

WORSHIP SUNDAY Brookhaven Presbyterian Church / Sep 20

LOVE
NEVER
FAILS

What is the chief end of man?

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.
-Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 1

What is Worship Sunday?

Step into a sacred space where worship takes on a deeply personal and powerful dimension. Worship Sunday is a unique opportunity to set aside the noise of daily life and lean fully into an atmosphere of reflection, prayer, and heartfelt praise. With an extended time of worship through music, prayer, the reading of scripture, and communion, this gathering invites you to engage with God in an intimate and transformative way.

Call To Worship

Habakkuk 3:17-19

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.

Where Would I Go?

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord,
to whom shall we go? You have the
words of eternal life,

-John 6: 68

There's a tension
Between the spirit
And the flesh
There are questions
Without answers
Weakness without rest

There are times when
There's no words,
Just a cry
There are seasons
Without reasons
Nobody knows why

I could bury the mystery
I could run from the feeling

Chorus:

*Where would I go?
What would I do?
I don't need to know
I just want to walk with You
Wherever You are
Wherever You lead
I don't need to know
I just want to walk with You*

In the tension
Give me the wisdom

To wait for your release
In the questions
Help me to listen
To your voice of peace

In every division
Give me a vision
Of heaven colliding with earth
In my darkest seasons
You are still speaking
Your kindness always calls me home

I could bury the mystery
I could run from the feeling

Chorus

In my heart
Come build Your altar
I will remember all You have done

Chorus

Psalm 23

Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of
the Lord forever.

-Psalm 23: 6

The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want
In green pastures He makes me lie down
He restores my soul and
leads me on for His Name
For His great Name

Chorus:

*Surely goodness surely mercy
Right beside me all my days
And I will dwell in Your house forever
And bless Your Holy Name*

You prepare a table right before me
In the presence of my enemies
Though the arrow flies
and the terror of night is at my door
I'll trust you Lord

Chorus

Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil
Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death
You are on my side

Chorus

Meditation 1

The rain falls on the just and the unjust

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

"Matthew 5:43-45"

Jesus says that God "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

There is something unsettling about that.

We want the world to be more predictable than it is.

We want goodness to be rewarded in ways we can see.

We want faithfulness to protect us.

We want suffering to make moral sense.

But Jesus describes a world in which the rain falls on everyone.

The faithful get sick.

The cruel sometimes prosper.

The kind are wounded.

The selfish sometimes escape consequence.

Life does not distribute joy and sorrow according to what we deserve.

And Scripture does not ask us to pretend otherwise.

The goodness of God is not the promise that nothing painful will happen to us.

It is not a contract that says,

"If I am faithful enough, careful enough, prayerful enough, then my life will be spared from grief."

Jesus himself was faithful.

And Jesus suffered.

So perhaps faith begins, in part, by surrendering the need to read every circumstance as a verdict on the character of God.

Some days the rain comes.

Some days the sun rises.

And in both, God remains God.

There is mystery here.

And faith does not remove the mystery.

It teaches us how to live inside it.

Abide With Me

Abide in me, and I in you. As the
branch cannot bear fruit by itself,
unless it abides in the vine, neither
can you, unless you abide in me.

-John 15: 4

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
When darkness deepens, Lord with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, abide with me.

Thou on my head in early youth did smile
And though rebellious
and perverse meanwhile,
Thou hast not left me, though I oft left Thee.
On to the close Lord, abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour
What but Thy grace can foil
the tempters power
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be
Through cloud and sunshine, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight
and tears lose their bitterness
Where is thy sting death?
Where grave thy victory?
I triumph still, abide with me.

Hold Thou the cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom
and point me to the skies
Heavens' morning breaks
and earth's vain shadows flee
In life and death, Lord, abide with me.

Sovereign Over Us

The Lord has established his
throne in the heavens, and his
kingdom rules over all.

-Psalm 103: 19

There is strength within the sorrow
There is beauty in our tears
And you meet us in our mourning
With a love that cast out fears

You are working in our waiting
Sanctifying us
And beyond our understanding
You're teaching us to trust

Chorus:

*Your plans are still to prosper
You have not forgotten us
You're with us in the fire and the flood
You're faithful forever
Perfect in love
You are sovereign over us*

You are wisdom unimagined,
Who could understand Your ways
Reigning high above the heavens,
Reaching down in endless grace
You're the Lifter of the lowly,
Compassionate and kind
You surround and You uphold me,
Your promises are my delight

Chorus

Even what the enemy means for evil
You turn it for our good
You turn it for our good
And for Your glory

Even in the valley you are faithful
You're working for our good
You're working for our good
And for Your glory

Chorus

Meditation 2

How long, O Lord?

4How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

"Psalm 13:1-2"

"How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?"

That sentence is in the Bible.

"How long will you hide your face from me?"

That is in the Bible too.

Which means there is a kind of prayer that does not begin with
certainty.

It begins with absence.

With confusion.

With the terrible feeling that God could act,
and has not.

The Psalms do not silence that prayer.

They give us words for it.

How long?

Why?

Where are you?

Have you forgotten me?

These are not the opposite of faith.

Sometimes they are what faith sounds like when it is wounded.

The remarkable thing about lament is that it still speaks to God.

The psalmist could have walked away.

Instead, he complains to God.

He grieves before God.

He argues with God.

He brings the ache into the relationship.

And maybe that is one of the deepest acts of trust available to us:

not pretending that everything is fine,
but refusing to suffer alone.

So if your prayers have become smaller,
or angrier,

or more confused,

you do not need to clean them up before bringing them to God.

You can pray the prayer Scripture has already given you:

How long, O Lord?

And you can trust that even this prayer is heard.

Love Never Fails

Some of us sinners, some of us saints
Some of us between a rock and hard place
Some of us welcome, some of us not
Some of us the scapegoat,
some of us the mob
All of us guilty, then all of us free
A cup of joy poured out to our great relief
So when the abyss had us tied to the rails
Like a runaway train, love never fails

Some say it's crazy, some take offense
Some swear the law
still demands recompense
Some shot the sheriff and the deputy too
Some heard the cock crow in
the light of the moon
All are atoned for the wicked made whole
The world's scarlet letter
washed white as snow
When the albatross curse
all the wind from our sails
We have no damns to give love never fails

A weapon will prosper
A levy will break
The heartbreaker gives you
More than you can take
The trouble in trusting
A Savior not seen
You find out He don't fail
When He don't intervene
Find out He don't fail
When He don't intervene

Some of us doubtful, some of us weak
Some are uncertain and still we believe
Some overcoming, some testify
There's a righteousness in
us that we can't deny
Some hallelujah, some blessed be
Some sing out in chains, some sing out free
Our dreams up in smoke
beneath plunging nail
Punchline of the joke, love never fails

Meditation 3

He doesn't fail, even when he doesn't intervene.

7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing
greatness of the revelations, I a thorn was given me in the flesh, a
messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.
8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave
me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power
is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly
of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults,
hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I
am strong.

"2 Corinthians 12:7-10"

There is a question beneath so many of our prayers:

If God loves me, why did he not stop this?

Why didn't he heal?

Why didn't he prevent it?

Why didn't he change the outcome?

And there are moments when every answer

we try to give feels too small.

We should be careful here.

Scripture does not ask us to call evil good.

It does not require us to pretend that every tragedy makes sense.

And it does not tell us that pain hurts less simply

because we believe in God.

But it does show us something about the character of God.

God's faithfulness cannot finally be measured by whether he gives us
the outcome we asked for.

Because if that were true, then the cross itself would look like failure.

Jesus prayed in Gethsemane,

"Let this cup pass from me."

And still the cup remained.

The Father did not spare the Son from suffering.

But neither was the Son abandoned.

The story of Jesus tells us that the absence of intervention is not the
absence of love.

It tells us that suffering does not mean God has ceased to be faithful.

We may not know why God acts in one moment
and seems silent in another.

We may carry those questions for a very long time.

But this is what Christians dare to say:

God does not cease to be good when we cannot understand him.

He does not cease to love when he does not intervene.

And in a moment we will come to the Table.

There we will not be given an explanation.

We will be given Christ.

Liturgy

Leader:

We have asked where God is
when the prayer is not answered,
when the rescue does not come.
We have searched for reasons.
We have reached for explanations.
We have stood before mysteries
too deep for words.
And now we come to this table.
And the table does not give us an
explanation.

People:

It gives us Christ.

Leader:

Not a theory of suffering,
but a body broken.
Not an answer to every grief,
but a cup poured out.
We are not promised that every sorrow
will make sense to us in this life,
but we are promised that no sorrow
can separate us from the love of God
made known in Jesus Christ.

People:

**Here is Christ,
broken with us,
given for us.**

Leader:

When we ask,
Where is God when he does not intervene?"
The table does not answer from a distance.
It answers with bread and wine.
It answers with the crucified Christ,
who does not remain above suffering
but enters it,
having first borne it in his own flesh,
and makes even the place of death
a place where God is present.
So we do not come pretending
that suffering is simple.
We do not come because we understand.
We come because Christ invites us.

People:
And where Christ is given,
we will receive him.

Leader:
On the night when Jesus was betrayed,
when violence was already
gathering around him,
when his friends would soon fail him,
when suffering could no longer be avoided,
he took bread.
He gave thanks.
He broke it.
And he gave it to his disciples, saying,
“This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”
This is the body of Christ:
not untouched by suffering,
but wounded.
Not spared from grief,
but offered in love.
Take and eat.
In the same way, after supper,
Jesus took the cup and gave it to them,
saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
poured out for you.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.”
This is the cup of Christ:
the sign that God has bound himself to us
even at great cost.
The sign that suffering and death
will not have the final word.
The sign that we belong to the One
who entered the grave
and rose again.
Take and drink.

Leader:
Christ has not given us
the answer to every question.
He has given us himself.

People:
And Christ is enough
for this moment.

Leader:
When we cannot see what God is doing,

People:
Christ is with us.

Leader:
When we cannot understand
why God has not acted as we hoped,

People:
Christ is with us.

Leader:
When faith feels less like certainty
and more like holding on,

People:
Christ is with us.

Leader:
When we suffer,

People:
Christ is with us.

Leader:
When we mourn,

People:
Christ is with us.

Leader:
When all we can do is come
with empty hands,

People:
Christ gives himself to us.

Leader:
Come and receive.

Forevermore

*"Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I
sit down, Christ when I arise,"*

-St. Patrick's Breastplate

Strong and courageous
My greatest hope
A loving savior, You won't let go
A Shield around me
My closest friend
The simple truth is that You've always been

Chorus:
*Christ before me
Christ behind me now
And forevermore*

*You surround me
You uphold me now
And forevermore*

You are the anchor
In every storm
Lord, You're the rock that I'm standing on
I won't be anxious
Won't be afraid
I know Your promises will never change

Chorus

I will rise and know that You are with me
In high or valley low, Lord You are with me
No matter where I go, Lord You are with me
Won't fear what tomorrow holds...

Chorus

All My Tears

When I go, don't cry for me
In my Father's arms I'll be
The wounds this world left on my soul
Will all be healed and I'll be whole

Sun and moon will be replaced
With the light of Jesus's face
And I will not be ashamed
For my Savior knows my name

It don't matter
Where you bury me
I'll be home, and I'll be free
It don't matter where I lay
All my tears be washed away

Gold and silver blind the eye
Temporary riches lie
Come and eat from heaven's store
Come and drink and thirst no more

So weep not for me, my friend
When my time below does end
For my life belongs to Him
Who will raise the dead again

It don't matter
Where you bury me
I'll be home, and I'll be free
It don't matter
Anywhere I lay
All my tears be washed away

Meditation 4

Nothing Can Separate Us

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

36 As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“Romans 8:35–39”

Paul asks a question:

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

And then he begins naming the things we are most afraid might prove that God has abandoned us.

Trouble.

Hardship.

Persecution.

Famine.

Danger.

Death.

Notice what Paul does not say.

He does not say that people who are loved by God
will be spared these things.

He says something stronger.

He says none of these things can separate us from the love of God.

The promise is not that suffering will never reach us.

The promise is that suffering cannot take Christ from us.

Grief cannot do it.

Illness cannot do it.

Unanswered prayer cannot do it.

The worst day of your life cannot do it.

Not even death can do it.

“For I am convinced,” Paul writes,

“that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is not optimism.

It is not the belief that everything will go the way we hope.

It is a deeper hope.

Whatever comes,

Christ will not let us go.

We may not understand.

Meditation 4

Nothing Can Separate Us

We may grieve.

We may ask how long.

We may walk through things we would never have chosen.

But nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God.

So our final word is not certainty about what will happen.

It is trust in the One who will be with us when it does.

And perhaps that is enough faith for today:

not knowing what comes next,

but knowing whose love will meet us there.

In The Meantime

He has made everything beautiful
in its time. Also, he has put
eternity into man's heart, yet so
that he cannot find out what God
has done from the beginning to
the end.

-Ecclesiastes 3: 11

Hey baby,
Do you remember when I told you
I wouldn't give you
More than you could hold?
I wasn't lying,
I wasn't lying to you baby.
I'm the one in control,
You're the one that I'm holding,
I'll take your burdens on my shoulders
And carry us on.

Chorus:

*And in time, I'll let you in
On everything I'm planning.
When it's time, I'll let you see
Everything you're asking me.
When it's time,
You will know why
There are things I'm hiding from you.
But I'm gonna satisfy
Everything in the meantime.*

Hey baby,
Do you remember when I said
That I would give you more
Than you could ever ask or imagine?
I wasn't playing,
I wasn't playing with you baby.
I'm the one in control,
You're the one that I'm holding,
I'll take your burdens on my shoulders
And carry us on.

Chorus

Benediction

Matthew 28:20

Go now without easy answers,
but not without hope.
Remain with one another in sorrow,
as Christ has remained with you.
And when you cannot trace
the hand of God,
remember the promise of Christ:

“I am with you always,
to the very end of the age.”

Until every tear is wiped away, until
death is swallowed up in victory,
until faith becomes sight, may the
Lord bless you and keep you,
may his presence go with you, and
may the grace of Jesus Christ
hold you fast.

For we are not given every
explanation.

We are given Christ.

Amen.

Doxology

Praise God from whom
all blessings flow

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Amen.