

the  
**HARBINGER**  
open minds open hearts

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From the Pews, Caroline Clark

My informal polling of friends and family members indicates that the story of Joseph is a favorite Bible tale for many young children (not to mention Andrew Lloyd Webber). Every child has a memory of bullying, or at least unkind words spoken to them by siblings at home or peers at school, so it's easy to empathize with Joseph's trauma at the hands of his cruel, jealous brothers. The story offers a comforting poetic justice, whereby Joseph rises from humble slave to Pharaoh's vizier. If Quentin Tarantino were to make a film celebrating Joseph's saga in modern Hollywood, he would have to change the ending to make it fit his particular genre of revenge fantasy; in a Tarantino version we would be able to vicariously enjoy Joseph's wish fulfillment when he, through God's divine assistance and with the power of the Egyptian pharaoh behind him, extracts revenge on the envious bullies – his own brothers – who sold him into slavery.

Of course, Tarantino's vision is not God's. Joseph surprises the reader with his humane reconciliation with his brothers. Instead of unleashing furious reprisals, "he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them." Joseph offered shelter to his former tormentors and provided them with bounteous resources to help them escape the ravages of famine. In doing so he proves that God's will is love, not hate. Even when that hate is (perhaps) well deserved.

God bending our hearts towards reconciliation is, I believe, the most important meaning of Joseph's tale, foreshadowing Jesus's much later enjoinder to "turn the other cheek." Still, during the pandemic which colors so many of our thoughts and experiences these days, I can't help but focus on Joseph's question to his brothers: "Is my father still alive?" Later in Genesis we see the joy of Jacob's reunion with his beloved son, whom he had believed to be dead. Those of us who have recently lost loved ones – through the pandemic or other causes – can understand well the emotion characterizing this blissful reunion on earth. In a time when so many of us have been kept apart from our loved ones, the grace of this Biblical reunion offers hope for the future. It is my hope for all of us that we are able to achieve reunions, like that of Jacob and Joseph, in healthier times, and with a much shorter wait. If there's reconciliation that needs to happen first, let us, like Joseph, take the first step.



WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, August 16, 2020 | online, 10:00a | Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost



Preparation for Worship

O God, full of compassion, I commit and commend myself to you,  
in whom I am, and live, and know.

Be the goal of my pilgrimage, and my rest by the way.

Let my soul take refuge from the crowding turmoil  
of worldly thought beneath the shadow of your wings.

Let my heart, this sea of restless waves,  
find peace in you, O God. Amen.

—Augustine of Hippo

Gathering and Preparing for God's Word

Prelude *God of Grace and God of Glory* arr. McKechnie

Welcome and Announcements

Sentences of Scripture *from Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32*

God has forgiven us and drawn us close,

Reconciling us through Jesus Christ,

Who has lavished upon us

The fullness of the blessed Holy Spirit.

With glad and grateful hearts, praise the Lord!

Hymn #620 *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven* LAUDA ANIMA  
See hymn sheet.

Prayer of Confession & Assurance of Pardon

Good and gracious God,

forgive us for our impatience and our lack of imagination.

We have not trusted the size and scope of your goodness,

your grace, and your love.

We are forgetful about the many ways that you have been

present for us in the past,

asking only what you will do for us in the future.

We fall back on the fallacy that life is all about us.

Forgive us, and remake us into new disciples today.

Give us courage to face the unknown.

Give us wise hearts, to see other people as you see them.

And make us eager to share the kindness and love of

Christ in ways we never pictured we might do.

It is in His name that we pray. Amen.

Hearing God's Word

Prayer for Illumination

Epistle Lesson, *Ephesians 2:13-18*

Old Testament Lesson, *Genesis 45:1-15*

Sermon

"Come Closer"

Anthem

Ose Shalom

(The One Who Brings Peace)

Ginsberg

Responding to God's Word

Affirmation of Faith, *from the Confession of 1967*

In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.  
Jesus Christ is God with humankind.

He is the eternal Son of the Father,  
who became human and lived among us to fulfill  
the work of reconciliation.

He is present in the church by the power of the Holy Spirit  
to continue and complete his mission.

This work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
is the foundation of all confessional statements about God,  
humanity, and the world.

Therefore, the church calls all people to be reconciled  
to God and to one another.

Morning Prayers

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.**

Hymn #774 *There Is Now a New Creation* STUTTGART  
See hymn sheet.

Charge and Benediction

Postlude *Praise Him With the Sound of the Trumpet* Simone

Leading Worship this Morning

Ben Dorr, *preaching*

Lauren Slingerland, *liturgist*

Dave Edwards, *lay reader*

Nancy Smith, *organist*

Vance Jenkins, *pianist*

Diana Dailey, Emily Sweezey, Hunter Ditsch, Mark Kemp, *vocalists*

ADORATION

# 620 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven

(Psalm 103)

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heav - en; to his  
 2 Praise him for his grace and fa - vor to his  
 3 Fa - ther - like, he tends and spares us; well our  
 4 An - gels, help us to a - dore him; you be -

feet your trib - ute bring; ran - somed, healed, re - stored, for -  
 peo - ple in dis - tress; praise him still the same as  
 fee - ble frame he knows; in his hands he gent - ly  
 hold him face to face. Sun and moon, bow down be -

giv - en, ev - er - more his prais - es sing: Al - le - lu - ia!  
 ev - er, slow to chide, and swift to bless: Al - le - lu - ia!  
 bears us, res - cues us from all our foes. Al - le - lu - ia!  
 fore him, dwell - ers all in time and space: Al - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia! Praise the ev - er - last - ing King.  
 Al - le - lu - ia! Glo - rious in his faith - ful - ness.  
 Al - le - lu - ia! Wide - ly yet his mer - cy flows.  
 Al - le - lu - ia! Praise with us the God of grace.

This free paraphrase of Psalm 103 gains much energy and conviction by including the double "Alleluia!" before the final line of text. That repeated four-note figure descending from the tune's highest note gives voice to the praise that the rest of the hymn evokes.

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

# 774 There Is Now a New Creation

1 There is now a new cre - a - tion through the grace of Je - sus Christ,  
 2 Call the lost and found to - geth - er; tell the news to ev - ery - one:  
 3 Wrap the prod - i - gal in wel - come; run to greet the way - ward child.  
 4 Come and join the cel - e - bra - tion; come and join this hap - py feast;  
 5 There is now a new cre - a - tion through the grace of Je - sus Christ.

peace and rec - on - cil - i - a - tion with the God of end - less life.  
 now the past is gone for - ev - er and a new life has be - gun.  
 All is fin - ished and for - giv - en; let us now be rec - on - ciled.  
 Je - sus makes an in - vi - ta - tion to the great - est and the least.  
 Sing, with thanks and ad - o - ra - tion, to the God of end - less life!

At the center of this text stands a reference to the well-known parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), and the fourth stanza forms an effective bridge between that gospel story and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The first and last stanzas draw on 2 Corinthians 5:17.