



At Home Worship for Faith and Hope

Second Sunday in Lent

February 28, 2021

* Call to Worship

Based on Psalm 130

Lift up your voice and call out to God.

We cry out, believing that God hears us.

Come together and wait for God.

We come together, trusting that God is still speaking.

Surely God's presence is here with us now.

We wait in hope, for God's steadfast love lifts our hearts.

Come, worship the Lord.

We celebrate the power of God that restores us.

*Song of Praise

"To God Be the Glory"

UMH 98

Either Sing/Read the Song Below or Listen to a Worship Song

Opening Prayer

Holy God, Creator of Life, you call us out of our dark places, offering us the grace of new life. When we see nothing but hopelessness, you surprise us with the breath of your spirit. Call us out of our complacency and routines, set us free from our self-imposed bonds, and fill us with your spirit of life, compassion, and peace, In the name of Jesus, your anointed one, we pray. Amen.

NO Children's Moments This Week

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of gratitude with grit! Lift up with thanksgiving to God for the ways He has helped you through these difficult days.

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayers of Confession for Lent

by Ann Siddall

*O God, help us to use this season of Lent
to examine our attachments,
and to sense where You invite us
to live more simply and deeply.*

*Shine the light of Your love
into the private corners of our lives
where we have acquired so much clutter
that it has begun to restrict our freedom.*

*Grant us the strength to free ourselves
from appetites and needs that drive us
into taking, having and wanting
more than we need or have time for.*

*Teach us that in letting go
we become free, rather than deprived,
generous rather than covetous,
and spacious rather than restricted.*

*We offer You our Lenten observance,
and today we place our feet*

*on the road to Easter, and walk
the Way that You have walked before us. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

God's Word

John 19:23-27 (NLT)

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Introduction to New Lenten Series "**Seven Words TO the Cross**"

Message

"The Word of Indifference"

Pastor Clark

...see below or go to website to listen online

* Hymn of Faith

"The Gift of Love"

UMH 408

Blessing

*Friends,
as we go from here,
let us rid ourselves of every weight that slows us down,
especially the sin that so easily impedes our progress.
Let us run the race that God has set before us,
keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ,
on whom our faith depends, from start to finish.
And as we run,
know that the grace of Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the presence of the Holy Spirit,
is always with you.*



To God Be the Glory

1. To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. (Refrain)

3. Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. (Refrain)

The Gift of Love

1 Though I may speak with bravest fire,
and have the gift to all inspire,
and have not love, my words are vain,
as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

2 Though I may give all I possess,
and striving so my love profess,
but not be given by love within,
the profit soon turns strangely thin.

3 Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
by this we worship, and are freed.

The Word of Indifference *“Rather than tearing it apart, let’s throw dice for it.”*

John 19:23-27

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴ So they said, “Rather than tearing it apart, let’s throw dice for it.” This fulfilled the Scripture that says, “They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing.” So that is what they did.

²⁵ Standing near the cross were Jesus’ mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son.” ²⁷ And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

Introduction

J. Ellsworth Kalas describes what it must have been like for a **Roman soldier** to be assigned to crucifixion duty. Serving in an execution quaternion (four soldiers for each cross) was a miserable task. It was mean, dirty work, with no chance for redeeming heroism. The soldiers had to steel themselves against the horrid cries of human agony. And, it was tedious work, because crucifixions were designed to be slow, agonizing deaths. The process of death was stretched out over many hours and these soldiers had to stay at their post the whole ugly time.

There was, however, potential compensation, modest as it was. The soldiers assigned to crucifixions were given the clothes of the victim. The four soldiers assigned to Jesus’ crucifixion took His garments in order to distribute them. Each soldier got something. Now there was one item still left, by far the most valuable of the lot. It was Jesus’ tunic or robe. It was without seam, woven from top to bottom. It was actually a much-desired piece of clothing in that day. The garment might even represent several days wages. They were concerned about its worth.

“So they said, ‘Rather than tearing it apart, let’s throw dice for it.’” What a shame to ruin a well-woven garment! They reasoned that they should gamble for it instead of tearing it into four useless pieces. So they gambled at the foot of the Cross. The gospel doesn’t give us many details but you can imagine the scene. Perhaps it was merely a pleasant distraction from their tedious and unpleasant task. But my guess is that the scene was charged with far more coarseness and cursing.

I find it ironic that these soldiers were aware enough that they didn’t want Jesus’ robe to torn into pieces, but were oblivious to His body being torn apart by the cruelty of crucifixion.

Again, Dr. Kalas has a keen insight: *“When Jesus died on Calvary, heaven and hell watched with awe, and time and eternity joined hands. But down at the foot of the Cross, the soldiers who crucified Him were busy dividing the spoils! They didn’t even wait for Him to die”*

True, the actions of these soldiers were particularly brutal. But, widen the lens and look at what these soldiers were experiencing.

Their way of life was very different than ours, and raw life was much closer to the surface. They were acting in a way consistent with their training. They were fulfilling the orders they had been given. Here's the point: these hardened soldiers were conditioned by their role, the brutality of their work, the harshness of life.

Not only that, they were preoccupied with the demands of life. The cares of this world preoccupied them not to see with their hearts what was happening on the Cross above them.

Next consider that this conditioning and preoccupation led them to the callous indifference to Jesus' suffering. Jesus' suffering simply didn't register with them. They were wrapped up in their own crude, little world. Their scope of awareness was surprisingly narrow.

This in no way justifies the soldier's actions. It just helps us see what went into thinking. And here is the point of this message: ***we cannot judge these soldiers too harshly because we too are prone to the very same process that leads to callous indifference to spiritual matters!*** So, as we make our way through Lent to the Cross—a season in which we let the searchlight of the Holy Spirit to reveal where we too miss the mark—I want us to ask ourselves three revealing questions:

Where Are We Conditioned?

Where has our thinking become so conditioned by life that we aren't really thinking at all? Where have we become conditioned to the roles, the difficulty, and the harshness of our work, that we can no longer truly see the needs of those around us?

Are we so conditioned by life that we become callous? Listen to this telling story from a decade ago:

The last thing ***LaShanda Calloway*** saw before she died was people literally stepping over her to continue shopping as if nothing had happened. Calloway had stopped to shop in a convenience store in Wichita, Kansas, when she was stabbed in an altercation. As she lay dying, a surveillance camera recorded no less than five people stepping over her to continue down the store's aisles. Only one stopped briefly—to take a picture of Calloway with a cell phone camera.

"It was tragic to watch," police spokesman Gordon Bassham said. *"The fact that people were more interested in taking a picture with a cell phone and shopping for snacks than helping this innocent young woman is, frankly, revolting."*

Wichita police chief Norman Williams had even stronger words: *"That's crazy! What happened to our respect for life?"*

I don't think any of us would step over someone in such peril, but how have we become so conditioned so as to not even notice people hidden from our view but nonetheless, suffering? Our hesitancy to fight for children caught up in human trafficking? Our ambivalence toward unborn life? Our silence about the modern holocaust in Syria?

Maybe those issues are so gigantic that we simply don't know what to do. It's almost like we become paralyzed by the immensity of such issues. So, let's hone in much closer. I ask this, as I will ask once again later: who is someone in our Canal Winchester area we have become conditioned not to see?

Would anyone be interested in prayer walking Canal with me to open our hearts and our eyes to see what we might have been conditioned not to see? Email me at clarkhess.cw@gmail.com

Where Are We Preoccupied?

As I have shared in many of my messages, I believe we are busy to the point of harm. Busyness is likely the greatest enemy of our spiritual health. We are as a result, the most preoccupied generation in human history. We are busy. We are preoccupied. We are blind to the needs of others. We are blind to the spiritual dynamics going on right beside us. I wonder how often we rub right up against God, love, life, beauty but have had our spiritual senses muted enough that we miss it?

What matters have filled your thoughts today? This past week? Is your life so full of the cares of this world, there isn't room for more important matters? What other matters have been crowded out by the busyness of your life? These are haunting questions to wrestle with, if you ask me.

Where Have We Become Indifferent?

Then, as with these soldiers, we become indifferent. Do you think it is even fair to compare our own indifference with that of the soldiers? Is it indifference only in degree? Or was their indifference entirely unlike anything else?

In his book ***When a Nation Forgets God***, Erwin Lutzer retells one Christian's story of living in Hitler's Germany. The man wrote:

I lived in Germany during the Nazi Holocaust. I considered myself a Christian. We heard stories of what was happening to the Jews, but we tried to distance ourselves from it, because what could anyone do to stop it?

A railroad track ran behind our small church, and each Sunday morning we could hear the whistle in the distance and then the wheels coming over the tracks. We became disturbed when we heard the cries coming from the train as it passed by. We realized that it was carrying Jews like cattle in the cars!

Week after week the whistle would blow. We dreaded to hear the sound of those wheels because we knew that we would hear the cries of the Jews en route to a death camp. Their screams tormented us.

We knew the time the train was coming, and when we heard the whistle blow we began singing hymns. By the time the train came past our church, we were singing at the top of our voices. If we heard the screams, we sang more loudly and soon we heard them no more.

Years have passed, and no one talks about it anymore. But I still hear that train whistle in my sleep. God forgive me; forgive all of us who called ourselves Christians yet did nothing to intervene.

On April 12, 1999, **Elie Wiesel** delivered a speech to President Clinton, his wife, and members of Congress in Washington, D.C. The world-renowned humanitarian and author spoke about "***The Perils of Indifference***":

What is indifference? Etymologically, the word means "no difference." ***A strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, dusk and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and evil.*** What are its courses and inescapable consequences? Is it a philosophy? Is there a philosophy of indifference conceivable? Can one possibly view indifference as a virtue? Is it necessary at times to practice it simply to keep one's sanity, live normally, enjoy a fine meal and a glass of wine, as the world around us experiences harrowing upheavals?

Of course, indifference can be tempting—more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the Other to an abstraction.

Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony. One does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it.

Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor—never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees—not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own.

Now I want to **pivot** for a moment. Interestingly, there is one other story in the New Testament about **Jesus' robe**. It also is about a character that wanted the robe. But unlike the Roman soldiers at the foot of the Cross who wanted it for personal gain, this person wanted it—or should I say, wanted to touch it, in faith that from the One who wore it, would flow healing power to set her free from of a long-suffering disease of twelve years.

Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him. ²⁵ A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact,

she had gotten worse. ²⁷ **She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe.** ²⁸ For she thought to herself, **“If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed.”** ²⁹ Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition. ³⁰ Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, **“Who touched my robe?”** ³¹ His disciples said to him, “Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, ‘Who touched me?’” ³² But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. ³⁴ And he said to her, **“Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.”**

For this woman, the robe was not an impersonal piece of clothing for desired gain, it was a connection of hope to the Messiah. Her heart told her, if I can just touch his robe, I will be healed. We don't know her actual words, only that she told Jesus what she had done after falling on her knees before Him. We do, however, know Jesus' words in response: **“Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.”**

This story captures the stark contrast between the soldiers and the One hanging on the Cross above them. Jesus was so attuned to the cares and concerns of the people all around Him, that even on this day when he is pressed and hurried by others who need Him urgently, He has the sensitivity and compassion to respond...he literally **felt** when this woman of great faith touched His robe!

Conclusion

Let's grow in the grace of Jesus' sensitivity, kindness, and compassion. But to do so means we have to die! Yes, I did just say that. I read in my Lenten devotional a couple of days ago that Lent calls us to die and that's a good thing!

Lent invites us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. We have to die...die to our self, die to our self-orientation, die to our conditioning, die to our preoccupation, and die to our indifference.

Who might Jesus be able to reach in Canal Winchester with our compassion because we chose—by the grace of God—to die to ourselves?