



SABBATH & WORK

Making Life, Good...In Love

April 7, 2024

[Worship Music Playlist](#)

Prelude – Trust In You by Antoine Bradford
Welcome (Dylan)

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 90:1-2, 16-17

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!

Song #1 – Place to Land by Jess Ray
Song #2 – My Heart Alone by Colorvault
Dismiss Kids

INTRO / ANNOUNCEMENTS | After Easter Focus & Resources

Where do we go after Easter? Where do we go in life again, new, resurrected, with the whole and holy in clear sight, even if a bit foggy on certain days? Well, we get into rhythm with Life Himself. Post-Easter is a return to our beginnings, but different. **We enter into the work and rest of God in our work and rest through Jesus with others.** That will be our focus these next two months, living into the reality that compelled our *Hallelujah* and beckoning us to say Amen to making life, good.

How do we sync ourselves up with Life Himself, you might ask? Well, obviously, with our Gathering focused on the topic, but also through....

RESOURCE SLIDE

- Our Rhythms | (at least) 2 Sabbath Days, Daily Work Prayers (2 push notifications), Praying the Psalms
- Our Practices | Work Inventory & Work Lectio(?), Entering Awareness
- Other Resources | Additional things to read and listen to

PRE-SERMON READING | 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what is not its to possess. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others. Love isn't always "me first," doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth. Love covers the errors and faults of others. Love trusts having confidence in the goodness of others. Love lives towards its confidence with joy. Love does so for the long haul, endures with courage and calmness. Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over someday; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled. When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good. We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us! But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God (have faith), hope joyously, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

SERMON | From the Ceremony Into the Everyday

When was the last time you heard I Corinthians 13 read? Or, where are you most likely to hear 1 Corinthians 13 read? At a wedding, right! But wait, weren't we just at a wedding ceremony, [a marriage supper on Easter Sunday?](#) Yes, we were!

At the celebration of union and communion in community and covenant, we shout "Praise God," "Hallelujah!" as we see life as we need it to be and as it is coming into full picture. A vision that beckons us to respond with an *Amen*, our yes, to God's Yes in Jesus (as the pastoral note reminded us). In case you missed it or we forgot the scene, here is what John sees at the end that is our beginning:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come**, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the fine linen is **the righteous deeds of the saints**. And the angel said to me, "Write this: **Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.**" And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." (Revelation 19:6-9)

You'll remember that throughout [the Letters of Lent](#), the issue pressing upon the churches that Jesus presses them to address is their loyalty, distinctive relation to Him, and life from Him. A loyalty, fidelity, and distinction demonstrated in how they related to God, one another, insiders and, outsiders the like. Yet here, at the moment of union, the marriage ceremony, the Church, all the churches and their various members, are "clothed...with fine linen...righteous deeds of the saints."

It's essential to notice, as theologian Robert Mounce points out, "...that what was given to her was not the 'fine linen'...but **the privilege of arraying herself in righteous acts** (the NRSV translates, '*to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen*'). Believers are created for divinely prepared good works (Eph. 2:10)."¹

The image at the end, an end that is our beginning, is our life, joined to Jesus' life. Our life clothed in loyalty and distinction, fidelity and holiness by you and I rightly relating not just to God, but to one another, the earthy, our vocations, our relationships, our roles and responsibilities. Remember what we said [last year at this time](#):

God's work [his pursuit, marrying, and granting] leads us into restful (secure, nonanxious, peaceful) worship and, from there, into our worshipful (confident, nonanxious, peacemaking) work [or righteous deeds]. It did so in Genesis and does so in Jesus. **Our good work (righteous deeds) comes from resting in God's finished work.**

¹ Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT, 348.

God worked; we rest with Him and then enter into His work only to return again to His rest. That is the rhythm of life and not death. It is a cycle of living with God, not the rinse-and-repeat cycle of survival. A rhythmic pattern of wholeness and holiness that fills all our days. If you'll allow me to elaborate on the Decalogue:

Six days you shall labor and do all your work [in partnership/union with God, joining Him in His good work because he granted us to]. But the seventh day is a sabbath to [be with] the LORD your God [totally immersed in His affection, faithfulness, and finished work, married].

It's (re)entering this incredibly profound God design, **this whole and holy rhythm of Sabbathing (resting in God's work, the "granted-ness" of our righteous deeds) into daily labor (in partnership/union with Him in our righteous deeds), working into Sabbath**, that gives form and power to our after-Easter living. A whole and holy rhythm allows us to experience the "Blessed-ness" (a.k.a., flourishing) of life with God.

How do we make life, good; this flourishing blessed life with God? Well, that brings us back to the marriage supper. Commentator William Barclay says it succinctly:

"The thought of the relationship between God and his people as a marriage goes far back in the Old Testament. Again and again, the prophets thought of Israel as the chosen bride of God. 'I will take you for my wife forever.' Hosea heard God say, 'I will take you for my wife in righteousness; (Hosea 2:19-20). [Or more directly,] 'For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name,' says Isaiah (Isaiah 54:5)..."

The marriage symbolism runs all through the gospels [as well]. We read of the marriage feast (Matthew 22:2); of the bride-chamber and the wedding garment (Mathew 22:10-11); [there is talk] of the wedding guests (Mark 2:19); of the bridegroom (Mark 2:19; Matthew 25:1); of the friends of the bridegroom (John 3:29). And Paul speaks of himself as promising the Church in marriage to Christ like a pure virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2). For him, the relationship of Christ to his Church is the great model of the relationship of husband and wife (Ephesians 5:21-23).

[Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31-32)]

This may seem to us a strange metaphor. But it contains certain great truths [says Barclay]. In any real marriage, there must be four things which must also be in the relationship between the Christian [really the CHURCH] and Christ.

- 1) There is *love*. A loveless marriage is a contradiction in terms.
- 2) There is *intimate communion*, so intimate that husband and wife become one flesh. The relationship of the Christian and Christ must be the closest in all life.
- 3) There is *joy*. There is nothing like the joy of loving and being loved. If Christianity does not bring joy, it does not bring anything.
- 4) There is *fidelity*. No marriage can last without fidelity, and Christians must be faithful to Jesus Christ as Jesus Christ is to them."²

² William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, TNSDB, Vol. 2, 194-195.

Love, communion, joy, fidelity. We talked about *fidelity*, loyalty throughout [Lent](#). We let *joy* be the grounding force of what [a committed life](#) produces, and *communion* is our weekly aim and practice. So that just leaves *love*, and love takes us back to 1 Corinthians 13. A chapter given the heading in many translations, "The Way of Love," for it is within Love, not ours, but God's, that make life, good.

I know we tend to read these words as an exhortation to one another relationships; that's why we place them in weddings. But the truth is, the context is about our relating to Christ, being who God has made us to be, the gifts granted us to be clothed in, and what makes them suitable...or not. That's what the first verses (which don't make it into weddings) suggest. Whether speaking a heavenly language (v.1), with prophetic wisdom, or living with complete trust that I can do anything because God can do anything through me, even move mountains (v.2), or even if I give away everything for the sake of others, including my own life, **but have not love; I gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3).**

Unless love becomes the essence, the very reality of my existence, what good can I do? Yet, what if Love becomes real, manifest, tangible, more than an idea or a feeling, but a presence, a truth deep within us, the air that feels our lungs, the very light that gives us sight? But wait, it has! Remember? John told us that on Easter Sunday,

In this the love of God was made manifest [becomes real, tangible, more than idea] among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loves us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sin...**So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.** God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in them. (1 John 4:9-10, 16)

This is the love you wake into each day. The love that allows today to be a day to rest. A love that clothes you has made way for you to array yourself in good work for which you were created, pursued, and invited. A love, union, through which we live. A love that is:

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things [covering errors and faults], believes all things [has confidence in the goodness of the loved], hopes all things [lives for completeness of what is believed], endures all things [is in for the long haul with courage and calmness]. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

That is the love that never ends (v. 8). The Love which keeps going beyond the end into forever. A love that we are exhorted to see as our daily reality and respond *Amen*, to say Yes as one mature for marriage, arraying oneself in fine linen (v. 8-12), The Love we are invited to live within...abide...make our home, make life, good...through faith and hope of our own.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

REFLECTION |

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in them. (1 John 4:16)

- Do you believe you abide in God's love (faith)?
- How can the vision of what is real, manifest in Jesus, energize, and propel your daily labors (hope)?
- What keeps you from and allows you to make life, good within Love?

CORPORATE CONFESSION & COMMUNION³ |

LORD of Creation,

create in us a whole and holy rhythm of life

composed of hours that sustain rather than stress,

of days that deliver rather than destroy,

of time that delights rather than degrades.

LORD of Liberation,

by the rhythm of your truth, set us free

from the bondage and baggage that break us,

from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us,

from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

LORD of Resurrection,

may we be raised into the rhythm of your Life,

dead to deceitful calendars,

dead to fleeting friend requests,

dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, **we bid, "Peace!"**

To our over-caffeinated consciences, **we say, "Cease!"**

To our suffocating selves, **LORD, grant our release.**

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes,

we rest in You, our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace,

allow us to enter your Sabbath rest

as your Sabbath rest enters into us.

For...

Jesus has done good work for us.

The Holy Spirit is doing a good work in us.

And God our Father equips and calls each of us to go out and do good works, works he has prepared in advance for us to do, and that he alone,

by his power and his Spirit,

will bring to completion through us.

For all the promises of God find their Yes in Jesus.

That is why it is **through Jesus we utter our Amen**

to God for his glory.

Hallelujah! Amen.

³ Adapted from *Common Prayer: a liturgy for ordinary radicals*, 554, & *Every Moment Holy*, Vol 3, xv.

Song #3 – God Is Love by Chris Renzema

Song #4 - Love Will Never Fail by Leslie Jordan

BENEDICTION | 1 Corinthians 13

As we rest in the day made for us, we prepare to enter into the work for which we are made
[**LIGHT THE CANDLE**], remembering the reality in which we live:

Love covers the errors and faults of others.

Love trusts having confidence in the goodness of others.

Love lives towards its confidence with joy.

Love does so for the long haul,
enduring with courage and calmness.

So now, live through faith and hope in love.

DISMISS

MEAL

MEETING **W/ SLIDES**