

Sunday Worship - June 9, 2024



Through Him, All Things by Lauren Wright Pittman. Block print with oil-based ink over gouache painting

PRIDE Sunday

Esther 3:1-11, 4:1-17

First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa

*“Striving to live as Jesus lived –
confronting injustice with love, compassion, service.”*

Welcome to Worship

Liturgy by Rev. Claudia Aguilar Rubalcava, Avery Arden, Rev. BrookeScott, and Matt Webb
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*Please stand if you are able

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Source of Life, in the beginning,

ALL: you made us and called us beloved.

Leader: When we forget how to love,

ALL: you remind us we are beloved.

Leader: When the powers of the world try to oppress us,

ALL: you name us beloved.

Leader: When our siblings in faith condemn us,

ALL: you claim us: beloved. We are your beloved, so today we sing your praises, Source of Love.

*HYMN Impartial, Compassionate God of All Lives

(sung to #12 ST. DENRO)

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*Impartial, compassionate God of all lives, in Christ you have shown us your love actualized
incarnate and weak in the arms of the poor, destroying all systems that keep closed the door.*

*Unholy, unjustified fear we incite, when we shun our neighbors yet cling to our rights.
Your children still wander the streets left in pain, we pass laws against them to prove our disdain.*

*Our hope is your freedom for both great and small, to strive for perfection and know all means all.
We challenge and question each law without grace, affirming the image of Christ on each face.*

*All honor we give you, O help us to see, your children are worthy to claim victory.
And so let our actions flow out of our praise, to seek transformation, your kingdom to raise.*

*CALL TO CONFESSION & PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION

Leader: Friends, God has named us beloved, and yet, this can be easy to forget. In a world of scarcity and threats, in a world that is rarely satisfied, the bravest thing we can do is trust that we belong here. So let us now turn to confession to tell the truth of our lives—to trust that even here, God's love is boundless.

Let us pray: Divine Creator, we come before you with humble hearts, acknowledging our shortcomings and seeking forgiveness.

ALL: We confess, O God, that we have subjected others to the kind of rejection and misunderstanding that you yourself experienced in the form of Jesus.

Have mercy on us, O God, when we have believed what others say about us rather than what you promise. Have mercy on us, O God, when we have caused others to doubt your love.

Leader: Forgive us for the moments we stand in our own way or in the way of others—dimming a God-given light, participating in the silencing of God-given voices.

Forgive us, O God, for the times when we have allowed ego to overshadow our ability to extend solidarity and support to our most marginalized siblings.

Like Esther, who risked her life to advocate for her people, help us to use whatever privilege or advantages we possess to uplift the voices of those who are vulnerable and oppressed.

Grant us the courage to stand in solidarity with our queer and trans siblings, even when doing so puts us at risk or challenges our comfort.

ALL: In times of fear and uncertainty, may we find solace in your promises, O God.

Give us courage to trust our belovedness even in a world that sometimes threatens to snuff out the life that has been breathed into us by God. Strengthen us to embody your love and courage in all that we do. Guide us to walk humbly, act justly, and extend grace and mercy to all whom we Encounter. May our lives be a reflection of your boundless love and embrace. In your holy name we pray.

Time of silent prayer

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Leader: Siblings in Christ, as long as we live on this side of heaven, there may be days when self-doubt and insecurity creep in, or moments when fear and external pressures threaten our courage. There will surely be days when we fail to believe our own belovedness or affirm it in those around us. Even still, the promises of God are for us. Though the road is long and difficult, nothing can separate us from God's love—not religious doctrine, not denominational decisions, not a person's unbelief, not even our own fears.

Friends, each day is a new chance to affirm life, to start over, and to love more fiercely. We are being renewed daily. This is our hope.

ALL: We are all loved, forgiven, embraced, and cherished. We are God's beloved. Amen.

*RESPONSE HYMN #843 My Soul Is at Rest

My soul is at rest in God alone; my salvation comes from God.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: Friends, to celebrate that we are all loved, forgiven, embraced, and cherished by God, I invite you to pass the peace of Christ to one another with a blessing. As you greet each person, I encourage you to say: "I see the image of God in you. You are beloved."

I see the image of God in you.

ALL: You are beloved.

Leader: Let us pass the peace of God to one another!

DISCOVERY TIME

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Leader: Loving God, Living Word,

Help us be present to your Spirit moving among us here

as we open ourselves to scripture that both comforts and challenges.

Breathe your holy wisdom into human words;
imbue us with the boldness to wrestle blessing from this book
that is said to hold nothing but condemnation for some.
As we bring old baggage and our own fresh, unique insights,
open our hearts and minds to your good news, here and now.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Esther 4:1-17 (Common English Bible) - A Crisis for the Jews

Reader 1: When Mordecai learned what had been done, he tore his clothes, dressed in mourning clothes, and put ashes on his head. Then he went out into the heart of the city and cried out loudly and bitterly. He went only as far as the King's Gate because it was against the law for anyone to pass through it wearing mourning clothes. At the same time, in every province and place where the king's order and his new law arrived, a very great sadness came over the Jews. They gave up eating and spent whole days weeping and crying out loudly in pain. Many Jews lay on the ground in mourning clothes and ashes. When Esther's female servants and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, the queen's whole body showed how upset she was. She sent everyday clothes for Mordecai to wear instead of mourning clothes, but he rejected them.

Reader 2: Esther then sent for Hathach, one of the royal eunuchs whose job it was to wait on her. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was going on and why he was acting this way. Hathach went out to Mordecai, to the city square in front of the King's Gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him. He spelled out the exact amount of silver that Haman promised to pay into the royal treasury. It was in exchange for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave Hathach a copy of the law made public in Susa concerning the Jews' destruction so that Hathach could show it to Esther and report it to her. Through him Mordecai ordered her to go to the king to seek his kindness and his help for her people. Hathach came back and told Esther what Mordecai had said.

Reader 1: In reply Esther ordered Hathach to tell Mordecai: "All the king's officials and the people in his provinces know that there's a single law in a case like this. Any man or woman who comes to the king in the inner courtyard without being called is to be put to death. Only the person to whom the king holds out the gold scepter may live. In my case, I haven't been called to come to the king for the past thirty days."

Reader 2: When they told Mordecai Esther's words, he had them respond to Esther: "Don't think for one minute that, unlike all the other Jews, you'll come out of this alive simply because you are in the palace. In fact, if you don't speak up at this very important time, relief and rescue will appear for the Jews from another place, but you and your family will die. But who knows? Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family."

Reader 1: Esther sent back this word to Mordecai: "Go, gather all the Jews who are in Susa and tell them to give up eating to help me be brave. They aren't to eat or drink anything for three whole days, and I myself will do the same, along with my female servants. Then, even though it's against the law, I will go to the king; and if I am to die, then die I will." So Mordecai left where he was and did exactly what Esther had ordered him.

Leader: For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us,
ALL: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Rev. Lori Wunder

HYMN #769 For Everyone Born

1. *For everyone born, a place at the table, for everyone born, clean water and bread, a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing, for everyone born, a star overhead,*

REFRAIN: and God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace: yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice, justice and joy!

2. *For woman and man, a place to the table, revising the roles, deciding the share, with wisdom and grace, dividing the power, for woman and man, a system that's fair, REFRAIN*
3. *For young and for old, a place at the table, a voice to be heard, a part in the song, the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled, for young and for old, the right to belong, REFRAIN*
4. *For just and unjust, a place at the table, abuser, abused, with need to forgive, in anger, in hurt, a mindset of mercy, for just and unjust, a new way to live, REFRAIN*
5. *For everyone born, a place at the table, to live without fear, and simply to be, to work, to speak out, to witness and worship, for everyone born, the right to be free, REFRAIN*

SHARING OF JOYS & CONCERNS AND 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 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 FOR THE OFFERING

Leader: Family of faith, we celebrate our gifts knowing that the work is not yet done; the world is not yet as it should be. And so we bring the gifts God has given us to build a world where all people are included, welcomed, and made whole. Let us now offer our gifts back to God.

GATHERING OF THE GIFTS

OFFERTORY

~ Offerings may be placed in the basket located at the back of church or given online at www.firstpresmv.com

*HYMN OF THANKSGIVING #70 What Does the Lord Require of You?

What does the Lord require of you? What does the Lord require of you?

Justice, kindness, walk humbly with your God.

To seek justice and love kindness and walk humbly with your God.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

ALL: Holy God, you have gifted us with so much. Daily we offer ourselves and our gifts to you with hope for a better world where your image is honored in each person. Use what we offer for the building of your kin-dom, and give us courage to dream of that day. In the name of the Beloved we pray. Amen.

***HYMN #767 Together We Serve**

- 1. Together we serve, united by love, inviting God's world to the glorious feast.
We work and we pray through sorrow and joy, extending God's love to the last and the least.*
- 2. We seek to become a beacon of hope, a lamp for the heart and a light for the feet.
We learn, year by year, to let love shine through until we see Christ in each person we meet.*
- 3. We welcome the scarred, the wealthy, the poor, the busy, the lonely, and all who need care.
We offer a home to those who will come, our hands quick to help, our hearts ready to dare.*
- 4. Together, by grace, we witness and work, remembering Jesus, in whom we grow strong.
Together we serve in Spirit and truth, remembering love is the strength of our song.*

***JUNE BIRTHDAY BLESSING & BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE**

Thank you to the following people for helping with our service this morning:

Pat Hogan, Accompanist
Gerald Gerber and Scott Larson, AV
Elizabeth Riechers, Liturgist
Pat Hogan, Fellowship Host

First Pres Mount Vernon Staff:

Lori Wunder, Pastor
Kristi Karwal-Clark, Interim Director of Christian Education
Position Vacant, Music Director
Donna Warhover, Office Manager
Jonathan Walsh, Treasurer
Trent Bowman, Custodian