



## **WORSHIPPING AT HOME**

**with UCC Westerly**  
*during the Covid-19 outbreak*

**March 22, 2020**

- Create a small worship space in your home anywhere. Add a candle, a bible and perhaps a small vase of flowers or a plant. Be sure to leave a place for Jesus! (See *At Home Worship Instructions!*)
- At 9:30am, the time we would usually gather in our sanctuary, settle into your worship space and begin...
- A reminder I will be livestreaming an abbreviated worship service on Facebook Live for about 25 minutes beginning at 9:45am. Let me know if you need help to set up a Facebook account.

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### **Light your candle as a reminder of God's presence with you**

#### **Call to Worship from Psalm 19:**

The heavens are telling the glory of God and the skies proclaim God's handiwork.  
Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.  
There is no speech; nor are there words; their voice is not heard;  
Yet it goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.

#### **Opening Songs:**

"Sisters, Brothers" (a chant by Maria Harris)  
*"Sisters, brothers, take your time, go slowly.  
Listen deep inside yourself. Every hour is holy."*

"In the Lord" (a Taize chant)  
*"In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice.  
Look to God, do not be afraid, lift up your voices, the Lord is here.  
Lift up your voices, the Lord is here."*

#### **Prayer of Self-Reflection:**

**Sweet and patient Jesus, enable me to place my trust in you so that I may live in the present moment and all its challenges. Too often I forget that you long for peace and healing in my mind and heart. Your song pierces even my darkest days, and your hands are always, and everywhere, the source of**

**my journey into wholeness and that inner springtime which is your gift alone. Let is be so in me this day, Sweet Jesus, and with all those I love. In your name we pray. Amen.**

[adapted from *An Iona Prayer Book*, (Millar, 1998)]

**TODAY'S SCRIPTURE:** John 2:1-11

Message: “... *What concern is that to you and me?*”

Rev. Ruth

I don't know about you, but this seems like a very timely question for us to consider this morning as we find ourselves in an entirely new reality in response to the Covid-19 global pandemic enveloping our lives. When I looked at my worship plan for this Sunday, I could not believe this was the focal point I had chosen months ago but there it was. This is yet another example to me of how I have been encountering God's presence – God's unfailing grace – every day we have been on this strange journey through the valley of Covid-19.

This quote – “what concern is that to you and me?” – is a question Jesus addresses to his mother in a curious story which appears only in the Gospel of John. Coming right after the story of Jesus' baptism and the calling of the first disciples, this story seemingly about Jesus' social life, is used by John as the kick-off to Jesus entire ministry. I love this story for many reasons, especially for the human side of Jesus it so clearly reveals when he gets in a tussle with his mother over something she asks him to do and he doesn't want to do it. I mean, how universal an experience is that? He is so typically an adult child annoyed with his mother in this story. And yet, in the end he does what she asks. So, just to recap quickly the story, there is a wedding in Cana, a town in Galilee. Jesus' mother Mary attends, and so does Jesus along with his disciples. The wedding hosts, the bridegroom and his parents, ran out of wine shortly after the festivities began. This would be a real problem since wedding festivities in Jesus' time went on for days. If this happened on the first day, as it appears to have done, the bridegroom and his family would have been disgraced. Not a great way to begin married life with your new bride and the in-laws!

Mary somehow learns of the problem and goes to Jesus to ask for his help. This has always been a fascinating point for me. Why did she go to Jesus? Did she know what he was capable of doing even though he had not yet done anything so miraculous? Did she just think of him as an excellent problem-solver who would know how to manage an incredibly awkward situation? Or, did she just think they should leave? Well, we know from what transpires next that this last one at least wasn't the case. Jesus responds to her by saying, “Woman, what concern is that to you and me? In my mind I always hear this as “Mom!!! Why are telling ME about this? What do you expect ME to do?” Then he also reminds her that “my hour has not yet come.” Huh? What hour? We think. Some scholars argue he is referring to his resurrection but that seems a stretch to me. Others think he was just telling her he wasn't ready to do anything quite so public yet. This has always struck me as the most human response. Jesus knew his life was about to change and change radically and he just wasn't ready for that yet. Or so he thought. But this was a mother who knew her son, a mother who knew when just a little extra nudge was needed and she nudged. That she knew him so well is proven by

what she did next – she told the servants, “do whatever he tells you.” They did which was to fill six stone jars used for holding the water for the purification rites. These would have been huge jars – think 4 to 5 feet tall. They would have been empty because the guests had already washed upon arriving at the wedding. Jesus orders them filled with water and then tells the servants to draw some water out and take it to the steward. They do and it is discovered to have been transformed into an excellent wine, so good that the steward complements the groom on serving the best wine later in the festivities than was usual. The story ends with an acknowledgement that “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory.” In other words, this is the moment when he let the world have a first glimpse of who he was.

What concern is that to you and to me? Not really the kind of question we expect to hear come out of Jesus’ mouth at any time. This was Jesus – the one who cared about everyone! The one who taught that loving God required loving the other. How could Jesus possibly be saying that he didn’t think this was of any concern to him? It is a curious question. Did he think the whole running out wine thing was just not what God thought he should be worrying about? Did he think it was just too trivial a thing to bother with? Did he really think it was not yet his time? I think it’s entirely likely that the answer to all three of these questions is yes because that is how the human part of Jesus – the part that’s like you and me – would react to this situation. If Jesus was coming to terms with his destiny as God’s son and God did have such big plans in mind for him, was this how everything should start? By miraculously making more wine for drunken wedding guests? And yet, he did it. Why? Because his mother asked him to? Because the bride and groom were his friends and their need for a miracle was as real as any other request? After all, they would have lived with the embarrassment of running out for the rest of their lives. Or, did he just realize, when he stopped to think about it, that God’s timing was God’s timing. Did he trust that God knew what God was doing so that if this was the situation where his gifts were first needed, who was he to second guess God?

Thus, we are left with the possibility, the reality even, that Jesus learned at the wedding in Cana that God’s will, God’s timing, would not always line up with his thinking. In other words, even Jesus was confused by God and God’s timing on occasion. And if Jesus got confused about God’s timing, God’s actions, then why in heaven’s name do we think we should understand everything all the time. Jesus was clearly annoyed by his mother’s request. “What concern is that to you and to me” is a pretty harsh response to a request for help for some friends. This was indeed the human Jesus, the Son of Man as Matthew calls him. But then the Son of God shows up after all and decides God knows what God is doing better than he does, so he acts. Seems that trusting God was a vitally important lesson even Jesus had to learn.

This question Jesus asked so abruptly, so unexpectedly – “what concern is that to you and to me?” is one we have heard repeated a lot in one form or another since this whole Covid-19 pandemic first appeared on our news feeds. “Why should we worry about that?” people asked. It’s on the other side of the world. Too far away to touch us. Then it crept closer, and closer and closer and now it’s here and our lives are totally upended. Now we get it. Now we understand that whether or not we personally get

sick, we are still responsible to do whatever it takes to keep others from getting sick. Now we understand that we can spread the disease to others without intending to because it is so sneaky and so deadly to some. At least most of us do. Sadly, not everyone. Not yet. News coverage yesterday showed college kids jamming beaches in Florida on spring break claiming they don't care if they get sick because they have a right to party, whether they get infected or not. "What concern is that to you and to me?" is the question they taunt the world with prompting anger and derision and disdain. The question for us then becomes, how will we respond to them and to everyone else like them who still don't believe this is a big deal? That's a tough one. Anger is a logical response surely. But is that all? Perhaps Jesus gives us a clue to a better answer in this story about a party in Cana. He didn't get angry, annoyed maybe, but not angry. He paused. He took a breath. Then he did what he needed to do to resolve the situation in the best way possible.

What concern is that to you and to me? Depends on the situation and your perspective on it, I guess. It also depends a lot on what you believe God is asking of you in that moment. The key here is to remember that all too often our first instinctive response is not the best one. This is why it just might help to remember this little story about Jesus as his ministry began. Here is a case where it makes sense to pause and consider WWJD in Cana. He paused, took a breath, did what was needed to address the situation in front of him. Maybe for you that's finding all sorts of ways of living with reality of Covid-19 upending your life. Maybe its figuring out how to deal with the people who just don't get it. No matter which situation you find yourself in, the best way forward – indeed the only way forward – is to trust that God always knows what God is doing. Even here. Even now. In the midst of all this. Especially in the midst of all this. Amen.

### **A Time of Prayer**

- If you are joining in the prayers during the Facebook Live broadcast, before worship take a few minutes to jot down your own list of prayer concerns.
- If you are using this worship resource on your own, after making your list of prayer concerns, sit in silence and let your mind calm down. When you are ready, aloud or just in your own mind, ask God to bless each of the persons and situations on your list.
- End with the Lord's Prayer.

### **Closing Song – “Jesus Loves Me”**

*Jesus loves me, this I know. For the bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong. They are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me (3 times). The bible tells me so.*

### **A Prayer of Benediction**

*May the God of peace be with you, stilling the heart that hammers with fear and doubt and confusion. And may the warm mantle of your peace cover those who are troubled and anxious. May the blessing of peace be on you and in you every moment of the week ahead. Amen.*

**TIME FOR JESUS CALLS!** Check out the *At Home Worship Instructions* to proceed.