



December 31, 2023
Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ

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Sunday Morning Meditation

Approach the New Year with resolve to find the opportunities hidden in each new day.

– Michael Josephson

Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ December 31, 2023
Mt Hope 8:30am Greenfield 9:50am Grace 11:00am
1st Sunday After Christmas Day / 'Vindication'

Community News

Prayer List and Prayers of the People

Prelude/Lighting of the Candles

* *Call to Worship*

Inspired by Psalm 100

Praise God in the heavens! Praise God among us! Praise the Holy One!

Praise God who vindicates us! Praise God who sustains us!

Praise God from the depths! Praise God in all circumstances!

Praise the Creator who made us! Praise God who shapes us!

Let all praise the name of the Holy One!

The glory of God reigns in heaven and on earth! Praise the Holy One!

* *Invocation*

Redeeming God, you have met us in valleys, on storming seas, and on mountaintops. We welcome your presence now as we come to worship you. We gather in gratitude and assurance that you are our God, and we proclaim with gladness that we are your people.

Some come in need of encouragement or comfort. Others need a healing touch. We hunger and thirst for righteousness as we praise and honor your name. Transform us into living vessels of your love and living witnesses of your continuing presence in the world.

Amen.

* *Opening Hymn*

"All Glory, Laud and Honor"

Mt Hope PH #155

Greenfield CH #300

Grace TH #135

Prayer of Transformation and New Life

Sovereign God, you have been our help from age to age.

Remind us to turn to you when confronted with difficult choices. Remind us that you strengthen us on the journey.

Remind us that our actions and attitudes impact our neighbors and ourselves. Renew our minds and spirits as we strive to follow your way of love and peace in the world.

Amen.

Words of Grace

Beloved, you are loved with an everlasting love by the Most High God. Know that each day is a new opportunity for faithful and flourishing life in the name and path of Jesus. Redemption is available, and God's grace is sufficient for transformation and new life.

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 61:10 – 62:3 NRSV

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn
and her salvation like a burning torch.

² The nations shall see your vindication
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.

³ You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the LORD
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple

²² When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴ and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵ so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

³⁹ When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

* *Gloria Patri*

Children's Message / Congregation Conversation

* *Meditation Hymn* “*It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*”

Mt Hope VH #95

Greenfield CH #251

Grace VH #95

Today's Message

* *The Apostle's Creed*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic/Christian church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy 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.**

Sung Response

“Hear Our Prayer, O Lord”

TH # 501

The Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Statement

Offertory (MH)

* Doxology

TH # 551

* Offertory Prayer

Generous God, we thank you for every good and perfect gift you have given to us and through us. Use our offerings this day for the benefit of creation, the redemption of humanity, and your glory. Amen.

* *Closing Hymn*

“Angels from the Realms of Glory”

Mt Hope PH #117

Greenfield CH #259

Grace TH #104

* *Benediction*

As we depart this place and this year, may we go forward...vindicated, restored, and empowered in order to be the blessing needed in the world. Share the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ in word and deed to the glory of God. Amen.

* *Three-Fold Amen*

TH # 558

* *Postlude/Extinguishing of the Candle*

Vindication: Service Prayers for the First Sunday after Christmas was written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ.