



WORSHIPPING AT HOME

*with UCC Westerly
during the Covid-19 outbreak*

May 10, 2020
4th Sunday of Eastertide
Mother's Day!

- Create a small worship space in your home anywhere. Add a candle, a bible and perhaps a lily or daffodil or tulip to get that Easter feel.
- If you are doing this on your own, settle into your worship space around 9:30am on Sunday and begin. Make your list of prayer concerns. Then sit in silence and let your mind calm down. When you reach the Prayer Time in the service, 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 in whatever words are most comfortable for you.
- If you are joining in the prayers during the Facebook Live broadcast, before worship take a few minutes to send them to me via text, email or Facebook message. It is helpful for me to receive them at least 20 minutes before the service begins.
- A reminder I will be streaming our worship service on Facebook Live beginning at 9:45am. You can still access it even if you are not on Facebook by going to the church website, www.uccwesterly.org, and clicking on the Facebook icon on the homepage.

~ ~ ~ ~

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

Gathering Music

CALL TO WORSHIP "Some Keep the Sabbath Going to Church" A Poem by Emily Dickinson
(<https://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/2020/5/3/some-keep-the-sabbath-going-to-church-by-emily-dickinson>)

Some keep the Sabbath going to church –
I keep it, staying at Home –
With a Bobolink for a Chorister –
And an Orchard, for a Dome --
Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice –
I just wear my Wings –
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton – sings.
God preaches, a noted Clergyman –
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last –
I'm going all along.

Opening Song – “All Things Bright and Beautiful”

[WORDS & MUSIC ©1958 Public Domain. All rights reserved. Reprinted under ONE LICENSE#A-734569]

*Refrain: All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.*

- 1. Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colors, and made their tiny wings. Refrain.*
- 2. The purple-headed mountains, the river running by,
The sunset and the morning that brightens up the sky. Refrain.*
- 3. The cold wind in the winter, the pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden: God made them every one. Refrain.*
- 4. God gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell
How great is God almighty, who has made all things well. Refrain.*

UNISON PRAYER OF REFLECTION (from *An Iona Prayer Book*, Peter Millar, 1998, p. 98)

Lord of Life, we celebrate your countless gifts, in days and nights, in rainbows and rain, in touch, dream and smile, in partners who cuddle, in grannies who listen, in friends who care, in dogs that lick, in hands that sew, in food on the table; yet above all, in your coming among us, walking our roads, calling our names, enfolding our lives, inviting us home. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Morning Message

No Better, Only Worse

Mark 5:25-34

Rev. Ruth

A TIME OF PRAYER

- If you are joining in the prayers during the Facebook Live broadcast, before worship take a few minutes to send them to me via text, email or Facebook message at least 20 minutes before the service begins.
- 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.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD

Acknowledgement of Gifts & Offerings*

*Doxology “Praise God from who all blessings flow; Praise Christ all creatures here below; Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter; One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.”

[WORDS & MUSIC ©2013 Public Domain. All rights reserved. Reprinted under ONE LICENSE#A-734569]

CLOSING SONG – “Jesus Calls Us”

[WORDS & MUSIC ©pd Public Domain. All rights reserved. Reprinted under ONE LICENSE#A-734569]

1. *Jesus calls us o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea;
Day by day his sweet voice soundeth, saying “Christian, follow me.*
2. *In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toils and hours of ease,
Still he calls, in cares and pleasures, “Christian, love me more than these.”*
3. *Jesus call us! By thy mercies, Savior, may we hear thy call,
Give our hearts to thine obedience, serve and love thee best of all.*

A Prayer of Benediction

May the Light of God surround you, the Love of God enfold you, the Power of God protect you and the Presence of God watch over you. May you always know and treasure in your heart that wherever you are, God is already there waiting. Amen.

Music as the Service ends –

~~~~

*\*On behalf of the leadership of UCC Westerly and myself, I would like to offer our deepest gratitude to our members and friends who have been so generous with their pledges and gifts to the church during this challenging time. We would also like to invite any of our new friends joining us now via Facebook Live to support the many vital ministries of this church. You may mail your checks, made payable to UCC Westerly, to us at 9 Castle Hill Road, Pawcatuck, CT 06379.*

~~~~

VIRTUAL FELLOWSHIP TIME!

- If you have access to a computer, tablet or an iPhone with a camera, you can join us for a Zoom Fellowship time by clicking on the link below at 11am. You will be able to see and chat with folks and they will be able to see and chat with you. Here is your invitation to the gathering:

Ruth Hainsworth is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Sunday Fellowship

Time: Apr 26, 2020 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/387873891?pwd=UUNoaVltbjJMWU1naWh4QzZoWEUxZzo9>

Meeting ID: 387 873 891

Password: 012305

SCRIPTURE READING
Morning Message

No Better, Only Worse

Mark 5:25-34
Rev. Ruth

Happy Mother's Day! How strange is it to be trying to celebrate Mother's Day under these bizarre "safe at home" restrictions we have been living with! Although I must admit that for the first time in my 30 year career in ministry I had a shot at getting breakfast in bed – or at least coffee waiting for me – this year. Pretty exciting, I must admit. As I write this, I am not sure what my "boys" will actually do, but here's hoping!

As always on Mother's Day my thoughts turn to my own mother whom you have heard me mention fairly often during my time as your pastor. That's because, although we had our differences, my mother had a huge influence on my life. Perhaps that's also the case with you and your mom. I don't know about you but, to this day, it is her voice I hear in my head when something goes really well for me. "Great job, honey, but did you ever think about phrasing it this way..." Candidly, it's also her voice I hear in my head when I look in the mirror and immediately know it's been a long time since I've been to the hairdresser. If I had a dollar for every time my mom said to me "is that how you're wearing your hair?" we'd all be sitting pretty! But she meant well. I know that. And I also acknowledge humbly that she gave me the most precious gift – my faith. My mother taught me how to pray when I was old enough to fold my hands. We prayed at bedtime, as I hugged my doll. We prayed at the dinner table, even if it was just me eating because she and my dad were heading out. My mom also taught me how to sing as a different way to pray. "Jesus Loves Me" and "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam" were routine in our daily lives as my mother's love for music permeated the house. She also showed me what it means to be a serious student of the Bible in a time when women wouldn't dream of preparing for ministry but they could lead Bible studies and she did in our little church over and over again. That was in addition to teaching Sunday School and Women's Circle and all the other work she did at the church and the Women's Club and the library. She shared with me her love of gardening as someone practicing organic, sustainable gardening since way before it was "a thing." In short, my mom modeled for me every day what it meant to be a woman of faith, a woman who trusted in God and tried to walk with Jesus. She was someone who appreciated that she often fell short of living life as Jesus would want her to. But, she was also a woman I watched time and time again "speak truth to power" even though she had no idea that was what she was doing. She would tell me she was just standing up for what she knew to be right. Not always as kindly or graciously as she might have, but that was her. Every inch a lady but one not afraid to speak her mind. Perhaps a trait you might have noticed in me from time to time.

I am confident many of you have stories to share about your mom and the influence she's had on your life. This is one of the wonderful things about Mother's Day – the encouragement to pause and remember our mothers and indeed all the extraordinary women who have touched our lives, making us the people we are today. The biblical story I chose for our focus this Mother's Day morning is one about another extraordinary woman. We know her story as it is one we hear in the church with some regularity despite its sensitive subject matter. Knowing what we know about the culture of ancient Palestine in which Jesus lived and ministered, it is nothing short of

miraculous that this story of the hemorrhaging woman made it into the sacred canon of Scripture at all. And not only is it in the canon, it's in all three synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Luke and Mark. It's Mark's version of the story I have chosen as our foundational text today where it appears in the midst of a series of stories about Jesus' healing miracles. But this story about the healing of the hemorrhaging woman is unique among them all.

For one thing, this woman who would have been considered ritually unclean and impure because of her bleeding condition, initiated her own healing. I mean she literally took it into her own hands. She jostled her way through the crowd following Jesus and touched him, telling herself if she could but touch the hem of his garment she would be healed. She did and she was. Immediately, Mark tells us. We can guess she was hoping to just slip back into the crowd and disappear since she knew what she had done broke every rule for women in the society in which she lived. But she didn't care. She needed help and she knew Jesus could help her. She believed, totally. She acted on that belief without hesitation. It worked, immediately. Except, Jesus knew something had happened. He knew "power had gone out of him." Now that right there is an extraordinary statement. He knew power had gone out of him which means the woman's actions on her own initiative made out of pure faith were powerfully and immediately successful. Jesus felt it. He literally felt her faith as it tapped into something inside of him. And he wanted to meet the person who was in possession of such extraordinary faith. For anyone else surrounding him in the moment, the knowledge that this touch and subsequent flow of power had been initiated by a woman, and an impure one at that, would have been absolutely horrifying. But not Jesus. When he heard her story, he knew what great courage she had displayed, what great risk she had taken. He also knew that because of her condition she would have been ostracized by the entire community, even her family. In the eyes of her own culture, she was literally a no one. She didn't matter. But she did to Jesus. As she crouched at his feet having been discovered for what she had done, she was trembling with fear. The text says so! She didn't know what Jesus would say to her but she expected it to be bad. It wasn't. Instead Jesus restored her to her full status in society as he said to her, "*Daughter*, your faith has made you well. "*Daughter*, your faith has made you well. Your family may have disowned you because of your illness but I won't. You are cured and you are part of my family forever.

I think it's difficult for us in our 21st century lives to fully grasp how absolutely extraordinary Jesus' reaction to this woman was. He literally gave her back her life, physically, socially and religiously. She then disappears from our view as Jesus is whisked away to a little girl who was dying. But I wonder about this woman. I wonder what happened to her. Did her family see Jesus heal her and claim her as his own? As a result, did they accept her back with loving hugs? Or did they still reject her because of the family fortune she had spent on useless cures? Was she from another town and had to go back to try to get them to believe her story, see for themselves she had been healed? What happened to her in the rest of her life when Jesus gave it back to her? We don't know. We can't picture it, really, because there is so much we don't know about her. We don't even know her name. The only hint we have of how she moved on from this miraculous healing moment is in what she already revealed to us about herself. We

know she was a woman of deep faith and tremendous courage. We know she was a woman who would do what needed to be done, say what needed to be said, even if the price she would pay was dear. For that reason, I like to think she went home and that her incredulous family was so touched by her faith that they enfolded her in their arms and their lives once again. I like to think her faith truly did make her well and whole in every sense of the word.

And so do we all wish desperately for ourselves here in this moment as the entire world struggles to figure out what comes next as the Coronavirus still rages. Do we continue in quarantine or not? Do we ease back into life ever so slowly, listening to the best advice of the health and government officials charged with guiding us forward, or do we give in to the fear and worry that no one really knows what to do? Dear friends, this Mother's Day indeed finds us in the midst of scary and uncertain times unlike anything any of us have ever seen or experienced. What to do and how and when to do it is not at all as clear or absolute as we would like it to be, hoped it would be by this point in time. When all this began, we were anticipating a shutdown of maybe a few weeks after which life would just immediately slip back into the comfortable patterns we now miss so much. Now we know that was never to be and we are left, so like the hemorrhaging woman, cowering at Jesus' feet trembling with fear. But here's the thing. By that time, the woman's health issues had been addressed. She was healed. She was ready for a new life and Jesus gave it to her – "Daughter, your faith has made you well." So too is Jesus reaching out to us to ease our trembling hearts and guide us slowly forward, one step at a time as we make our way into a future we can't yet fully imagine or envision. But Jesus can. God can. And that's enough for me. It has to be, just like it has been for so many before us. May God fill us all with the faith and determination of the courageous, strong women who have touched our lives. Happy Mother's Day. Amen.