



**First Church of Christ in Mansfield
(Congregational) United Church of Christ**

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All the Members, Ministers

Rev. Joseph Blotz, Pastor + Erik Haeger, Organist Olivia

Russell, Worship Circle Coordinator

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME + JULY 9, 2023

Chimes and Prelude

Welcome and Greeting

Centering in the Spirit

Faith and Doubt

Alfred Tennyson

You say, but with no touch of scorn, Sweet-
hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes Are tender
over drowning flies,

You tell me, doubt is Devil-born. I
know not: one indeed I knew

In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first, But
ever strove to make it true: Perplexed in
faith, but pure in deeds, At last he beat
his music out.

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength, He
would not make his judgment blind,

He faced the spectres of the mind And
laid them: thus he came at length To find
a stronger faith his own;

And Power was with him in the night, Which
makes the darkness and the light, And dwells
not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud, As
over Sinai's peaks of old,

While Israel made their gods of gold,
Although the trumpet blew so loud.

Lord Alfred Tennyson, from "In Memoriam," XCV

Hymn

All Creatures of our God and King

CH22

Prayer of Reflection and Transformation

Here these words from the Gospel according to Matthew: Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

When in this past week have we held on to our burdens? When have we refused to help carry the burdens of another?

Silence

We rejoice, O Christ, for in your tender compassion you shoulder our burdens and ease our heavy hearts. Give us the strength to carry each other as you have carried us. Amen.

Song of Praise

Gloria

Christopher Grundy

Glo - ry to the Cre - a - tor, and the Christ, and the Spir - it so near, as it
9
was from the start so it shall be for - ev - er one God, al - ways here.

Christian Scripture

Romans 7:15-25a

In this passage, Paul continues to wrestle with the question of the role of the law. Paul teaches that, although the law is good in principle, without God's saving act in Jesus, it only produces more sinfulness. Paul feels two strong and opposing tendencies within his being. Without the new relationship of faith through Jesus, the regulations of the law only cause the tendency to break the law to grow stronger. Paul speaks of this as a tendency of his flesh, by which he means all within him that does not seek faithful obedience to God.

Hear now these words from the Letter to the Romans.

What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary. But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes.

I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions.

Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

How long am I for-got-ten? Am I for-ev-er spurned? O keep not from my
A-round me hosts of e-vil are quick to claim their prize; if on-ly death could

sor-row your face in an-ger turned. My heart is bowed with an-guish, my
free me, I pray you, close my eyes. But your great mer-cy ran-soms my

foes in-flict their pain; while I no com-fort mer-it; no hope for peace re-gain.
spi-rit from the grave; not ev-en death can con-quer God's pow'r to bless and save.

Hebrew Scripture**Genesis 22:1-14**

And it happened after these things that God tested Abraham. And He said to him, "Abraham!" and he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Take, pray, your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go forth to the land of Moriah and offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I shall say to you." And Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took his two lads with him, and Isaac his son, and he split wood for the offering, and rose and went to the place that God had said to him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from afar. And Abraham said to his lads, "Sit you here with the donkey and let me and the lad walk ahead and let us worship and return to you." And Abraham took the wood for the offering and put it on Isaac his son and he took in his hand the fire and the cleaver, and the two of them went together. And Isaac said to Abraham his father, "Father!" and he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Here is the fire and the wood but where is the sheep for the offering?" And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for the offering, my son." And the two of them went together. And they came to the place that God had said to him, and Abraham built there an altar and laid out the wood and bound Isaac his son and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. And Abraham reached out his hand and took the cleaver in to slaughter his son. And the Lord's messenger called out to him from the heavens and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" and he said, "Here I am. And he said, "Do not reach out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him, for now I know that you fear God and you have not held back your son, your only one, from Me." And Abraham raised his eyes and saw and, look, a ram was caught in the thicket by its horns, and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up as a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place YHWH-Yireh,

as is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord there is sight."

Reflection

Rev. Joseph Blotz

Call to Prayer

Lord Listen to Your Children Praying

CH305

9 Lord, li-sten to your chi - ldren pray - ing. Lord, send your Spi-rit in this place.

Lord, lis-ten to your chi - ldren pray - ing. Sendus love, sendus power, sendus grace.

Prayers of the People and the Prayer of Jesus

We pray for the church. Sustain us as we share your word. Embrace us as we struggle to find our common ground. Lift up leaders with powerful and prophetic voices. Free us from stagnant faith.

We pray for the well-being of creation. Protect the air, water, and land from abuse and pollution. Free us from apathy in our care of creation and direct us toward sustainable living.

We pray for the nations. Guide leaders in developing just policies and guide difficult conversations. Free us from patriotism that hinders relationship-building. Lead us to expansive love for our neighbor.

We pray for all in need. For all who are tired, feeling despair, sick, or oppressed. Take their yoke upon you and ease their burdens. Give your consolation and free us from all that keeps us bound.

We pray for this congregation. Bless our leaders. Energize children's ministry volunteers and those who maintain our building. Shine in this place that we might notice the ways your love transforms our lives.

We give thanks for those who have died. Welcome them into your eternal rest and comfort us in our grief until we are joined with them in new life. Hear us, O God.

Please pray the Prayer of Jesus in whatever language is most comfortable for you.

The following are offered as examples...

Our Father/Mother/Creator, 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/sins/trespases
as we forgive our debtors/those who sin/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. Amen.**

Musical Offering

Concerto for Two Violas

G. P. Telemann

Cheryl Chase and Laurel Thurman

*Financial offerings may be placed in the collection plates,
mailed to: First Church of Christ in Mansfield UCC. Box 36. Mansfield Center, CT 06250, or given
online at www.myfcc.info*

Doxology

Praise God from whom all bless - ings flow; Praise God all crea - tures here be low; Praise
5 God for all that love has done: Cre - a - tor, Christ and Spi - rit, One. A - men!

Prayer of Dedication

God of all goodness and grace, receive the gifts we offer; and grant that our whole lives may give you glory and praise. Amen.

Hymn

Be Thou My Vision

CH595

Benediction Postlude

The Week Ahead...

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| Sunday, July 9 | 10:15am Worship and Worship Circle
Loris' Birthday Celebration following Worship |
| Monday, July 10 | 10am First Church Leads Worship at St Joseph Center |
| Tuesday, July 11 | 10:30 am First Church Leads Worship at MCNR |
| Wednesday, July 12 | First Church hosts the Community Meal at First Baptist Willimantic |
| Thursday, July 13 | 12:15pm Contemplative Communion in Yellow Office |
| Sunday, June 16 | 10:15am Worship and Worship Circle
Coffee Hour Training following Worship |