

Worship Guide for Sunday, October 4, 2020 | 10:00 am

and

Thursday, October 8, 2020 | 7:00 pm

Watch live on NPC's Facebook Page.

For those who do not have a Facebook account, please visit www.newnanpres.org to view the recording.

PREPARING FOR GOD'S WORD

PRELUDE

Cliff Brock

This is the day the Lord has made. **Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Rev. David Jones

Welcome | We are glad you are worshiping with us virtually. Please let us know that you are tuned in. Visitors, please leave a message in the comments thread. One of our elders will reach out to you this week with a word of welcome. All may view the Worship Guide at www.newnanpres.org if you wish to follow along. Please notice that we have included two intentional moments of silence in this service: one at the end of the Prayer of Confession, as a time for personal confession and the other following the Sermon, as a time of reflection. We are also observing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper today. For those of you worshiping online, please gather your crackers or bread and juice and plan to participate with us.

Outreach Item of the Month | We will be collecting breakfast cereal during the month of October to be distributed to Bridging the Gap and One Room. You may drop off boxes of cereal to the Church Office during the week or we will host a Barrow Hall Portico Drop-Off on Sunday, October 25 from 11:00 am-1:00 pm.

OPENING PRAYER

As we prepare for a time of worship, we breathe in God's mercy...

And breathe out God's mercy to others...

HYMN 463 How Firm a Foundation, vv. 1 & 5

***How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in God's excellent Word!
What more can be said than to you God hath said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?***

***"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."***

CALL TO CONFESSION

Rev. Tyler Brock

Let us boldly confess our sin before the One who already knows our errors and is gracious to forgive our hidden faults.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rescuing God, you brought us out of the land of captivity, out of the house of slavery. Forgive us when we willingly return to slavery, making divine the machine of production, crafting idols from the excess of consumption. Forgive us when we consider ourselves so grand that we do not rest and enjoy your presence, defining ourselves by our ability rather than your love. Forgive us when we esteem ourselves so little that we dare not rest and sit with ourselves, exposed, without the cloak of productivity. Forgive us when we deem our species so central that we do not rest and halt consumption, decimating Earth, denying her Sabbath and integrity. Forgive us through Christ, who redeems us from the brokenness of slavery that we might enjoy your presence, creation, and community...

We keep a moment of silence for personal confession.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Righteousness does not come from our own doing or not doing. Righteousness comes from God, by faith. Through the faithfulness of Christ, our Lord, we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

RECEIVING THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you.

And, also with you.

A TIME FOR YOUNG DISCIPLES

Rev. Darcie Jones

GLORIA 583 Glory to God

Erik Swindlehurst, Bell Tree

*Glory to God, glory to God, glory in the highest!
Glory to God, glory to God, alleluia, alleluia!
Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!*

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God who speaks, your law is perfect, reviving the soul; your commandment is clear, enlightening the eyes. May your Spirit illumine this Word that our eyes may be opened and our souls revived. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Matthew 21:33-46

³³“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. ³⁴When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ ³⁹So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.” ⁴²Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? ⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. ⁴⁴The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” ⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

“The Church’s Accountability”

Rev. Jones

I used to teach Confirmation Class and when I would teach about worship I stressed that preaching (as each of them would get the chance to do as a High School Senior) was about two primary things: comfort and challenge. A sermon is the pastor’s attempt to interpret Holy Scripture for the benefit of God’s people. Sometimes what is needed is a word of comfort, sometimes a word of challenge, sometimes a mixture of both. Our text this morning is clearly in the realm of challenge.

Jesus is in Jerusalem following his Palm Sunday entry and after last week's encounter with the chief priests and the scribes, he continues his challenge to those in power. Jesus moves immediately from putting those leaders in their place to offering them a stark vision of what may happen because they have failed to produce good fruit on behalf of their God. Jesus makes the claim in last week's passage, (the immediately preceding verses) that those sinners who repent will enter the kingdom before those religious leaders who are self-righteous, offering mere lip service to God's call on their lives.

In this next parable, we hear tell of a landowner who spends time and effort into planting what he hopes will be a successful vineyard, then leases it to tenants who will work the land while he is away in another country. The landowner sends two envoys of servants to collect his portion of the produce of his land, but the tenants kill every one of them. The landowner then decides to send his son assuming that the tenants will respect him more than the servants. However, the tenants kill his son also scheming to keep his inheritance for themselves. Let me tell you what I was thinking when I first read this passage. I thought what a fool this landowner was for not learning his lesson with the first batch of servants. The second batch should have been armed and accompanied by the authorities and then to send your son after two rounds of murder was just foolhardy. Then I realized that in this parable, the landowner is God. Our God, whose mercy and love for all humanity far surpass my understanding of justice or strategic rent collection.

Here, there may be some room for hope, but what happens next is far from hopeful. The chief priests and the scribes respond to Jesus' question. Jesus asks what the vineyard owner will do to the tenants. They respond with human rationality that the landowner will have the tenants killed and replaced with new tenants.

It is important to note here that Jesus neither confirms nor denies their answer. He lets them believe what they will as the chief priests and the scribes slowly realize that Jesus is comparing their actions in the stewardship of God's vineyard to that of the wicked tenants. It is also important to note that historically and with damaging consequences, this passage has been used by Christians as a means of "replacement theology." This is the notion that God has removed Jewish people from God's favor and replaced them with Christians. This has led directly and indirectly to acts and beliefs of anti-Semitism in the church's history.

Because of our sordid history, we must take a moment to remember that Matthew's gospel is written by a Jewish author whose intended audience was his Jewish brothers and sisters. Christianity didn't come along until at least two generations following Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus is in fact chastising the leaders of his religion for poor stewardship of God's resources, but this is clearly a family feud, not a theological treatise on why one religion failed to live up to god's standards and was thus replaced.

According to the text, the chief priests and the scribes realize he is talking about them, but when Jesus tells the parables, no one mentioned is of a particular race or religion, just human beings, making a decision with their wallets instead of with their integrity. And this is the warning, the challenge for Christians in 2020: we are called to treat God's vineyard with honor, working hard that it might produce good fruit some of which God blesses us with and some of which is God's to do with what God will.

The way we respond to God's blessing in our lives is called stewardship. What do we do with the time, talent, and resources that have come from the opportunities God provides. Good stewardship is why we choose to give our money to the church - we trust that our church leaders are hearing this same parable and we believe they are taking it to heart, which gives us the confidence to support the work of the church and its worship, its programs, and its service to the world. Good stewardship is why we volunteer our time to serve on committees and task forces, attend worship, and participate in the church's programs. Good stewardship is why we are challenged in hearing this parable of Jesus. We want to know if we are producing good fruit for our master. Or, are we lying in wait to take advantage of God's generosity and second chances as we scheme to get a little farther ahead?

The last two weeks combine to tell a story of growth and accountability. The tax collectors and the prostitutes are lauded for their repentance in the former scripture and a warning that dire consequences await those who don't take seriously the stewardship of God's bounty. We must recognize this warning for what it is. An opportunity to do the right thing. There is a fine, French restaurant in Cleveland, Ohio called Edwin's. The owner and head chef is a convicted drug dealer who upon his release recognized how difficult it was for convicted felons to get a job, keep a job, and keep themselves on the straight and narrow. After years of pitching his French restaurant to investors and being turned down, he cobbled together enough cash to open his restaurant with a clear mission to "give formerly incarcerated adults a foundation in the culinary and hospitality industry, while providing a support network necessary for their long term success. Since 2013, Edwin's has been a wild success story with a 97% graduation rate from the program and only a 1% recidivism rate.

This is the kind of stewardship of which our God would be proud. And while you and I may not have the ability to make a culinary school and fine restaurant happen, we do have plenty of opportunities, small and large, in our own lives to produce the kind of fruit that our master is expecting. May we continue to be good stewards of our individual gifts and may we continue to push our church and our church leaders here in Newnan and beyond to be good stewards of God's blessings. I look forward to continuing our planting, our tending, and our harvesting together. Amen.

A time of silent reflection follows the sermon.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

OFFERING OF GRATITUDE

God blesses us generously and it is out of this abundance that we are able to give to the operation and mission of the church. This week, we highlight those who volunteer their time and talents to the ministries of the church. Our worship experience is elevated by our special musicians and all who attend. Our church communities are bolstered by those who teach, visit, and care for one another. Our service to God's children throughout the world helps to strengthen the church universal and build God's kingdom on earth. Thank you for your continued support of Newnan Presbyterian Church.

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Table

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Sanctus

Therefore, with all creation, we sing your praise:

***Holy, Holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.***

Words of Institution

Memorial Acclamation

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

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.

Breaking of the Bread

Jesus said: "I am the bread of life."

Jesus said: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Come to me and never be hungry; believe in me and never thirst." These are the gifts of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

ANTHEM

"Autumn Carol"

R. Schulz-Widmar

Chancel Choir, Kate Davis, Vicki Hunter, Nan Newman, Handbells, Roy Barbee, percussion

Sing to the Lord of harvest, sing songs of love and praise.
With joyful hearts and voices, your alleluias raise.
In God the rolling seasons in steadfast order move.
Sing to the Lord of harvest a joyous song of love.

The Clouds break forth with raining, the deserts bloom and spring,
the hills leap up in gladness, the valleys laugh and sing.
God fills them with abundance and nature's gifts increase.
The year is crowned with goodness, with plenty and with peace.

Bring to this sacred altar the gifts God's goodness gave,
the golden sheaves of harvest, the souls Christ died to save.
Your hearts lay down in offering as at his feet you fall.

Post Communion Prayer

GOING FORTH TO SHARE GOD'S WORD

HYMN 765 May the God of Hope Go with Us, *sing twice*

*May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.
Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;
working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

GIVING REPORT

	<u>Giving 2020</u>	<u>Giving 2019</u>
Pledged	\$330,431.61	\$313,579.57
Unpledged	<u>\$23,604.00</u>	<u>\$52,191.49</u>
Total	\$354,035.61	\$365,771.06



Members and visitors alike, please plan to give today in whatever way you are able either [Online through Realm](#), through your bank account, using the QR code below or by mailing a check to the church. Thank you for your generosity.