

## Order of Worship for May 14, 2023

### Prelude

P: Jesus Christ is risen!

**C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

### Opening Hymn: “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus” – Hymn #821

### Confession:

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: Heavenly Father, on this Mother’s Day we remember how You love us as an ever faithful parent.

**C: You invite us to pray to You as Father.**

P: But we run away from You like a spoiled child. That is why Jesus cried:

**C: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”**

**All: Forgive us, Father.** (pause for silence)

P: Our heavenly Father deals with us not according to our evil, but according to His mercy in His Son, Christ Jesus, who died and rose for us. He will not leave us as orphans, but has adopted us into His family. In His name and by His command, I forgive you all your sins.

**C: Amen.**

P: “For we did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,

**C: but we have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”**

### Entrance Psalm

P: Your word is a lamp to my feet

**C: and a light to my path.**

P: Forever, O LORD, Your word

**C: is firmly fixed in the heavens.**

P: Your faithfulness endures to all generations;

**C: You have established the earth, and it stands fast.**

P: By Your appointment they stand this day,

**C: for all things are Your servants.**

P: If Your law had not been my delight,

**C: I would have perished in my affliction.**

P: I will never forget Your precepts,

**C: for by them You have given me life.**

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Your word is a lamp to my feet

**C: and a light to my path.**

## **Prayer of the Day**

P: Let us pray... O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant that we may think those things that are right; and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

## **Hymn of Praise: “Christ Be My Leader” – Hymn #861**

### **First Reading – Acts 17:16-31**

R: Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us, for “‘In Him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed His offspring.’

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.”

R: O Lord have mercy on us.

C: Thanks be to God.

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### **Second Reading—1 Peter 3:13-22**

R: Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with

gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.

R: O Lord have mercy on us.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Third Reading – John 14:15-21**

P: Jesus said to His disciples, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

P: O Lord have mercy on us.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Children’s Message:**

**Sermon Hymn:** *“Thee Will I Love, My Strength, My Tower”* - **Hymn #694**

**Sermon:** *“If You Love Me”* - **John 14:15-21**

We’ve all had the experience of wanting to get a project done but putting it off for later. Sometimes we wait because we just don’t care enough about the project, but other times we care a lot – and still end up doing something else. I, for one, end up cleaning my desk when I have a sermon to write and do not want to do it..

So why do we procrastinate? Are we built to operate this way at some times? Or is there something wrong with the way we’re approaching work?

It all starts with a simple choice between working now on a given project and doing anything else: working on a different project, doing something fun or doing nothing at all.

The decision to work on something is driven by how much we value accomplishing the project in that moment – what psychologists call its subjective value. And procrastination, in psychological terms, is what happens when the value of doing something else outweighs the value of working now.

This way of thinking suggests a simple trick to defeat procrastination: find a way to boost the subjective value of working now, relative to the value of other things. You could increase the value of the project, decrease the value of the distraction, or some combination of the two.

For example, instead of cleaning my desk, I might try to focus on why writing a sermon is personally important to me. Or I could think about how unpleasant cleaning can actually be – especially when I think of how much of a mess I can make..

It's simple advice, but adhering to this strategy can be quite difficult, mainly because there are so many forces that diminish the value of working in the present.

The tendency for people to devalue money and other goods based on time is called “delay discounting.” For example, on average receiving \$100 three months from now is worth the same to people as receiving \$83 right now. People would rather lose \$17 than wait a few months to get a larger reward.

Other factors also influence subjective value, such as how much money someone has recently gained or lost. The key point is that there is not a perfect match between objective value and subjective value.

New research supports the idea that mental effort is intrinsically costly: for this reason, people generally choose to work on an easier task rather than a harder task. Furthermore, there are greater subjective costs of work that feel harder (though these costs can be offset by experience with the task at hand).

It's for this reason that procrastination seems to stem from a failure to “identify sufficiently with your future self” – in other words, the self for whom the goal is most relevant.

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” That may not seem like a solution to procrastination. Instead it is easy to focus on the “keeping My commandments” part as being perfect or at least without any major blame. When we hear the word “commandment” we think of the “Thou shalt nots” of the Bible. We aren’t supposed to lie, cheat, commit adultery, curse, or hurt others. And it is easy to connect that with being good enough to say that we can hope to make the standard of loving God.

Jesus is speaking these words in John’s Gospel. John, in the first letter is the one who talks about Jesus being the “atoning sacrifice” for our sins. But then he also says, “Whoever claims to live in Jesus must walk as He did.” So what is it? Do we follow His commands to be good enough, or does He forgive us despite our failures?

Jesus is talking to His disciples on the night before He died. They would not understand what He said until after He rose from the dead on Easter. Though Jesus said many great things to the disciples and therefore to us, the key is to see that He was what He was about to do as He allowed Himself to be arrested, tortured, and killed for us on the cross.

In that context Jesus speaks also of the “Counselor,” the Holy Spirit. Jesus would only physically be with the disciples for a while before He left to return to His Father. Why was He going to do that? Wouldn’t it be easier for Him to stay there and lead them as He did the past three years?

That is where, “If you love Me, then keep My commandments,” comes in. Jesus’ commandments did not focus on “Don’t do this,” or even “Do this.” He focused on “Love your enemies,” and “Love, as I have loved you.” The way we keep His commands is by reaching out in love to others. It is not about living a cautious life of never doing things wrong, but about risking by giving to others.

But do we do that? While psychologists speak about “subjective” and “objective” values, God’s Word shows us that the problem is sin. Even if we know in our hearts that God is right, we still act according to what “we” want. And all our attempts to decrease the “subjective” and increase the “objective” are described in that way by Isaiah: “All our righteousness is like filthy rags.”

“If you love Me.” This isn’t just anyone talking, it is Jesus. Jesus spoke those words as He was about to suffer His death on the cross. He died to forgive us of our sins. His love for us is so great, that in response, we can love Him. As John says in

his first letter, “In this is love, not that we love God, but that He first loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. “But how do we love Him? Why couldn’t He have stayed to make it easier to love Him directly?

Jesus died, as John emphasizes, to save all people. If Jesus stayed on earth, the disciples would have clung to Him instead of spreading out in the world loving other people as Jesus loved them. Jesus would be there for the people in His general vicinity, but not for the world. By going Jesus was preparing His followers to keep His commandments by going out into the world with His love.

That is where the Counselor, the Holy Spirit comes in. The Holy Spirit is there to help us, but He isn’t physical like Jesus. The Holy Spirit then can guide us not to Himself, but to the physical—to other people. Where we encounter Jesus is in other people. Jesus said, “Whatever you do to one of the least of these, you do it to Me.” Martin Luther said we are led by the Holy Spirit to see other people as “little Christs.” For us to love, means that we need real, physical people to receive that love. Love is not some good feelings, but the whole act of reaching out to other people. That is where we can encounter Jesus’ love for us. We keep Jesus’ commandments not to qualify to receive His love, but to experience the love He already has for us.

That is what can move us to love. “If you love Me.” The relationship we have with Jesus is the key. When we love Jesus, then we want to love the people Jesus has put in our lives as he commanded us to do. And as we love those people, we learn to love Him more. It is a cycle that moves us from “feeling” love into “doing” love. “If you love Me,” we do because of how much He loves us.

**Hymn of Praise:** “*Sing Praise to the God of Israel*”- **Hymn #936**

**First Article of the Creed and Explanation:** p 322

**Prayers:**

P: Lord, in Your mercy.

C: Hear our prayer.

**Lord’s Prayer:**

**Closing Prayer:** C: Amen.

**Blessing:** (Pastor) C: Amen.

**Closing Hymn:** “*Children of the Heavenly Father*” –  
**Hymn #725**

**Postlude:**

