



AUGUST 28-29, 2021

14TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PREPARATION PRAYER:

Almighty God, you have blessed each of us with unique gifts, and you have called us to specific occupations, relationships, and activities using those gifts. Enable us to use our talents to witness to our faith in you and to communicate your love to the people we meet each day. Empower us to be ministers of your reconciliation, love, hope, and justice. Keep us steadfast in our commitment to serve actively in your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- From the order for Affirmation of the Vocation of Christians in the World

PASTORAL WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY:

- ❖ Measure actions, not outcomes. Focusing on the big picture all the time can be overwhelming and frustrating. So don't. Instead, focus on the smaller actions that will get you to where you want to be. - *Anurag Prakash Ray*
- ❖ "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members." - *Coretta Scott King*
- ❖ "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is wasted." - *Aesop*
- ❖ "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." - *Mother Teresa*
- ❖ Watch where you're stepping; all of life is holy ground. - *Anonymous*

PRAISE SONG: *"Something Beautiful For God"* (music at end of bulletin)

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: We think we must do great things to change the world around us. Know that great changes come about because of our smallest efforts.

People: An appropriate word,

Leader: A few minutes of shared time,

People: A promise honored,

Leader: A moment of confident enthusiasm

People: Can spawn a fresh start.

Leader: Let us pray

All: Creator God, we recommit ourselves to trust that your realm will win out in the struggle for justice and peace and engender fullness of life and vitality in our world community. Amen.

OUR CONFESSION PRAYER:

Loving God, please forgive us for underestimating, undervaluing and leaving unrealized the possibilities of each talent, opportunity and ability you have given us. We doubt that, with your power, our actions and ideas can generate positive change around us. Teach us, O God, to cherish, use, and expand even the smallest seeds of love and promise that you have given us. Through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

Leader: Our sins are forgiven and we have a new start. Today we are called to live as God's people in the world. Let us answer the call in joy. **Amen.**

THE CONFESSION RESPONSE: "Here I Am, Lord" (music at end of bulletin)

THE GOSPEL: Mark 4:0-33 (Good News Translation)

"What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like?" asked Jesus. "What parable shall we use to explain it? ³¹ It is like this. A man takes a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the world, and plants it in the ground. ³² After a while it grows up and becomes the biggest of all plants. It puts out such large branches that the birds come and make their nests in its shade."

³³ Jesus preached his message to the people, using many other parables like these; he told them as much as they could understand.

MESSAGE: "The Heart Can't Feel What the Eyes Don't See"
- Pastor Cristy Schoob

MESSAGE RESPONSE: "What is the World Like" - verses 1,3 & 5
(music at end of bulletin)

THE PRAYERS

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, and the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever. Amen.

THE SENDING OUT:

Leader: Dismiss us, Lord, with confidence.

Ground us in hope.

Strengthen our faith.

Remind us of those things worth dying for,

That we might live in truth.

Help us never give up, never surrender to the powers of the world.

All: Amen.

THE SENDING SONG: “This Little Light of Mine”

This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine;
this little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine;
this little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine;
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Ev-’ry-where I go, I’m gonna let it shine;
ev-’ry-where I go, I’m gonna let it shine;
ev-’ry-where I go, I’m gonna let it shine;
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Jesus gave it to me, I’m gonna let it shine;
Jesus gave it to me, I’m gonna let it shine;
Jesus gave it to me, I’m gonna let it shine;
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

THE DISMISSAL:

Leader: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

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This Little Light of Mine. Text and music: African American Spiritual. Public Domain.

Something Beautiful for God

3
Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

1. Know this one thing a - bove all else.
2. Ev' - ry - one who we meet to - day
3. Je - sus will vis - it us to - day

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

We are loved, loved by God. Let this be how we
is God's child, God's own child. May our lives help them
in dis - guise, in dis - guise. Poor and weak, Christ will

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

see our - selves, as peo - ple loved, loved by God. And
hear God say, "You are my child, God's own child." A
come our way, - Je - sus Christ in dis - guise. The

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

once we know the love of Christ; feel God's heal - ing
smile can ra - di - ate God's love. Let them see the
lone - ly poor, the vic - tim - ized, love for them is

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

in our lives, lov - ing ser - vice is
Christ in us. Let our lives be the
love for Christ. Love is wa - ter to

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

how we give our love back to God. To -
cheer - ful - ness of God in this world! To -
quench the thirst of Christ on the cross. To -

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

day let us do some - thing beau - ti - ful for God! Do some - thing small, but

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

do it with great love. Do what we can, where we are

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature.

with what we've got. To - day, let us do some - thing

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature. Includes first and second endings.

beau - ti - ful for God. God! To -

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature. Includes a Coda section.

beau - ti - ful for God, to - day let us do some - thing beau - ti - ful for God, to -

Musical staff with treble clef, key signature of two flats, and 4/4 time signature. Includes a final triplet.

day let us do some - thing beau - ti - ful for God!

Here I Am, Lord

1. "I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my peo - ple cry.
2. "I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my peo - ple's pain.
3. "I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.

All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I have wept for love of them. They turn a - way.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.

I, who made the stars of night, I will make their dark - ness bright.
I will break their hearts of stone, I give them hearts for love a - lone.
Fin - est bread I will pro - vide till their hearts be sat - is - fied.

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?" Here I
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?"
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?"

am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you
call - ing in the night. I will go, Lord, if you
lead me. I will hold your peo - ple in my heart.

What is the World Like

1. What is the world like when God's will is done?
 3. What is the world like when God's will is done?
 5. These are the sto - ries that Je - sus im - parts,
 Mus - tard seeds grow more than we can con - ceive:
 No more is neigh - bor - just al - ly or friend;
 filled with the Spir - it who joins us as one.
 roots thread the soil; branch - es reach for the sun.
 peace thrives in place - es where once there was none.
 Born through our voice - es, our hands, and our hearts,
 This is how God moves us each to be - lieve.
 This is how God works when ri - val - ries end.
 this is a new world where God's will is done.

OUR *Welcome* IS WIDE OPEN

Skeptic. Cynic. Certain. Believer. Confident. Fearful. Doubter. Seeker. Questioner.
 Latino. Black. Asian. White. Indigenous. Immigrant. Any combination of ethnic or
 racial identities. Female. Male. Straight. Gay. Bisexual. Transgender. Questioning.
 Rich. Poor. Middle-class. Barely making it. Able bodied. Specially abled. Disabled.
 Young. Old. In-between. Married. Single. Divorced. Awaiting trial. Served time.
 On probation. Tired. Worn. Hopeful. Employed. Unemployed. Workaholic. Slacker.
 Anxious. Depressed. Confused. Centered. Inked. Pierced. Both. Life long follower
 of Jesus. Regular attender. Occasional attender. Curious onlooker. Don't quite fit the box.
 Need a prayer right now. **Trinity is a faith community where we believe
 in God's love, grace and mercy—illustrated most clearly through Jesus
 Christ. We believe we are all children of God, created in God's image
 and equal in God's sight. We believe God loves us just as we are and
 way too much to let us stay this way. We are called to live in God's light
 and be transformed, not through judgment but through unconditional love.
 We believe God's love is all-inclusive and is stronger than the pressure
 to be perfect regardless of whatever labels we carry. Saint. Sinner. Democrat.
 Republican. Independent. Libertarian. Green. Socialist. Apolitical. Addicted. Recovering.
 We don't care what religion or denomination you are. We are all Human. We are all Flawed.
 We are all Beloved. —You are welcome here.**

COME *as you are.*

TRINITY CONGREGATION | WELCOME STATEMENT | MARCH 2017

George Saunders 2013 Commencement Speech

Down through the ages, a traditional form has evolved for this type of speech, which is: Some old fart, his best years behind him, who, over the course of his life, has made a series of dreadful mistakes (*that would be me*), gives heartfelt advice to a group of shining, energetic young people, with all of their best years ahead of them (*that would be you*).

And I intend to respect that tradition.

Now, one useful thing you can do with an old person, in addition to borrowing money from them, or asking them to do one of their old-time “dances,” so you can watch, while laughing, is ask: “Looking back, what do you regret?” And they’ll tell you. Sometimes, as you know, they’ll tell you even if you haven’t asked. Sometimes, even when you’ve specifically requested they *not* tell you, they’ll tell you.

So: What do I regret? Being poor from time to time? Not really. Working terrible jobs, like “knuckle-puller in a slaughterhouse?” (And don’t even ASK what that entails.) No. I don’t regret that. Skinny-dipping in a river in Sumatra, a little buzzed, and looking up and seeing like 300 monkeys sitting on a pipeline, pooping down into the river, the river in which I was swimming, with my mouth open, naked? And getting deathly ill afterwards, and staying sick for the next seven months? Not so much. Do I regret the occasional humiliation? Like once, playing hockey in front of a big crowd, including this girl I really liked, I somehow managed, while falling and emitting this weird whooping noise, to score on my own goalie, while also sending my stick flying into the crowd, nearly hitting that girl? No. I don’t even regret that.

But here’s something I do regret:

In seventh grade, this new kid joined our class. In the interest of confidentiality, her Convocation Speech name will be “ELLEN.” ELLEN was small, shy. She wore these blue cat’s-eye glasses that, at the time, only old ladies wore. When nervous, which was pretty much always, she had a habit of taking a strand of hair into her mouth and chewing on it.

So she came to our school and our neighborhood, and was mostly ignored, occasionally teased (“Your hair taste good?” — that sort of thing). I could see this hurt her. I still remember the way she’d look after such an insult: eyes cast down, a little gut-kicked, as if, having just been reminded of her

place in things, she was trying, as much as possible, to disappear. After awhile she'd drift away, hair-strand still in her mouth. At home, I imagined, after school, her mother would say, you know: "How was your day, sweetie?" and she'd say, "Oh, fine." And her mother would say, "Making any friends?" and she'd go, "Sure, lots."

Sometimes I'd see her hanging around alone in her front yard, as if afraid to leave it.

And then — they moved. That was it. No tragedy, no big final hazing.

One day she was there, next day she wasn't.

End of story.

Now, why do I regret *that*? Why, forty-two years later, am I still thinking about it? Relative to most of the other kids, I was actually pretty *nice* to her. I never said an unkind word to her. In fact, I sometimes even (mildly) defended her.

But still. It bothers me.

So here's something I know to be true, although it's a little corny, and I don't quite know what to do with it:

What I regret most in my life are *failures of kindness*.

Those moments when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering, and I responded . . . sensibly. Reservedly. Mildly.

Or, to look at it from the other end of the telescope: Who, in *your* life, do you remember most fondly, with the most undeniable feelings of warmth?

Those who were kindest to you, I bet.

It's a little facile, maybe, and certainly hard to implement, but I'd say, as a goal in life, you could do worse than: *Try to be kinder*.

Now, the million-dollar question: What's our problem? Why aren't we kinder?

Here's what I think:

Each of us is born with a series of built-in confusions that are probably somehow Darwinian. These are: (1) we're central to the universe (that is, our personal story is the main and most interesting story, the *only* story, really); (2) we're separate from the universe (there's US and then, out there, all that other junk – dogs and swing-sets, and the State of Nebraska and low-hanging clouds and, you know, other people), and (3) we're permanent (death is real, o.k., sure – for you, but not for me).

Now, we don't *really* believe these things – intellectually we know better – but we believe them viscerally, and live by them, and they cause us to prioritize our own needs over the needs of others, even though what we really want, in our hearts, is to be less selfish, more aware of what's actually happening in the present moment, more open, and more loving.

So, the second million-dollar question: How might we DO this? How might we become more loving, more open, less selfish, more present, less delusional, etc., etc?

Well, yes, good question.

Unfortunately, I only have three minutes left.

So let me just say this. There *are* ways. You already know that because, in your life, there have been High Kindness periods and Low Kindness periods, and you know what inclined you toward the former and away from the latter. Education is good; immersing ourselves in a work of art: good; prayer is good; meditation's good; a frank talk with a dear friend; establishing ourselves in some kind of spiritual tradition – recognizing that there have been countless really smart people before us who have asked these same questions and left behind answers for us.

Because kindness, it turns out, is *hard* – it starts out all rainbows and puppy dogs, and expands to include . . . well, *everything*.

One thing in our favor: some of this “becoming kinder” happens naturally, with age. It might be a simple matter of attrition: as we get older, we come to see how useless it is to be selfish – how illogical, really. We come to love other people and are thereby counter-instructed in our own centrality. We get our butts kicked by real life, and people come to our defense, and help us, and we learn that we're not separate, and don't want to be. We see people near and dear to us dropping away, and are gradually convinced that maybe we too will drop away (someday, a long time from now). Most

people, as they age, become less selfish and more loving. I think this is true. The great Syracuse poet, Hayden Carruth, said, in a poem written near the end of his life, that he was “mostly Love, now.”

And so, a prediction, and my heartfelt wish for you: as you get older, your self will diminish and you will grow in love. YOU will gradually be replaced by LOVE. If you have kids, that will be a huge moment in your process of self-diminishment. You really won't care what happens to YOU, as long as they benefit. That's one reason your parents are so proud and happy today. One of their fondest dreams has come true: you have accomplished something difficult and tangible that has enlarged you as a person and will make your life better, from here on in, forever.

Congratulations, by the way.

When young, we're anxious — understandably — to find out if we've got what it takes. Can we succeed? Can we build a viable life for ourselves? But you — in particular you, of this generation — may have noticed a certain cyclical quality to ambition. You do well in high-school, in hopes of getting into a good college, so you can do well in the good college, in the hopes of getting a good job, so you can do well in the good job so you can . . .

And this is actually O.K. If we're going to become kinder, that process has to include taking ourselves seriously — as doers, as accomplisners, as dreamers. We *have* to do that, to be our best selves.

Still, accomplishment is unreliable. “Succeeding,” whatever that might mean to you, is hard, and the need to do so constantly renews itself (success is like a mountain that keeps growing ahead of you as you hike it), and there's the very real danger that “succeeding” will take up your whole life, while the big questions go untended.

So, quick, end-of-speech advice: Since, according to me, your life is going to be a gradual process of becoming kinder and more loving: Hurry up. Speed it along. Start right now. There's a confusion in each of us, a sickness, really: *selfishness*. But there's also a cure. So be a good and proactive and even somewhat desperate patient on your own behalf — seek out the most efficacious anti-selfishness medicines, energetically, for the rest of your life.

Do all the other things, the ambitious things — travel, get rich, get famous, innovate, lead, fall in love, make and lose fortunes, swim naked in wild jungle rivers (after first having it tested for monkey poop) — but as you do,

to the extent that you can, *err in the direction of kindness*. Do those things that incline you toward the big questions, and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial. That luminous part of you that exists beyond personality — your soul, if you will — is as bright and shining as any that has ever been. Bright as Shakespeare's, bright as Gandhi's, bright as Mother Teresa's. Clear away everything that keeps you separate from this secret luminous place. Believe it exists, come to know it better, nurture it, share its fruits tirelessly.

And someday, in 80 years, when you're 100, and I'm 134, and we're both so kind and loving we're nearly unbearable, drop me a line, let me know how your life has been. I hope you will say: It has been so wonderful.

Congratulations, Class of 2013.

I wish you great happiness, all the luck in the world, and a beautiful summer.