

## Home Service for

### Welcome and Announcements

Although we cannot meet together in the church building we can share worship together in our individual homes. We will continue to work to stay connected and be there for each other during the difficult time. We are going through something never experience before. I hope this will help you worship God today with those who are in your home. Add hymns if possible, too.

Continue to keep Jamie in our prayers as she recovers.

Keep Bryan Johnson and her family in your prayers as they deal with the loss of her brother, Bill.

*The spirit of truth dwells among us. Bask in this awareness. In the Lord, we live and breathe and have our being. Rest in His presence.*

### Opening Prayer:

Lord of wondrous light and power, we come to you this day to learn of your will for our lives. Heal our wounds; lift our spirits; give us courage and confidence to boldly serve you in all that we do. AMEN.

### Prayer of Confession:

Lord of mercy, there are so many times in our lives when we feel alone. We wonder where you are. We cry out to you in our confusion, pain, and hurt. And when you do not immediately grant the prayers of our cries, we begin to doubt that you even care or exist. Stop us from going down this path of self-destruction. Help us look around and find the many ways in which you have blessed our lives. Forgive us when we are so quick to doubt and so arrogant in our demands of your responses. Give us a spirit of patience and willingness to be ready to hear your voice. Strengthen us for the ministries of love and hope that you have placed before us; for we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

## Words of Assurance

*Even in the midst of doubt and darkness, the light of God is shining in you, on you, and through you. Out of God's great love, you have been redeemed and made whole. Rejoice, beloved of God! AMEN.*

### Read Psalm 66:8-20

O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:

<sup>9</sup> Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

<sup>10</sup> For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

<sup>11</sup> Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.

<sup>12</sup> Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

<sup>13</sup> I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,

<sup>14</sup> Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

<sup>15</sup> I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

<sup>16</sup> Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

<sup>17</sup> I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

<sup>18</sup> If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

<sup>19</sup> But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

<sup>20</sup> Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

### Prayers of the People:

Lord of love, you have asked us to keep your commandments. In your life you demonstrated the power of love to effect healing, redemption, and hope in the lives of all your people. Yet we are so unsure of the gifts that you have given us for ministry that we wonder if we can really do what you want us to do. We are a strange mixture, Lord. We are arrogant in our demands of your mercy and timid in our awareness of the blessings and gifts you have given to us. That's why we're here today. We really want to sense your presence and receive courage truly to be your people in this world that you have loaned to us. Remind us when we bring names and circumstances before your throne of Grace that we also bring our own needs and concerns. Lay your healing hand upon our hearts and spirits. We place our lives and our trust in you, O Lord. AMEN.

## 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 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 and ever. AMEN

*Listen for the presence of God in the word. Listen for the presence of the Holy in your lives. Worship a God who makes known a love for all of humanity. See a God who sends help and hope. Open yourselves to the spirit of truth.*

Read the Lesson: Acts 17:22-31

Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill and said, “People of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. <sup>23</sup> As I was walking through town and carefully observing your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an unknown God.’ What you worship as unknown, I now proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn’t live in temples made with human hands. <sup>25</sup> Nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed something, since he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn’t far away from any of us. <sup>28</sup> In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, ‘We are his offspring.’

<sup>29</sup> “Therefore, as God’s offspring, we have no need to imagine that the divine being is like a gold, silver, or stone image made by human skill and thought. <sup>30</sup> God overlooks ignorance of these things in times past, but now directs everyone everywhere to change their hearts and lives. <sup>31</sup> This is because God has set a day when he intends to judge the world justly by a man he has appointed. God has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

## Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 3:13-22

Who will harm you if you are zealous for good? <sup>14</sup> But happy are you, even if you suffer because of righteousness! Don't be terrified or upset by them. <sup>15</sup> Instead, regard Christ the Lord as holy in your hearts. Whenever anyone asks you to speak of your hope, be ready to defend it. <sup>16</sup> Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience. Act in this way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ may be ashamed when they slander you. <sup>17</sup> It is better to suffer for doing good (if this could possibly be God's will) than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> Christ himself suffered on account of sins, once for all, the righteous one on behalf of the unrighteous. He did this in order to bring you into the presence of God. Christ was put to death as a human, but made alive by the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And it was by the Spirit that he went to preach to the spirits in prison. <sup>20</sup> In the past, these spirits were disobedient—when God patiently waited during the time of Noah. Noah built an ark in which a few (that is, eight) lives were rescued through water. <sup>21</sup> Baptism is like that. It saves you now—not because it removes dirt from your body but because it is the mark of a good conscience toward God. Your salvation comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who is at God's right side. Now that he has gone into heaven, he rules over all angels, authorities, and powers.

## Read the Gospel Lesson: John 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion,<sup>[a]</sup> who will be with you forever. <sup>17</sup> This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can't receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you. <sup>18</sup> “I won't leave you as orphans. I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

## Message

In Acts, Paul describes God as the source of all creation and the source of life for all humankind. More than this, “we live and move and have our being” in God. Indeed, how can this God be far from us when we are in God? First Peter speaks of our being brought to God by Jesus Christ and describes lives of integrity “in Christ.” John takes this human/divine spatial imagery the furthest in Jesus’

description of himself as in God, while we the disciples are in Christ and Christ is in us. More than this, the Spirit is with us and in us as well. These passages call us to recognize the mysterious interrelationship that undergirds our being; they challenge us to live lives of love and goodness, courage and hope.

In our Gospel today, Jesus continues his farewell discourse to his disciples; it begins and ends with a statement about loving Jesus and keeping his commandments. In each instance there is a promise that a divine presence will come to those who meet this standard. In verses fifteen to seventeen, it is the Spirit; in verses eighteen to twenty-one it is Jesus. The different terms all point to the same reality, namely, divine presence, looked at from different vantage points.

Starting with verse fifteen, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Here, loving Jesus and “keeping,” which means, fulfilling his commandments. “Love” identifies the attitude; “keep” identifies the actions which flow from it. “Love” Greek *agapate*, is plural and means “have a positive will towards,” an invisible reality which becomes visible, enfleshed, takes form, in actions. Those actions are called here “commandments,” since they are done out of obedience, as opposed to “good feeling,” love. We need to understand what commandments Jesus is talking about, Jesus gave us two commandments in the New Testament, we are to love the Lord our God with all our soul and might and we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. From these two commandments Jesus says all the rest will flow. It means all those actions that flow from and are consistent with that fundamental attitude. God and Jesus, is complete in himself and autonomous. He has no real “needs,” as such, but when a Christian acts in the best interests of others, he or she, in a sense, meets God’s needs. Thus, he or she can be said to “love God” or “love Jesus.” Of course, Christians also love God in an emotional sense. Keeping Jesus’ commandments is the way the invisible reality of love becomes visible. The “commandments,” of Jesus involve a whole way of life in loving union with Jesus.

In verse sixteen, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.” The term “Advocate,” used in this verse, is another term for the Holy Spirit who communicates truth and interprets for the present what Jesus said and taught in the past. The verb “to give” is often associated with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, so much so that “gift” of the Holy Spirit, becomes a term for the Spirit Himself. Jesus is the way to the Father, and also the revelation of the Father. When He is withdrawn, through His death, from the disciples’ sight, how will He continue to reveal, make the invisible God visible, God, being invisible Himself now? The Holy Spirit is the answer. The

divine presence will be felt spiritually, as really as physically. John wants to say that the ordinary lives of Christians who put into practice the attitude of love is lived by and under the power of the divine presence now experienced as Spirit. The whole point is that the Spirit of Jesus does the work of Jesus now, after He is no longer “in the flesh,” through his disciples. The Spirit is not a different divine reality, but a different experience of that same divine reality, God. The Father’s gift of His and Jesus’ Spirit overcomes the gap created by the absence of the physical Jesus. That Jesus-Spirit will now be located in the disciples and in us instead of in an earthly body once inhabited by the Jesus-Spirit.

Humans can only be open to receiving the Spirit if they are in a right relationship with God, something the “world” is not. Thus, the “world” neither sees Him by physical observation of His effects since He is physically invisible as such. These effects, signs of His presence, are the works; the loving keeping of Jesus’ commandments, Jesus’ disciples do in his name. Nor can they know the Spirit of Truth, of Jesus, by any inward apprehension as Christians do.

In verse nineteen, “In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.” Being Jesus would no longer “in the flesh,” no one would be able to see Jesus as they used to, even His disciples. Yet, they and we can “see” Him with another eye, the eye of faith. They would come to see that He never really left them, only left the usual form, His body, in which the disciples were used to seeing Him. But there is more to the presence of Jesus, being divine, than the physically tangible.

In verse twenty, “On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, and I in you.” This has three referents. The last day, the end of the world, when no one will be able to deny the divine presence, is the most comprehensive meaning here. Then, there is the day of Jesus’ resurrection, the same day, according to John, he bestows the Spirit. They will “see,” what he means then. Thirdly, there is the day of one’s personal resurrection, one’s death. Having no physical eyes to block or cloud real vision, the disciples will see into the eternal realm. All will be clear then. What will be seen will not be things or landscapes or terrain, but relationships. The mutual indwelling of Father and Son will be paralleled, “imaged,” to use a Genesis term, by the mutual indwelling of disciples and Son. How will we know? The same Spirit that bonds and binds Father and Son binds and bonds Son and disciple, not only, then in the future, but even now. Only then it will all be much clearer, but no more or less real and true than now. Now this relationship is real, even more so. The union between Father and Son is at the

heart of Jesus' teaching, the authoritative basis for it, stated often throughout John. But the believer's similar union with Jesus is new.

In verse twenty-one, "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." The mutual indwelling is not automatic. It is open to everyone, but not everyone receives it because not everyone loves as Jesus means the term. Mutual indwelling depends on love.

Humans seem to be the only ones of God's creatures for whom there are indeed levels of reality, that life is more than existence, that what we see with our eyes, feel with our hands, and hear with our ears, is not all there is. Even without faith in God, humans love things and people, rightly or wrongly, with their hearts. At least, we use "heart" and many other words, in a more than physical sense, even though it is a sense organ.

Now that sort of presence, not only local but friendly presence, would seem to be quite enough, more than we as humans should rightly expect, a grace in and of itself. God is friendly to us, not hostile. That is a lot to know and takes a lot of fear off the collective human mind or human race. Imagine if it were otherwise!

However, Jesus tells us that is not enough for God. He wants to be even more present than that. He wants to be within us, and not just as a little temple or tabernacle. He wants to mix with us, converse with us, interchange love with us. He also wants us to reciprocate. This is the deepest and fullest presence, almost unimaginable, almost unspeakable, and certainly indescribable in human linguistic terms, although Jesus seems to have done an excellent job of finding all the right words. God wants, to use human words however inadequately, what holds Him together and what makes Him happy to hold us together as well. On the human level the word "love" says it; on the divine level the word "Spirit" says it. Different words, same reality, same truth. So, what does God do, after becoming one of us or, as we humans would say, giving us his Son? He gives us his Spirit, really Himself with all His love and life and light and glory. It is as if God could not wait until this creation has run its course, a course he intended from all time and eternity, before giving us "more." He gives us his Spirit now. He prepared us for this with Jesus and now continues to give us Himself well past death, in time, yes, but well past time. It is too much for us to put into words and too much to grasp. In truth it is we who are grasped by Him. All the prepositions of any human language when put together- by, in, into, within, through, among, etc.- do not begin to capture the essence of the mutual indwelling of God with us. Yet, no one has said

it better than Jesus and the very contemplation of His words brings the reality home to us- that He makes his home in us and we in Him! Jesus was not talking to mystics when He said these things; He was talking to you and me.

So, God is within us whether or not we recognize that fact. If God were not, we could not exist. Yet, God is within us in another sense, in an interpersonal way, if, and only if, we accept Jesus on His terms, if we totally surrender to Him, give up our will or willfulness, and let him be our God, our Lord, our Savior.

Unconditional surrender makes possible unconditional love. We can then love as God loves. Loving Jesus and keeping his commandments of love amount to the same thing. Loving others is the “incarnation” of our loving God. Love, as Christ uses the term, is an attitude that expresses itself in action, not a feeling that expresses itself in emotions. Christian love empowers us to see the invisible as God sees it. The Holy Spirit is Jesus, who is God, invisible in form, but “seen” through behavior. Jesus had to die and rise in order to give us himself in Spirit form.

Jesus says in effect: In one way I am going away, but in another way I am not. He says that He is only becoming physically invisible, but not really absent. The disciples would receive Jesus’ Spirit on Easter, but it would take fifty days before they realized its full impact. That later realization was so powerful that they would forget the previous fifty days and even minimize the original experience of the gift and celebrate Pentecost with such joy that even Easter would be interpreted in its light. Let us not forget that God is always with us though His presence is invisible He is always and everywhere present in our lives if we believe. Amen.

Benediction:

Being washed in the love of Christ, now go into this world with the healing love of God to be given generously in peace and hope. God’s peace will always be with those who live in God’s love. AMEN.