

Worship in Place: a guide

First United Methodist of Cuero, Texas

Sunday, May 24, 2020

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Ascension Sunday

Greeting

Pastor Ron Welborn

Song of Praise

“Jesus Shall Reign”

Pastor Ron & Darlene Welborn

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun, does its successive journeys run; his kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns; all prisoners leap and loose their chains; the weary find eternal rest, and all who suffer want are blest.

Morning Prayer

Bob Wood

Glorious God, as we begin worship together in separate locations, we ask for your Holy Spirit to flow among us that we may feel one another's presence. As we begin worship together yet apart, we ask for a quietness within to hear your word to us this day. As we begin worship together in different places, we pray that something will touch us today in a way that we will be refreshed and renewed on our daily journey. We give thanks for the gifts and graces with which you have blessed us. May we use them to praise you and to sustain one another on our way. Be with us and among us. It is in the strong name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Special Music

“You Say”

Shirley Simpson

Reading from the Gospel

Luke 24: 44-53

Levi Jones

A message for the day

Pastor Ron Welborn

Over the course of the last few days our high schools, our colleges and universities have generated a new generation of graduates. Some of them know exactly what comes next. But for many, well their plans are up in the air. They are a bit uncertain. Still trying to work a few things out. Undecided. Maybe even a little confused. That would be expected in a “Normal” year but 2020 is anything but normal. The Covid 19 pandemic has so much Up in the Air. And honestly, I think that could describe Jesus' followers as well 2,000 years ago. They had just been through a whirlwind; first Jesus calls them to come follow him, they do and then they watch as he teaches, feeds 5000, raises the dead, heals the blind, calms storms and spreads hope left and right. But in the blink of an eye Jesus is dead-crucified, put in a tomb and literally left for dead-but wait, he's alive, he's risen as he said-he's back and once again he's here, he's there, he's teaching again-encouraging-instructing, and then suddenly he's gone yet again. This time Jesus has ascended, he disappears right before their eyes; he leaves planet earth and goes back to Heaven promising to come again one day. And the day and hour of his return is literally Up in the Air.

Jesus had given his disciples a vision — a dream that he called the kingdom of God. The dream no doubt disappeared when Jesus was crucified, but on the other side of the empty tomb they now saw what was possible: a people restored and brought to new life through the power of God's saving love.

Jesus had taught them about the kingdom, and continued to do so in the 40 days after his resurrection. This was the vision that had driven Jesus, the central theme of his preaching, the focus of his healing ministry, and the ultimate dream for which he had given his life. With his physical departure imminent, Jesus made sure that his disciples would be driven by the same dream.

But while Jesus saw the kingdom vision as a long-haul process, the disciples were looking for short-term success. “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” they asked him (Acts 1:6). God’s people had been waiting for centuries for the Messiah, the one who would restore Israel to its former glory, fully return them from exile, and usher in a new age when God would again dwell with them. The disciples’ question is one of timing — is it here? Is it now? The answer: it’s up in the air.

Jesus refocuses their vision, reminding them that their energy shouldn’t be put into speculation, but into action. Ironically, many Christ followers have continued to expend their energy looking up to heaven, waiting for Christ’s return rather than engaging the world around them. The disciples were to be the original “left-behind” people — left behind by Jesus to continue his work on earth. They were to be driven by visions of the kingdom of God breaking in on the present world rather than merely focusing on “getting to heaven.”

We are called to be witnesses – not spectators.

Remembering Joys and Concerns/The Lord’s Prayer

Pastor Ron Welborn

A closing song

“Ask Ye What Great Thing I Know”

Pastor Ron & Darlene Welborn

Ask ye what great thing I know, that delights and stirs me so? What the high reward I win? Whose the name I glory in? Jesus Christ the crucified.

Who defeats my fiercest foes? Who consoles my saddest woes? Who revives my fainting heart, healing all its hidden smart? Jesus Christ the crucified.

Who is life in life to me? Who the death of death will be? Who will place me on his right, with the countless hosts of light? Jesus Christ, the crucified.

This is that great thing I know; this delights and stirs me so. Faith in him who died to save, him who triumphed o’er the grave: Jesus Christ the crucified.

Blessing and Dismissal

Pastor Ron Welborn