

Glorify God
Service Prayers for the
Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 15, 2022



St. John United Church of Christ
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Liturgy - Rev. Michelle I. Torigian

**JUST A REMINDER. THERE WILL BE NO BULLETIN
FOR SUNDAY MAY 22**

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

(Inspired by Psalm 148)

Celebrate our God, from the plains to the mountains!
Celebrate our God, from the waters and hills.

Sing to our God who designed creation.

**Fill the air with song to the One who painted the
world with love.**

Let us praise our God, the author of grace.

Let us worship our God, the composer of joy.

***INVOCATION: Spirit of Joy-**

Basking in your presence, we dance in the knowledge
that your presence dwells with us. We celebrate your
name, your grace, your love in this space with our
siblings. We proclaim our excitement that we,
together, can glorify your name through sharing your
love. May this minute be the start of a new chapter of
our love for you and our love for our neighbors.
Amen.

***PRAYER OF REFLECTION AND GROWTH:**

God of Awe and Harmony-

**We were given the great commandment to love one
another the way you, the Christ, the Spirit loves us.
And yet, the way we love becomes conditional.
What events have distorted our view of Divine
Love? How can we return to a simple but radical
way of loving? Transform our hearts as we work to
understand one another, creating an earth which
reflects God's heaven. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF GRACE:** The Spirit of God heals our hearts, blessing us with grace as the Divine One works to transform our world into a realm of peace and joy. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 11:1-18

Jerusalem church questions Peter

11 The apostles and the brothers and sisters throughout Judea heard that even the Gentiles had welcomed God's word. ² When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him. ³ They accused him, "You went into the home of the uncircumcised and ate with them!"

⁴ Step-by-step, Peter explained what had happened. ⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying when I had a visionary experience. In my vision, I saw something like a large linen sheet being lowered from heaven by its four corners. It came all the way down to me. ⁶ As I stared at it, wondering what it was, I saw four-legged animals—including wild beasts—as well as reptiles and wild birds.^[a] ⁷ I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter! Kill and eat!' ⁸ I responded, 'Absolutely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ The voice from heaven spoke a second time, 'Never consider unclean what God has made pure.' ¹⁰ This happened three times, then everything

was pulled back into heaven. ¹¹ At that moment three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. ¹² The Spirit told me to go with them even though they were Gentiles. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered that man's house. ¹³ He reported to us how he had seen an angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is known as Peter. ¹⁴ He will tell you how you and your entire household can be saved.' ¹⁵ When I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as the Spirit fell on us in the beginning. ¹⁶ I remembered the Lord's words: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then who am I? Could I stand in God's way?"

¹⁸ Once the apostles and other believers heard this, they calmed down. They praised God and concluded, "So then God has enabled Gentiles to change their hearts and lives so that they might have new life."

Our suggested liturgical lessons have been sort of jumping around lately; some after Jesus' resurrection and some before. So just to get our minds in the correct chronological place, I'd like to set the scene for today's reading. These words of Jesus were

spoken at the table following the last meal he had with his disciples. He has washed their feet, broken the bread, and sent Judas out. When Judas left, it was the beginning of what Jesus called his "hour." In the mealtime Jesus is giving his final words to those who will continue his work.

***GOSPEL: John 13:31-35**

Love commandment

³¹ When Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Human One has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One in himself and will glorify him immediately. ³³ Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me—but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now—'Where I'm going, you can't come.'

³⁴ "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. ³⁵ This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

These are the ancient Words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE: "Glorify God"

It would have been easier if I had preached on the "Love Commandment." But to tell you the truth, I have always been curious about the "Glorified" portion of the text. I don't truly understand it. I think part of the problem is that we don't use that word in our every speech. "Glorified" got lost in translation.

This is the same way that Jesus' hour means something different than our hour.

In the Gospel of John, "Jesus' hour" refers more broadly and metaphorically to the climactic event of Jesus' death and resurrection, which the Fourth Gospel also refers to as his "glorification" (12:23; 17:1)

Webster's dictionary defines "glorify" as to praise, elevate, adore, worship. But the Bible translates it "to glorify is to make visible the presence of God." This definition is very important. We should try to think of this definition every time we read "glorify" in the Bible.

To further confuse us, John 13:31-32 has also been called the "Fourfold Glory."

#1 The glory of Jesus has come; and that glory is the cross. The greatest glory in life is the glory which comes from sacrifice. That's how the presence of God was made visible.

#2 In Jesus, God has been glorified. It was the obedience of Jesus which brought glory to God.

Jesus gave the supreme honor and glory to God, because he gave to God the supreme obedience, even to a cross.

#3. In Jesus, God glorifies God's self. It is a strange thought that the supreme glory of God lies in the incarnation (Jesus' life with us) and the cross. There is no glory like that of being loved. Had God remained aloof and majestic, serene and unmoved, untouched by any sorrow and unhurt by any pain, men and women might have feared God and they might have admired God; but they would never have loved God. The law of sacrifice is not only a law of earth; it is a law of heaven and earth. It is in the incarnation and the cross that God's supreme glory is displayed.

#4. God will glorify Jesus. Here is the other side of the matter. At that moment, the cross was the glory of Jesus; but there was more to follow – the resurrection; the ascension; the full and final triumph of Christ.

In the cross, Jesus found his own glory; but the day came, and the day will come, when that glory will be demonstrated to all the world and all the universe. The vindication of Christ must follow his humiliation; the enthronement of Christ must follow his crucifixion; the crown of thorns must change into the crown of glory.

To glorify is to make visible the presence of God. Jesus came, lived, died, was resurrected, and

ascended all TO MAKE VISIBLE THE PRESENCE OF GOD. That is why we worship, exalt, elevate, adore, and praise God. How can we make the presence of God visible to others? Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.

Glorious God, by resurrection you empower the crucified Christ and also the witness of the church. Your Spirit enables us in worship as in service to the world. Only in the Spirit may we seek and find you, who has sought and found us, and we are very grateful.

With the sacrifice, obedience, love, and humiliation, Jesus has brought the presence of God to our hearts and minds. And when that happens, we are given the strength and courage to continue the work of God in our every day lives. And we are so grateful.

Great Physician, remember your suffering children wherever they are. We especially pray for all the children and adults in the Ukraine as they hold on to hope with you, dear God. Graciously visit the sick with your healing power. Comfort the old and bedridden and such as are homeless and destitute of friends. Save, O Lord, those who have been driven to despair, the suicidal, the insane. Console those who

mourn their dead. Sustain us all with faith in your resurrection from the dead as first fruits of our future with you.

All our prayers we offer before your throne, O God, through Jesus Christ who lives and rules beside you in the communion of the Holy Spirit, one God, time without end.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your 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 as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

CALL TO OFFERING: We have the tools we need to love one another. Through our talents, treasures, and time, we can create God's Realm here on earth. Our contributions – no matter the size – will craft a world which reflects God's love.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:
Loving God, Holy Vessel of Kindness-
We glorify you by sharing our gifts of love with this community. We celebrate your presence by caring for your creation. May these offerings today nourish**

a world craving more love, peace, justice, and hope. Amen.

***BENEDICTION:** As the week begins again,
May we dance as we celebrate God's presence.
May we sing as we proclaim Christ's love.
May we create as we embrace the Spirit's vision.
May we love boldly, care radically, and share courageously to glorify the Spirit of God in our midst.
Amen!

**From the Words of Henri Nouwen
You Are the Glory of God**

With a smile John Eudes said, "Take this as a mantra: 'I am the glory of God.' Make that thought the center of your meditation so that it slowly becomes not only a thought but a living reality. You are the place where God chose to dwell, you are God's place and the spiritual life is nothing more or less than to allow that space to exist where God can dwell, to create the space where his glory can manifest itself. In your meditation you can ask yourself, 'Where is the glory of God? If the glory of God is not there where I am, where else can it be?' "