

Nashville UCC Sunday Morning Worship
September 12, 2021 – 16th Sunday of Pentecost

LIGHTING ALTAR CANDLES
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome, especially to those who are worshipping with us on Facebook Live!

Checking Emergency buckets after church.

CENTERING MUSIC

CALL TO WORSHIP

Here in this sanctuary of our God, that we learn to fulfill the royal law of God's Word:

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

May our praise and worship this day, remind us of God's love, forgiveness, and healing grace.

OPENING HYMN Chalice #687 "In Christ There Is No East or West"

OPENING PRAYER

Holy God of all humanity, truly you show no partiality, for you treat all people with equity. You have chosen the poor to be rich in faith. You have chosen the downtrodden to be heirs of your kingdom. And You call us to love our neighbors as ourselves. You call us to speak and act with mercy and grace. Open up our eyes, and ears, our mouths and our hearts, that we may see our neighbor's need and proclaim your good news in word and deed. In Christ Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC REFLECTION ON 9/11

SCRIPTURE READING James 2:1-13

My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory. For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they

who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So, speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

SERMON "Rich in Faith"

HYMN OF RESPONSE Chalice #490 "Sister, Let Me Be Your Servant" vs 1,2,3 & 5

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Joys:

Judy Butts-Good reports from the Doc after her Chemo treatments.

Concerns: Remembering 9/11

Afghanistan People

Covid – youngsters Ethan Deuble & Grace Berger positive for Covid.

Carol Homan's friend Kathy and her husband George-pancreatic cancer

Ed Miller's mother Shirley is recovering from a broken hip at Piqua Manor.

Russ & Elly Kimmerly. Russ is being treated for prostate cancer.

Teresa Knock – Bad knee – Difficulty walking.

Mitch Fogle's mother Roberta – mild stroke – rehab at Spring Meade.

Nationwide floods from Hurricane Ida

Wild fires out west

SILENT PERSONAL PRAYER

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Almighty God, As we remember the events of September 11, 2001 and the decades of war since, we find ourselves caught between memories that haunt us and the hope that comes from you. Mere mention of the date launches a myriad of thoughts, images and emotions. Hear us as we pray for healing of spirit and of memories for people whose lives were affected on that day or since.

We remember the innocent victims who died that day or since and our hearts are moved to grief. We are mindful of broken families, orphans, co-workers and friends who grieve still. We lift our prayers for all who grieve.

We remember the selfless women and men who bravely served as first responders, some of whom died or were injured in the process of serving. We thank you for them and for all who contributed toward recovery at Ground Zero in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington D.C., in a field near Shanksville, PA or anywhere around the globe where people gathered to comfort or to pray for others.

Help us bring an end to war as we work for peace with justice in ways that are peaceful. Hear our prayer for the people of Afghanistan.

Most of all, dear God, move us from despair to hope, from isolation to community, from war to peace, from death to life, with you and your people in every tribe and nation, so that together we might build your beloved community on earth as it is in heaven.

Be present, O God, with the sick and those suffering in mind, body, soul and spirit. Bless those who minister to them in your name. May your gracious presence be known in very real way to all those near death this day. May they look forward to the vision of your glorious face.

Be present with our church...

Be present, O God, with all affected by the winds and waters of Hurricane Ida, and with those suffering the loss from raging fires, and those suffering the ravages of Covid.

...God of the ages, before your eyes all empires rise and fall yet you are changeless. Be near us in these moments of remembrance. By your Spirit give rise in us to broad sympathy for all the peoples of your earth. Strengthen us to comfort those who mourn and work in large ways and small for those things that make for peace. Bless the people and leaders of this nation and all nations so that warfare, may become only a historic memory. We pray in the strong name of the Prince of Peace. And we pray as he taught us...

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.

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Every generous act of giving, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of light. Our gratitude prompts us to give of ourselves back to God. Let us give with hearts of love that are rich in faith.

OFFERTORY MUSIC

DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God above, ye heavenly host.
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost! Amen

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Receive our offerings, Gracious God, as our commitment to give from our lives and our hearts to the work of the church; the work of love to our neighbors.

May we hear your word and make it real in our world. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN Chalice #494 "They'll Know We Are Christians" 4 verses

BENEDICTION

With hearts renewed and our spirits filled with the love of God,
Go into the world to follow Jesus, who taught us how to love.
As you go, listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
Hear the word, do the word, and live the word.
Go in peace! Amen!

POSTLUDE

Sunday, September 12, 2021
James 2:1-13 Impartiality
Rich in Faith

I sat down this week to write today's sermon and I was pondering these words from James, warning us as Christians against acts of favoritism and encouraging us to treat everyone impartially—no matter if they are rich and wear gold rings and fine clothes, or are poor wearing old, wrinkled Goodwill Clothes.

As I worked, I was distracted by the sound of a jet plane rumbling over the house, and that sound reminded me that Sept 11 is this week. That sound quickly turned my thoughts to memories of 9/11/2001—that shocking day 20 years ago when 2 jet airliners were turned into missiles with human cargo and were sent violently crashing into New York's twin towers, turning them into towering infernos of death and destruction right before our very eyes. Much like the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, it was one of those moments when anyone alive at the time can tell you exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news. I know I can and I bet you can too.

I also remember how we turned our hearts to God in the aftermath. Churches immediately opened their doors that day for spontaneous prayer vigils. People could hardly wait to get to a church. I attended one that day too—at MVH. I was there for a doctor's appointment when word spread throughout the hospital campus that the chaplains were inviting everyone to prayer in the hospital chapel. The place filled quickly with doctors, nurses, office workers, visitors and even a few patients in their gowns—people of every stripe and social standing were there. It was one of those rare occasions when it didn't matter who we were—whether we were privileged or poor—whether a person was the hospital CEO or the janitor—a brain surgeon or the girl who brings the lunch trays—none of that mattered that day. The only thing that mattered was that we were all united as fellow Americans and nothing seemed more important in that moment than being in that chapel together to seek God's face. It was truly a day when we showed no partiality. We looked at each other kindly, no matter who we were. We hugged each other, cried together, shared our fears, sorrows and prayers, united in our common lament.

We hoped that our common crisis would renew our sense of unity and togetherness. We hoped it would renew our faith and return us to God. But of course, those feelings didn't last long enough. After a while, people drifted back to whatever they were doing before 9/11. During the aftermath of 9/11 we were all asking, "Where was God in this?" You know, maybe that was the wrong question. Maybe the question should have been, "Where were WE in this? Where is our faith in times of challenge?"

Our Scripture lessons today have something to teach us about faith. James says if we want to know what faith means we should look to those who are poor, for "God has chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith." There is an old Jewish saying that states "The person who is poor and free from envy; who is grateful to the Lord for everything, is richer than all, because that person does not love the foolish things that are a common temptation to humanity."

I DON'T WANT TO ROMANTICIZE THE POOR. IT'S A HARD LIFE AND NO ONE WANTS TO BE POOR. IN FACT WE DEMONIZE THE POOR..... THE DIVIDE BETWEEN RICH AND POOR HAS WIDENED. THE POOR ARE NOT RICH IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD BUT JAMES TELLS US THEY ARE RICH IN FAITH.

The poor are rich in faith because the only confidence they have—the only security they have—is in God. Those who are poor are vulnerable on so many levels. When I was serving the church in Middletown, I looked out the back door of the church one day, and found that some homeless person had set up home at our back door. Talk about vulnerable! Weather—rain—storm—heat—food—theft—etc. God is the only one he could rely on. God is the one who the poor trust to supply what they need.

I used to see this time after time when I helped in a women's support group that ministered to low-income women. Most of these were single African-American women with children. In the eyes of the world they had 3 strikes against them—they were black—they were black women—and they were single mothers with children. And believe me, our society is not kind to single women with children of any race. These women had little of the world's goods but much of the world's hardships. They had limited opportunities and struggled hard to make a life for themselves and their children. One of the things that impressed me most about them was their great faith in spite of their hardships. If you asked them how they were doing, they would say, "I am so blest." And they would count out with gratitude all the little ways God had entered their lives and blessed them that day.

On days when they were struggling, they would pour out their hearts and talk about how they were putting their faith in God to provide for them or to resolve a problem. It just gave me goose-bumps when one of them would come back with a remarkable story about how God DID provide for them. They could see so clearly where God had acted in their lives. They had such radical faith; casting their entire trust on God. I felt that I was in the presence of awesome people who were rich in faith and I felt ashamed. Compared to their great faith, my faith felt so puny. They relied on God for everything. I wondered if I could take the same radical leap of faith.

You see, we who are rich in the world, we who have achieved some success making our way in the world, have learned to rely on ourselves for what we need. If we think about the things that bring us security we are most likely to think that things like money, family or friends. We have faith in our insurance policies, retirement pensions or 401k funds. We have faith in our homes, or our social status, or our bank account give us a sense of stability. And these are all good things. They are all blessings from God. But many times we mistake them for God. We place our faith in these things instead of in the God who gave us these good things. And so when our world is threatened—when the stock market takes a dive and drags the pension fund with it, when friends or family fails us, when our health fails us, when jobs become scarce, or when our job ends and we retire—when our faith in the things we thought were stable is shaken, our faith in God is shaken too. When the things we counted on are threatened we learn the lessons of faith all over again. It's true. The poor in the world—those who have less to cling to—are rich in faith. They challenge us to think about where our own faith really lies.

Those who are poor are rich in faith because their full trust is in God. One of my favorite preachers, William Sloane Coffin says "faith is being grasped by the power of love. Faith is recognizing that what makes God, "God", is infinite mercy, not infinite control—not power as we define power, but the power of unending love." "Faith is trusting God without reservation" and surrendering to God with that kind of trust is a very vulnerable and radical thing to do indeed!

September has turned into quite a month of National reflection and remembrance for us. Two of the largest catastrophic events that have ever happened in the history of this country have taken place at this point in the year: the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, (and this year Hurricane Ida) and the events of 9/11. these are events that shook the ground we stand on, and they continue to do so all these years later. Some say these events are the defining moments of this present generation. If that is the case, how have they defined us? How have they shaped us? Will future generations look back and see us as people of fear? Or people of faith? The answer to this question will define our humanity.

I'd like to close with these words from Ps. 146

Do not put your trust in princes, or in mortals in whom there is no help.

When their breath departs, they return to the earth, on that very day their plans perish.

Blessed are those whose help is in the God of Jacob.

Whose hope is in the Lord their God, Maker of heaven and earth.

AMEN.

Daily thoughts September 6-10

Monday, September 6

Good morning! This is Pastor Lynn with today's thought.

Happy Labor Day! This may be my favorite holiday of the entire year! Oh, I know – Halloween is loads of fun; on Thanksgiving you can eat until you burst; and Christmas is a time to gather with family and enjoy loved ones opening their gifts. I still like Labor Day better than all of them, though, because Labor Day has no agenda at all. There are no decorations that must be put up, no turkey that must be cooked for a houseful of people, no gifts that must be bought for family. The only agenda on Labor Day is taking it easy! Even the name of the day reminds us of that: Labor Day. “Remember not to labor, now; it's Labor Day!” Isn't it ironic that we allow ourselves to rest only once a year on a secular holiday when God has advised us to do the very same thing once a week? The Sabbath is God's Labor Day! Just as our secular Labor Day honors the workers on whose labor we depend, the Sabbath honors the labor of God who created the entire universe, and remembers the labor of the Hebrews when they were slaves in Egypt. It says to us, “Even God rested after his work. You do the same thing! Once you were slaves in Egypt and couldn't rest at all. Don't do that again!” We are called to worship God, not worship work! Maybe we should take the Sabbath more seriously and really relax once a week. It's what God wants us to do, after all; and God certainly ought to know what's good for us! Blessings on all of you on this Labor Day! Relax and enjoy it!

Wednesday, September 8

I hope you don't mind a few more reflections about work and rest in this week of Labor Day. I am convinced that we work way too hard because we secretly believe that God wants us to do that. We don't really believe that observing a Sabbath rest is the right thing to do, because our culture tells us to work, work, work. See if any of these commonly held beliefs sound familiar.

Belief #1: You should feel guilty if you rest. Reality: God tells us to rest for our own good.

Belief #2: You are only worthwhile if you are successful at a career. Reality: We are worthwhile because God says that we are.

Belief #3: Hard work makes you happy. Reality: Working too hard can kill you.

Belief #4: If you just stay busy, you'll be fine. Reality: Staying busy is often a way to avoid the problems that are crippling our lives.

Belief #5: If you are sick, in pain, or overwhelmed, you should work anyway. Reality: Sometimes we need to take time off to heal because we're human.

God tells us to take a Sabbath rest. In fact, it's one of the Ten Commandments on which we put so much emphasis! Let's take the Sabbath seriously. God really, really wants us to! Blessings on all of you!

Friday, September 10

Where were you twenty years ago tomorrow at 8:45 a.m.? I know exactly where I was. I was on the highway just south of Tipp City driving to a class at my seminary. I was enjoying a sunny, late summer day when I heard a report on the radio that a plane had flown into the World Trade Center. I don't need to tell you how horrified I was, because you were, too. I wept and I prayed; and so did you. Now that almost twenty years have passed, we have a choice as to how we can remember that day. We can focus on the hate and the evil that caused such a terrible event; or we can focus on the amazing courage and compassion that people demonstrated. I, for one, choose to focus on the latter. I have read the stories of first responders who ran into the Twin Towers to help others at the cost of their own lives. I have read about Father Mychal, a Fire Department chaplain, who was the first one killed by debris falling from the collapsing towers. And I have visited the Flight 93 Memorial in Pennsylvania and heard about the bravery of the passengers who were determined not to let the hijackers get to their target. My son-in-law's bomb-sniffing K9 is named "Beamer" in memory of passenger Todd Beamer, who was part of the organized resistance on Flight 93 and gave the command, "Let's roll." I choose to focus on God's presence shown through the courage and compassion of so many people on 9-11. Although hate did its best, love won on that day. It always does. Blessings on all of you.