



A Celebration of Juneteenth:

An Uprising of Peace

June 19, 2020

4 pm

United Parish of Upton

It was shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

[Micah 6:8]

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.

But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

[Galatians 5:13]

General Order No. 3

The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them, becomes that between employer and hired labor. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.

Juneteenth is a holiday that commemorates the end of legalized slavery in the United States. It recalls how the states of Louisiana and Texas heard the news that President Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Slavery continued in those two states for more than two years after the proclamation was signed because the word had yet to travel there. Texas and Louisiana finally got the good news on June 19, 1865 that legalized slavery in the United States of America had ended.

We worship in thanksgiving today for the enduring vision of those first Freedmen and the generations of African Americans whose affirmation of the dignity of every human being has itself been an act of resistance. We pray for forgiveness for our own complicity in social injustice, and we renew our commitment to the freedom that is possible only when justice and peace are joined through the grace of our compassionate and merciful God.

Order of Worship

Opening Hymn

Gathering Prayer

For anyone who is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It is God who through Christ has won us back and given us a share in this work of reconciliation. [2 Corinthians 5:17-18]

The Lord our God is great. **The Lord is worthy of our praise.**

Come, let us remember the great things God has done for us.

Let us not neglect to teach our children the greatness of God.

Let us not forget our past and those who have gone before us.

May God create in us clean hearts, renew a steadfast spirit within us.

Let us lift up our voices in song, lift our arms in praise, and open our hearts in gratitude.

Let us greet God with our hymn of praise.

Hymn of Praise

Prayer of the Day:

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominion and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A Pouring of Libations

The pouring of libations may be offered by pouring fresh water in to a living plant of appropriate size. The offering of water as sign and source of life, poured (offered) giving up some of what has been so graciously given acknowledging is both an act of thanksgiving and a promise to share in God's life-giving justice.

First Pouring: to acknowledge God our source, our Creator, the giver of Life **Amen.**

Second Pouring: to acknowledge the full presence of God with us Source, Savior and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Third Pouring: to acknowledge our ancestors, the great cloud of witnesses now one with God. **Amen.**

Fourth Pouring: to acknowledge the generations who fought died and led us to freedom from slavery persecution, Jim Crow laws, inequitable access to rights and resources in this society . **Amen.**

Fifth Pouring: to acknowledge, those who have led the struggle for freedom in recent times and even now. **Amen.**

Sixth Pouring: to acknowledge our children and our children's children. The generations of hope and promise entrusted to us by the Grace of God. We pour in thanksgiving and in Hope. **Amen.**

Seventh Pouring: to acknowledge God our Source, Our Savior Jesus Christ, Our Sustainer and Counsel and Comforter the Holy Spirit. **Thanks Be to God.**

Musical Meditation

Readings

A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah [61:8-10]

⁸ For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. 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.

Psalm 77:11-20

I will remember the works of the LORD, * **and call to mind your wonders of old time.**

12 I will meditate on all your acts * **and ponder your mighty deeds.**

13 Your way, O God, is holy; * **who is so great a god as our God?**

14 You are the God who works wonders * **and have declared your power among the peoples.**

15 By your strength you have redeemed your people, * **the children of Jacob and Joseph.**

16 The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you and trembled; * the very depths were shaken.

17 The clouds poured out water; the skies thundered; * **your arrows flashed to and fro;**

18 The sound of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lit up the world; *
the earth trembled and shook.

19 Your way was in the sea, and your paths in the great waters, *
yet your footsteps were not seen.

20 You led your people like a flock * **by the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew [5:1-9]

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 'Blessed are those who are gentle, for they will inherit the earth.

6 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949; 1996),

Howard Thurman (1899 – 1981) was an African-American author, philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader who played a leading role in many social justice movements of the twentieth century. Thurman's theology of radical nonviolence influenced and shaped a generation of civil rights activists, and he was a key mentor to leaders within the movement, including Martin Luther King, Jr.

The first step toward love is a common sharing of a sense of mutual worth and value. This cannot be discovered in a vacuum or in a series of artificial or hypothetical relationships. It has to be in a real situation, natural, free. The experience of common worship of God is such a moment. It is in this connection that American Christianity has betrayed the religion of Jesus almost beyond redemption. Churches have been established for the underprivileged, for the weak, for the poor, on the theory that they prefer to be among themselves . . . The result is that in the one place in which normal, free contacts might be most naturally established—in which the relations of the individual to his God should take priority over conditions of class, race, power, status, wealth, or the life—this place is one of the chief instruments for guaranteeing barriers . . . The enormity of this sin cannot be easily grasped. The situation is so tragic that men of good will in all the specious classifications within our society find more cause for hope in the secular relationship of life than in religion. [L]ove is possible only between two freed spirits.

There is a Spirit at work in the life and in the hearts of men which is committed to overcoming the world. It is universal, knowing no age, no race, no culture, and no [human] condition. For the privileged and underprivileged alike, if the individual puts at the disposal of the Spirit the needful dedication and discipline, [we] can live effectively in the chaos of the present, the high destiny of a son of God.

James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* 1927, pp. 11-12]

“Listen, Lord-A Prayer” [the first and verses]:

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) was an American writer and civil rights activist. He was the first African American to be admitted to the Florida bar and In 1920 he was the first African American to be chosen as executive secretary of the NAACP. He was known during the Harlem Renaissance for his poems, novels, and anthologies.

*O Lord, we come this morning
Knee-bowed and body-bent
Before thy throne of grace.
O Lord—this morning—
Bow our hearts beneath our knees,
And our knees in some lonesome valley.
We come this morning—
Like empty pitchers to a full fountain,
With no merits of our own.
O Lord—open up a window of heaven,*

*And lean out far over the battlements of glory,
And listen this morning.*

*Lord, have mercy on proud and dying sinners—
Sinners hanging over the mouth of hell,
Who seem to love their distance well.
Lord—ride by this morning—
Mount your mild-white horse,
And ride-a this morning—
And in your ride, ride by old hell,
Ride by the dingy gates of hell,
And stop poor sinners in their headlong plunge.*

Musical Meditation

Prayers of Intercession

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and, through our struggle and confusion, work to accomplish your purposes on earth; so that, in your good time, every people and nation may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Out of the darkness we cry to you, O God. Enable us to find in Christ the faith to trust your care even in the midst of pain. Assure us that we do not walk alone through the valley of the shadow, but that your light is leading us into life.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

O God, call us into a deeper relationship to be your church for the sake of the world. Help us to see with new eyes the injustices within church and society. Call us to have a loving heart that respects and uplifts the humanity and dignity of every person; open our ears to listen to and learn from the experiences of people of color. Open our mouths to speak up and about injustices. Join us with others to work for racial equity and inclusion for all people.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer supporting the work of eradication of racism and racial justice in the United States.

A Prayer Attributed to St Francis

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is discord, union;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. **Amen.**

A Covenant Prayer of Recommitment to Justice

Reader 1: O God, who has created your children to be free, we attest in word and deed that you are our God and we are your people. From our earliest days as the people whom you intend to be free, O God, you have called us forth from self-seeking bondage, comfort, complacency, and complaint, to freeing and redeeming action for justice everywhere in the world.

You are our liberating God, and we would be your free and liberating people.

Reader 2: O God of Exodus and the Burning Bush, of the Prophets and of Jesus, we hear your powerful calling to be your servants in the service of all those who are oppressed. At every turn we hear your voice in the cries of the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned, and the broken, for you made yourself one with those who seek justice, freedom, and peace. We share a vision, a promise, and a yearning for the day of your reign, O God.

You are our servant God, and we would be your serving people.

Reader 3: O God, Our Sustainer, search our hearts and reveal to us our sinfulness, all the ways that we contribute to injustice and to self-destroying bondage. Give us deep courage to find the true path of your way, ready to give our very selves as living sacrifices for your will. We have heard your calling. Hear us now as we make our pledge.

People: You are our God and we are your people. We pledge ourselves now to pursue relentlessly that living, breathing justice which transforms persons and peoples. To your will for justice we recommit ourselves and pledge ourselves, our funds, our actions. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

The Sending Forth:

“Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold onto what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the faint hearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Closing Hymn