



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ)

Worship Service for 8/14/22



Welcome & Announcements

Elders meeting today...after church?

--Gratitude to all who made last week's Camp Day successful.

GREETING one another in the name of Jesus Christ

Hymn-- Christians, We Have Met to Worship #277

JOYS AND CONCERNS

--Officer Seara Burton—her family—and all RPD....and their families. Some of whom are here today. We especially keep in our prayers those officers who were there and saw the shooting.

--We also keep in our prayers the man who shot Officer Burton.

--Our community—those caught up in darkness of addiction and poverty of spirit...can create havoc for all.

--Our nation

Call to Prayer--Lord, Listen to your Children Praying #305 (twice)

PRAYER w/ Lord's Prayer

Bell Choir Response—*Simple Gifts*

SCRIPTURE AND MESSAGE

Out of Darkness

There seems to be two stereotypes about Christians. One is the harsh, judgmental image of Christians smacking people upside of the head with the Bible and screaming, “Repent...or be damned!” The other image of Christians is that we walk around with plastic smiles permanently affixed to our faces, and speaking only of sunshine and happiness.

Now...these images have some basis in truth. We are called to repent from our sins...to change our ways...and to submit our lives to God. And...as Christians...we are blessed with the

assurance of God's radical love for us...and the amazing Grace God shares with us through Jesus Christ.

Life, however, is hard. Last week...we remembered that we are children of God. We played and were lighthearted ...as all children should be. As adults...however, we know that life isn't always playful. Life can turn dark...in a moment. We were reminded of this awful truth just a few days ago... with the shooting of a young officer...just a few blocks from this sanctuary.

Our scripture today is from one of the Apostle Paul's letters to the Corinthian church. Paul speaks to that church...and to us... about difficult moments. He acknowledges that we are mortal. Our bodies...are really nothing more than clay jars. And yet... these clay jars...hold something very precious.

Hear now...our reading from ...**2 Corinthians 4:6-10**

6 For it is the God who said, "*Light will shine out of darkness,*" who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

⁷ But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, ⁹ persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, ¹⁰ always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. **SCRIPTURE PRAYER**

It is impossible to live a human life without brokenness. As Paul says in this letter...we are but “clay jars.” And the fact is... clay jars...break. Our physical bodies...are mortal. Even the most healthy of us...will eventually decline in vitality. Our egos and our emotions will get bruised at some point. Our minds may even snap. It is impossible to live a human life without brokenness.

Some brokenness comes with simple age...some by our own bad choices...some by the *innocent* actions of others. And, yes... some breaking will occur due to intentional...and malicious... acts of another person. It is impossible to live a human life without some form of breaking ...at some point.

And one more truth...though many may not want to hear this.

Being a Christian...being a loving and devout follower of Jesus Christ...will not keep brokenness away. We still live in clay jars. We still break. We still bleed. We still hurt. The darkness of life...will still find us.

This is when we need to remind ourselves that we are not alone in our darkness. No matter how much the darkness tries to get us to believe otherwise...we are never...alone in the darkness. This is the beauty of faith and trust in God through Jesus Christ.

Remember Jesus' words...spoken the night before His crucifixion. He knew that a deep darkness was coming for his disciples. In John 14, we read Jesus' promise to send His Spirit to be with them in that darkness. ...to be IN them...and IN us. In other words...when we accept Christ's Spirit into our lives...we are inseparable from Him. He is ...IN us...even when the darkness surrounds us. We are never alone...in the darkness.

Think what that means...to have Christ truly IN us today. Christ is One who overcame the deepest darkness. Christ

overcame death itself. He walked out of a dark tomb...and into the morning light. My friends...it may be August...but we carry the Light giver of Resurrection...within us. Darkness may surround us...but we know...don't we...that darkness has no real power over us.

This is why Paul could proclaim in our reading today...that we may be afflicted...but not crushed. We may be perplexed, but not driven to despair. We may be persecuted, but not forsaken. We may be struck down...but not destroyed. Why? Because the Light of Christ...is within us. So when the darkness around us is defeated...we can point to that Light and say..."Look what God has done! Thanks be to God...our Salvation and Creator!"

God created this planet to tell and retell the power of light over darkness. We see it every Spring ...not just in church...but in gardens and yards. Trees that were just branches...begin to bud...and then bloom. Flowers break through the rich, dark earth...to fill the world with vibrant color...and sweet aroma.

And then...there are the victories over darkness that seem even more miraculous. Have you ever seen the stump of a dead tree ...begin to sprout. It was dead...and dark. And then a tiny fleck of green... emerges. LIFE...coming out of the darkness.

In early March of 2012, an F4 tornado struck Henryville, Indiana. People were killed. Homes destroyed. Whole towns were leveled. Trees were torn from the ground and branches were ripped away. After the storm, the clean-up began. Branches from the now-dead trees were piled up here and there.

It was then that people who were struggling through that darkness began to notice something. Warm weather and spring rains did something to those piles of dead branches. Those branches...began to bud...and to bloom. Where there had been darkness...and ugly reminders of death...there were flowers. Thee was LIFE.

Have you ever heard of the Japanese artform called Kintsugi? It's the process of repairing broken pottery by mending the brokenness with a lacquer mixed with a precious metal, like

gold or silver. It celebrates the idea that beauty can occur...even in the midst of brokenness.



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When I see Kintsugi pottery...it's almost like a golden light shining through the brokenness. Where there had been only the darkness of a break or a crack...there now shines beauty.

This speaks volumes to me about what it must look like when the Light of Christ that is within us...shines out when we feel surrounded by darkness. That gleaming gold...cannot be hidden. It's too powerful. ...So too...the Light of Christ we keep within us. It's too powerful to keep hidden. It'll find a way out of the darkness.

You know, every time I see this sermon title...one image keeps coming to me. For copyright purposes, we can't show the video. But I can...and I will ...tell you about it.

You may know the name Gloria Estefan, lead singer of the Miami Sound Machine. They were incredibly successful back in the 1980s. Gloria possesses a powerful voice and splendid Latin moves. Her music evoked a joy and lightness of spirit.

In March of 1990, a semi-truck slammed into her tour bus. She suffered a broken back. Prayers from around the world were lifted. It was a dark time, laced with lots of questions. Would she survive? Would she be able to walk? Would this powerhouse singer and dancer ever be able to perform again?

In January of 1991, less than year after her accident, Gloria Estefan appeared at the American Music Awards. There was a video that night that told of the accident and her hard-fought recovery. She stepped onto the stage to a standing ovation, welcoming her home...back onto a performing stage.

Then... she began to sing...in her rich alto voice. She had co-written the song with her husband, Emilio and their friend, Jon Secada. The song was entitled..."Coming Out of the Dark."

The first line of that song...says it all. "Why be afraid if I'm not alone." And the chorus is "Coming out of the dark. I finally see the light now...and it's shining on me. Coming out of the dark. I know the love that saved me." There wasn't a dry eye in the house! ...or in my house that night!

This is the truth about the darkness around us. It's there. It does nobody any good...to deny that we're living through dark times. And this week...in this city...it got even darker.

Yet, why be afraid...if we're not alone? We have the Light within us. Like kintsugi jars of clay, that Light shines through our broken hearts and our damaged spirits. This Light helps us see the way out of the darkness.

And...more than that...this Light helps us...help those around us. If those around you are struggling in the surrounding darkness ... if they can't sense the Light within themselves...let the Light within you...shine. Let the Light of Christ within you...show them the way... out of the darkness.

INVITATION—"I'll leave the light on for you." It's what my parents said...and did... when my brother or I were out to school events in high school. Games...Plays...work...would get us home when it was dark. But pulling into the drive...and seeing the light on...helped. Such a simple act...yet it was a way of showing us a way...to the safety...the sanctuary ...of our home. Whenever we are in darkness...seeing a light leading us home...moves us.

Even more so...when the Light is the Light of Christ...and we are surrounded by darkness. Are you in darkness today...and in need of the Light that can help you find your way home to God...the One who loves you so much. Then follow the Light that is Christ.

Hymn-- Called as Partners in Christ's Service #452 v. 1 & 2

MOMENT FOR MINISTRY

BELL CHOIR Anthem—Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

COMMUNION—During the Apostle Paul's final trip to Rome... his ship was caught in days and weeks of storms. Experienced sailors and soldiers feared for their lives. Then came the moment...in the midst of all that turmoil...when Paul...took bread, and blessed it...and broke it... and gave it to them to eat. This wasn't Communion per se. But as told by the author of Acts...the Eucharist is food of confidence shared in the middle of the storm.

We too...are in the middle of a storm. In our community and in our country. Perhaps in our personal lives. We are dealing with darkness...and a hunger of the soul. So, let us come together as a community...to this Table...presided over by our

Lord and Savior. Let us experience His Goodness...and His Grace offered to each one of you.

Hymn-- You Satisfy the Hungry Heart #429 v. 3 & 4

Elder's Prayer blessing the Bread and Cup

Remembering Jesus' words

Partake

Hymn--The Church's One Foundation #272 v. 1, 2, 5

BENEDICTION