

*August 9, 2020*



We have chosen to follow Jesus' commandment to care for our neighbor, especially our most vulnerable neighbors (Matthew 22: 37-40), during the coronavirus/COVID19 pandemic. While we are not gathering at the church building, we have chosen to see this as a time for us to try new ways to worship, learn, pray, and stay connected ...after all, *God is always doing new things (Isaiah 43:1-19)!*

In these difficult times, we are committed to continuing to find ways to be the church.

Don't hesitate to be in touch if you need something, especially help...getting groceries or medicine, figuring out how to do all this online stuff, or just needing to chat. We are here to help!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Henry, the Elders, and Deacons of the First Presbyterian Church of Corona

*In order to open the music, place the cursor on the title, press ctrl and click. That will take you to the appropriate YouTube location to open.*

GATHERING SONG                    [In Christ Alone](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us approach worship today with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us stand in Christ alone without wavering. Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds. Let us encourage one another as we worship today. Amen.

HYMN                                    [Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty](#)

CALL TO CONFESSION

If we claim to be sinless, we are self-deceived and strangers to the truth. If we confess our sins, God is just, and may be trusted to cleanse us from every kind of wrong.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Almighty God, you called us to be a servant people, but we do not always do what you command. We are often silent when we should speak, and frequently avoid opportunities to be useful. We can be lazy, timid, and heartless. Help us to face up to ourselves so that as you move toward us in mercy, we may repent, turn to you, and receive forgiveness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

DECLARATION OF PARDON

Who is able to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, and Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. If a person is in Christ, they become a new person altogether – the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

OLD TESTAMENT            Genesis 37: 1-4, 12-28 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

<sup>2</sup>This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

<sup>3</sup>Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate<sup>(a)</sup> robe for him. <sup>4</sup>When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

<sup>12</sup>Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, <sup>13</sup>and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them."

"Very well," he replied.

<sup>14</sup>So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, <sup>15</sup>a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

<sup>16</sup>He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

<sup>17</sup>"They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'"

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. <sup>18</sup>But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

<sup>19</sup>“Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. <sup>20</sup>“Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

<sup>21</sup>When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. “Let’s not take his life,” he said. <sup>22</sup>“Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.” Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

<sup>23</sup>So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— <sup>24</sup>and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

<sup>25</sup>As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

<sup>26</sup>Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? <sup>27</sup>Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

<sup>28</sup>So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels<sup>Ⓜ</sup> of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

NEW TESTAMENT Matthew 14: 22-33 (MSG)

<sup>22-23</sup>As soon as the meal was finished, he insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people. With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night.

<sup>24-26</sup>Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o’clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared out of their wits. “A ghost!” they said, crying out in terror.

<sup>27</sup>But Jesus was quick to comfort them. “Courage, it’s me. Don’t be afraid.”

<sup>28</sup>Peter, suddenly bold, said, “Master, if it’s really you, call me to come to you on the water.”

<sup>29-30</sup>He said, “Come ahead.”

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, “Master, save me!”

<sup>31</sup>Jesus didn’t hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, “Faint-heart, what got into you?”

<sup>32-33</sup>The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down. The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, “This is it! You are God’s Son for sure!”

SERMON

In every time and place and situation, God is working God’s purposes out. Sometimes we humans cooperate with these purposes, and sometimes we don’t. God is not responsible for the evil that people do, but history shows that God can turn bad into good. God did it with Joseph and his brothers. God did it with Jesus on the cross. God did it with Paul, who moved from a persecutor of the church to an apostle to the Gentiles.

When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, they set the stage for his rise in Egypt. When Jesus died and was buried, he was put in the right place for resurrection. The zeal of Saul the persecutor changed into the passion of Paul the apostle.

Each of us has committed sins, suffered defeats, made terrible mistakes and been treated terribly. We might want to jump in a time machine and change the past. But remember: God is always at work in your life, turning evil into good.

Since nothing is wasted with God, there is no point in trying to change history. Instead, trust God to transform your future.

And what stands in the way of transforming the current crises into a more stable future? Perhaps it is the same thing that ruled the emotions of Joseph's brothers and struck at the hearts of Jesus' disciples when they saw him walking toward them on the water.

## **FEAR.**

There is so much we come to fear over the course of a lifetime, so much we suppose will defeat us, that we make life an exercise in securing ourselves against our insecurities.

From the beginning, what one of us did not fear the dark, supposing certain defeat awaited us as the lights went out? Annie Dillard writes about a strange light that swept across her bedroom wall, hour after hour and night after night. "When I was five," she wrote, "I would not go to bed willingly because something came into my room. This was a private matter between me and it. If I spoke of it, it would kill me. . . . I dared not blink or breathe; I tried to hush my whooping blood." Then one night she figured out that the windshield of a passing car was reflecting the corner street lights outside. "Figuring it out," she says, "was as memorable as the . . . thing itself. Figuring it out was a long and forced ascent to the very rim of being, to the membrane of skin that both separates and connects the inner life and the outer world."

Cynthia Jarvis reflects that "there are fears that seem to have been in our bones from birth, fears that shape our lives by the shadow they cast. The fear of certain defeat in relationships keeps us from intimacy. The fear of certain defeat in family relationships keeps us from confronting a parent or comforting a child or speaking our heart. The fear of failing in a job burdens us in our work and makes us unable to break free. These fears define the person we are and deny the person we want to become. They defeat us day in and day out.

Other fears are external. They hold us hostage, silence us and dismantle our humanity. "The first time he hit me I was 19," says Anna Quindlen's main character in *Black and Blue*. "I can hear his voice now, so persuasive, so low and yet somehow so strong, making me understand once again that I am all wrong. Frannie, Frannie, Fran, he says. . . . How huge was his rage. It was like a twister cloud; it rose suddenly from nothing into a moving thing that blew the roof off, black and strong."

Our world seems to be ordered by way of power and powerlessness, by way of the bullies and the beaten. Fear begins to control lives when it insidiously possesses the life of the person who dominates with violence, or a community of those who exclude, abuse, exterminate and hate.

"Hatred," wrote C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape to Wormwood*, "is often the compensation by which a frightened man reimburses himself for the miseries of Fear. The more he fears, the more he will hate." The darkest fear of all, the fear that has the power not only to shape a life for death-dealing, but also to distort an entire community, is the fear that lurks beneath the pretense of power and privilege, the fear which crouches behind the doorways of prejudice and preys upon the least of these. It is often a righteous fear, justified in the name of a greater Power who has, according to us, willed our dominant hold on the present order.

"Others become scapegoats," writes Miroslav Volf in *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of*

*Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation, “concocted from our own shadows as repositories for our sins and weaknesses [and fears] so we can relish the illusion of our sinlessness and strength.” We exclude, Volf implies, because we are fearful of “anything that blurs our boundaries, disturbs our identities and disarranges our symbolic cultural maps. Others strike us like objects that are ‘out of place,’ like ‘dirt’ that needs to be removed in order to return the sense of propriety to our world.”*

This is how fear shapes a human life, distorts the human community and denies another person the humanity revealed by One whose power was made perfect in weakness.

So we leave the story of Joseph’s brothers, whose jealous fear of their brother led them to ditch him in the wilderness, and turn to the disciples, whose fears of the storm pale before their terror of the One who shows up to save them. “Only here,” says Karl Barth, “is it really worthwhile to be afraid. Here hearts and reins are tried. Here the question is awe and not agitation. Here no one can escape and no one can console himself. Having reached the ultimate limit of all that we fear, where God is revealed to us, we are no longer afraid of this or the next thing, but of Him alone.”

Augustine suggests that we respond to our fears with prayer. We are to ask God to watch over us while we are on our life voyage. “Remember such as a lie exposed to the rough storms of trouble and temptations,” he prays. “Frail is our vessel, and the ocean is wide.”

Nurturing past grievances is not only a waste of time, but a positive danger to our spiritual lives. If we keep a ledger of ways others have hurt us, those painful past experiences take on a life of their own.

Each of us has committed sins, suffered defeats, made terrible mistakes and been treated terribly. We might want to change the past. Instead, trust God to transform your Each of us has committed sins, suffered defeats, made terrible mistakes and been treated terribly. Since nothing There is no point in trying to change history. Instead, trust God to transform your future.

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,” begins Reinhold Niebuhr’s famous “Serenity Prayer,” a favorite text of those in Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step recovery groups.

*Things we cannot change. These are the annoyances, the obstacles, the stumbling-blocks that stymie us. Some things in life are susceptible to change. A great many others are not.*

Our personal histories are a prime example. “If I Could Turn Back Time,” sang Cher, in a 1989 pop hit: “If I could find a way; I’d take back those words that hurt you; And you’d stay.”

But none of us can turn back time. The way to healing painful memories of the past lies through spiritual practices like Niebuhr’s “Serenity Prayer.” After replaying the tape of that painful memory countless times in our head, the only way to new life is to simply accept it.

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
As it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
If I surrender to His Will;  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
And supremely happy with Him  
Forever and ever in the next. Amen

May we indeed have the courage to change the things we can.

(With thanks to Cynthia Jarvis and Anne Dillard for their writing and reflections on the work of Karl Barth And Miraslav Volf.)

AFFIRMATION            From the Brief Statement of Reformed Faith

The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives ...With believers in every time and place, rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Joys & Concerns

Please pray for Rev. Charlie Castles and his family. His wife, Shirley, passed away. Kathy Shepardson - son needs light, love, and forgiveness in his life. Teri—Please pray for my neighbor Doreen. She has a blood infection again and they put her on a ventilator because her blood pressure keeps dropping. Also, pray for her daughter, Pam that she doesn't lose her mom after just losing her dad, Bill.

### *Continuing Prayers*

Continued prayers for Rochelle. Prayers for our country and elected ones. All people, law enforcement & civilians, affected by current violence in this country. Lynn Rodisch - healing. Pete - healing. Kofi - prayer. Loren Nelson - continued prayer.

*Please Pray During Week of August 9, 2020 for the families of:*

- ◆ Margie Wilkerson
- ◆ Walt & Deneva Willians



if you have a prayer request or joy to share, contact any session member, Pastor Henry, the prayer chain at [mom4tc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mom4tc@sbcglobal.net), or [judy@fpc-corona.org](mailto:judy@fpc-corona.org).

During this time of being apart,  
remember that your Deacons are  
available if you are in need of help.

HYMN

[Help Us Accept Each Other](#)

BENEDICTION

RESPONSE

[Precious Lord, Take my Hand](#)

