithful God. And you may entrust the shadows too. For the same God our ancestors trusted with their cries, hears our cries as well. And their witness assures us that there is no shame in the cry — that our with-us-God will not let us down. And as you go, may the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit go with you all — this day and every day. Amen.

Parting Song: "God Be With You Till We Meet Again"

Portions of today's liturgy are © Presbyterian Outlook, 2020. Liturgy written by Shelli Latham, pastor at Druid Hills Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, and provided for free distribution.

Announcements:

- Bible Study resumes this week with James Chapter 4
- In order to reduce the risk to ourselves and others, the session asks that you **please wear a mask** over your nose and mouth while in the Sanctuary; keep space between households and minimize handshakes and hugs. If you have cold or flu symptoms, please stay home and join us on Zoom.

Prayer Requests:

Juhree Vanderpool, in rehab at Via Christi Diane Shafer Dennis Backhaus
Anastasia Rule Pastor Mark Mozeik (St John's Lutheran)