

**It's September 5, 2021: the 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**



On behalf of our family of faith at Community United Church of Christ, Medford, WI, welcome to this time of worship! No matter who you are or where you are on your life's journey, you are welcome here. Welcome to those who are with us on Facebook "Live" and those who are worshiping at other times this week, who are watching the recording of this service on our website! Today, we will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy

Communion and we will pray a blessing on the children and their backpacks. For those of you at home, please get some communion elements ready: crackers or bread, wine or juice.

**Hymn:** "*Morning Has Broken*" **35**...words by Eleanor Farjean using a Gaelic melody

Morning has broken like the first morning, blackbird has spoken like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning! Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven, like the first dewfall on the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden, sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning born of the one light Eden saw play!  
Praise with elation, praise every morning, God's recreation of the new day!

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**Call to Worship:** One: We come to worship a God whom we have experienced as compassion.

**All: We have grown to trust this God in both the joyful and hard places of life.**

One: We come to worship and know that something is required of us, that we do justice,  
love kindness and walk humbly with God.

**All: We come accepting both the compassion and call to a higher righteousness.**

One: We come on this day to remember that work matters to God, workers matter to God,  
and wages matter to God.

**All: We come to sing, pray, hear the spoken word and encounter the Living Word  
that we might be shaped by all that matters to our Creator God.**

**Prayer of Confession:** Pastor: Great and loving God, we come before you, asking for forgiveness:

**All: Gracious God, you call us to be those who "talk the talk," but also who "walk the walk" with you.  
You call us to be just and forgiving; to be peacemakers. Forgive us when we honor you only with our  
lips and not with our actions. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

**Words of Assurance and Grace:**

Pastor: What has been in the past does not have to define the future. God's grace can transform us,  
will transform us. Receive this good news and move in a new direction: in the name of Jesus Christ  
our sins are forgiven. **All: Thanks be to God.**

**Response: "Amazing Grace" 422**

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
3. Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
4. When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.
5. Repeat verse 1. CCLI license #11131534/ Streaming License #20947364 Public Domain, Song # 4755360

**Passing the Peace** We will Pass the Peace of Christ to one another by sharing the words, “Peace be with you;” then turn and wave a greeting of peace to others around you... later, call or text someone and continue this “peace passing” throughout this week. **“Peace be with you!”**

**Scripture: Common English Bible Mark 7:24-37 from the Common English Bible**

The first seven verses are entitled, “*An immigrant’s daughter is delivered*”

<sup>24</sup> Jesus left that place and went into the region of Tyre. He didn’t want anyone to know that he had entered a house, but he couldn’t hide. <sup>25</sup> In fact, a woman whose young daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit heard about him right away. She came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup> The woman was Greek, Syrophenician by birth. She begged Jesus to throw the demon out of her daughter.

<sup>27</sup> He responded, “The children have to be fed first. It isn’t right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” <sup>28</sup> But she answered, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

<sup>29</sup> “Good answer!” he said. “Go on home. The demon has already left your daughter.” <sup>30</sup> When she returned to her house, she found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone.

This next part of the scripture is entitled, “*A deaf man is healed.*”

<sup>31</sup> After leaving the region of Tyre, Jesus went through Sidon toward the Galilee Sea through the region of the Ten Cities. <sup>32</sup> Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly speak, and they begged him to place his hand on the man for healing.

<sup>33</sup> Jesus took him away from the crowd by himself and put his fingers in the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. <sup>34</sup> Looking into heaven, Jesus sighed deeply and said, “*Ephphatha,*” (eff-uh-THAH) which means, “Open up.” <sup>35</sup> At once, his ears opened, his twisted tongue was released, and he began to speak clearly.

<sup>36</sup> Jesus gave the people strict orders not to tell anyone. But the more he tried to silence them, the more eagerly they shared the news. <sup>37</sup> People were overcome with wonder, saying, “He does everything well! He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who can’t speak.”

The title of my **Message** today is: “*Out of the Cave*”

Please pray with me: Merciful God, we lift our prayers and our labors to you and give you thanks for calling each of us to be exactly where we need to be and for calling us to be doing exactly what we need to be doing. Give us the grace to tune in to your voice and to leave aside all of the other “ringings” in our ears for this hour. Lead us and guide us in the words we speak and in the decisions that we make as we go our separate ways later this day. Amen.

When I first read this morning’s scripture, it hit me like many of the scriptures in the *lectionary* often do. What’s the lectionary? it is actually called the Revised Common Lectionary. It is an arrangement of scriptures that was decided upon in 1983 that guides us through Old Testament and New Testament readings each year. I am always amazed when it seems like someone picked the scriptures to exactly *fit* this day, this year. Maybe you have noticed that, too. After reading today’s Gospel several times and in different translations and interpretations, the same “message” stood out to me. God is speaking to us again.

God is finding a way when there seems to be no way. God is transforming something impossible into something new. God is giving someone a new lease on life. God is again working best with nothing and is creating something out of chaos.

Hope is emerging where there once was despair. A time of lamenting is leading us to a brighter future!

When I started to think that we really need this scripture today, I received a sign... in the form of a daily devotional from Rev. Cameron Trimble on Thursday morning, entitled,

*We don’t see the world as it is. We see it as we are.*

She writes... I discovered a story called, "*The Old Woman in the Cave*," told by mythic storyteller, Michael Meade, in his book, "*Why the World Doesn't End*." (Take a breath; let it out.) Sit back and listen to it: *The old people of the tribes would tell of a special cave where knowledge of the wonders and workings of the world could be found. "Not too far to go," they say, yet no one seems to find it anymore.*

*Inside the cave, there lives an old woman who remains unaffected by the rush of time and the confusion and strife of daily life. She spends most of her time weaving in the cave where light and shadows play. She wants to fashion the most beautiful garment in the whole world. She has been at this weaving project for a long time and has reached the point of making a fringe for the edge of her exquisitely designed cloak. **She wants that fringe to be special; wants it to be meaningful as well as elegant, so she weaves it with porcupine quills.** In order to use the porcupine quills, she must flatten each one with her teeth. After years of biting hard on the quills, her teeth have become worn down to nubs that barely rise above her gums. Still, the old woman keeps biting down, and she keeps weaving on.*

*The only time she interrupts her weaving work is when she goes to stir the **soup that simmers in a great cauldron at the back of the cave.** The old cauldron hangs over a fire that began a long time ago. The old woman cannot recall anything older than that fire; it just might be the oldest thing there is in this world. Occasionally, she does recall that she must stir the soup that simmers over those flames. For that **simmering stew contains all the seeds and roots that become the grains and plants and herbs that sprout up all over the surface of the earth.** If the old woman fails to stir the ancient stew once in a while, the fire will scorch the ingredients and there is no telling what troubles might result from that.*

*So the old woman divides her efforts between weaving the exquisite cloak and stirring the elemental soup. In a sense, she is responsible for weaving things together as well as for stirring everything up. She senses when the time has come to let the weaving go and stir things up again. Then, she leaves the weaving on the floor of the cave and turns to the task of stirring the soup. Because she is old and tired from her labors and because of the relentless passage of time, she moves slowly and it takes a while for her to amble over to the cauldron.*

*As the old woman shuffles across the floor and makes her way to the back of the ancient cave, a black dog watches her every move. The dog was there all along. Seemingly asleep, it awakens as soon as the old weaver turns her attention from one task to the other. As she begins stirring the soup in order to sustain the seeds, the black dog moves to where the weaving lies on the floor of the cave. **The dog picks up a loose thread with its teeth and begins pulling on it.** As the black dog pulls on the loose thread, the beautiful garment begins to unravel. Since each thread has been woven to another, pulling upon one begins to undo them all. As the great stew is being stirred up, the elegant garment comes apart and becomes a chaotic mess on the floor.*

*When the old woman returns to take up her handiwork again, she finds nothing but **chaos where there had been a garment of great elegance and beauty.** The cloak she has woven with great care has been pulled apart, the fringe all undone; the effort of creation has been turned to naught. The old woman sits and looks silently upon the remnants of her once-beautiful design. She ignores the presence of the black dog as she stares intently at the tangle of undone threads and distorted patterns.*

*After a while, she bends down, picks up a loose thread, and begins to weave the whole thing again. As she pulls thread after thread from the chaotic mess, she begins again to imagine the most beautiful garment in the whole world. As she weaves, new visions and elegant designs appear before her and her old hands begin to knowingly give them vibrant shape. Soon she has forgotten the cloak she was weaving before **as she concentrates on capturing the new design and weaving it into the most beautiful garment ever seen in the world.***

Just when it seems all is lost, and the world is being unwoven before us, a story comes along that reminds us that perhaps our unweaving is a wonderful thing. We shouldn't get mad at the dogs who undo it all. Perhaps we are becoming free to weave an even more beautiful world.

Rev Cameron Trimble always ends her devotionals with this: We are in this together.

We are not inside of a cave, my friends. We are not stuck in this pandemic making soup and weaving an endless and fraying blanket. We are out here, with all the imaginable possibilities to lift one another up,

to warm one another's hearts and to reach out beyond our little corner of this world. Our eyes have been opened. We have been moved to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. We have been challenged to feed the hungry and help the homeless people in our midst. Natural disasters have drawn us together to find ways to help. We find ourselves dreaming new dreams and envisioning new ways to make a difference. Call on Jesus to help us to do all things well...even soup making and even a little weaving.

**Breathe in a resolve to pay attention. Breathe out "we always did it that way."**

**Morning Prayer, Backpack Blessing  
and The Lord's Prayer:**

We will begin this time of prayer, blessing the back packs...I invite the children to come forward. God of all learning, God of all-knowing, these backpacks are filled with supplies, these children are filled with talents and eagerness to learn. We ask your blessings on students and their teachers... on these backpacks and everything that will be carried in them. May they be a reminder that you are with them wherever they go. Do not ever forget that! We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Pray with me: You are weaving us together, O God. We are many peoples from many different heritages. We have many talents, many ideas, many different occupations. Bless the work of our hands. O God of hope, we turn our faces to you, as the sunflowers look for the sun.

Help us not to be dragged down by the tragedies, the sickness and disagreement among us. Lead us, O God to find the good in each new day. Let us filter out what we consider to be most difficult and let us see our way through to the other side of these confusing days.

We lift to you all those who are at home and in the hospitals suffering with the COVID virus; those who are recovering from sickness, surgery and accident; those who have lost loved ones; those are picking up the pieces of their fire-ravaged, flooded and hurricane-blown lives. Merciful God, you know our every joy and our every need...but, we still need to tell them to you in our hearts... Help us to listen more closely to what you have to say to us as we pray in the name and in the words of Jesus, 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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**Hymn:** "Great I Am" by Jared Anderson

1.I want to be close, close to your side So heaven is real and death is, a lie  
I want to hear voices of angels above singing as one

**Refrain: Hallelujah, holy, holy God almighty, the great I am  
Who is worthy, none beside thee God almighty, the great I am**

2.I want to be near, near to your heart

Loving the world and hating the dark I want to see dry bones living again singing as one **Refrain**  
The great I am The mountains shake before you, the demons run in fear

At the mention of the name king of majesty there is no power in hell or any who can stand  
Before the power and the presence of the "Great I Am" The great I am, the great I am yeah **Refrain**  
**The great I am The great I am The great I am**

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**Sacrament of Holy Communion of Holy Communion,** written for Labor Day Weekend  
by Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi, UCC Pastor and Author

We make a joyful muffled noise –rhythm and blues, country, rap, a sometimes masked, distanced,  
sweet response to the voice of God:

*"I relieved your shoulder of the burden and your hands were freed from the basket."* Psalm 81

We pick up the microphone and the bass guitar –we join in electronic "live" worship and sit safely spaced!  
The first Exodus released those treated unjustly and worked to bring them to a new and safe place.

This is a new Exodus time, a time to give attention to those who are workers when others are not able or are not well...those jobless and waiting, those who work in dangerous conditions.

We experience the voice of God, saying: "I will give you finest wheat; from the rock, I give you honey."

### **Prayer of Consecration**

In the bread we eat, we honor farmers and bakers; we honor truck drivers, and those who stock grocery shelves. In the cup we drink, we honor those who pick fruit, often endangered by pesticides, and those who work in bottling plants. In bread and cup, we honor those who have written, translated, printed, sold, given, and taught the Good News of the new covenant.

*(Each person laying hands on bread and cup)*

**All: Holy One, this is the Sacrament we share, because others have passed it on – spiritually and physically –to each of us. We pray that your Spirit of life and love, of tenderness and power, rest upon every bread and every cup, so that they may feed our inmost needs and pour forth a grace that can change the world. Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you. Amen.**

### **Words of Remembering** ~ adapted from Henry Van Dyke's Hymn for Labor Day in public domain ...

Jesus, our divine companion, by a lowly human birth, surely came to join the workers, burden bearers of the Earth –known as carpenter of Nazareth, gathered those who fish for food, promised – "raise the stone and find me, I am here, just cleave the wood."

In these times of fires and flooding, here Christ is to claim and own; where the virus finds a victim, no one shall be left alone. Christ the peace which passes knowledge dwells within the daily strife; in the bread of Heaven broken in the sacrament of life.

My friends, we remember a Passover in Jerusalem when Jesus borrowed an upper room, soaked and scrubbed the tired feet of others, and explained that there is a God-shaped hole in everyone's belly and Jesus would fill it with love. And on Easter afternoon in Emmaus, Jesus reminded us that the bread of welcome on anyone's table, on everyone's table, is blessed to be a holy sacrament, sending us out to find the cup in the world around us.

### **Sharing of the Elements**

The bread on our table is blessed and broken. As long as it is open to all, it is holy.

**Please repeat after me: Sharing love, we will never be hungry.** (Eat it now.)

The cup on our table is blessed and shared like the overflowing of tears and joy.

**Please repeat after me: Drinking deeply, we will never thirst.** (Drink it now.)

Let us pray: **All: O Holy One, we give you thanks for honey from rocky times, hope from fearful thoughts and burdened shoulders, bread and roses from the labor of hands and minds, and your blessing as we receive this sacrament in the holy dispersion of virtual worship and in this beautiful garden, to reach out and change your world one foot-washing servanthood at a time, one Emmaus joy at a time. Amen**

### **Time of Intention and Thanks:**

We each, as members and friends of this church family, are called to minister to one another and to the world around us. Thank you, to all of you whose various gifts electronically, through the mail and those given in person have enabled Community United Church of Christ to faithfully serve.

Let us dedicate our gifts and in so doing offer our lives to God this day:

**All: Loving God, receive our offerings and unite us into a community of mutual caring, where the light of your love shines through all of our efforts as we share of our time, talents and treasure.**

**We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

**Benediction:** From Paul's letter to the Ephesians 3:20-21, Common English Bible

<sup>20</sup> Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; <sup>21</sup> glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always. Amen.

Go in peace & continue to be safe.

*Pastor Mary Jo*