



First Christian Church

Disciples of Christ

430 S. 16th St. Lincoln, NE 68508 402.475.4289

Weekly Worship

love all • live spiritually • rejoice in hope • show hospitality

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Week of February 20, 2022



Call to Worship

Feel free to follow along with our Call to Worship from today's live-streamed worship service.

One: We come, those who seek to trust in God.

Many: We commit ourselves to do as Jesus would do for those around us.

One: We come, delighting in all the wonders God provides for us.

Many: We would not worry, but open ourselves to God's heart.

One: We come, waiting patiently for God to speak.

Many: We will be still, listening for God's words of hope and peace.

Public Worship WILL be held at 10:30 am Sunday morning.

If you are not quite ready to join us for public worship, we invite you to follow along with this printed service.

Community Prayer

Loving God, you love us with a passion that is beyond compare. You find in each one of us something beautiful, encouraging, and worthy of celebration. Lord, why can't we do the same? Sometimes it is so hard to find anything to love about the people in our lives: our coworkers, our children, our spouse. Sometimes even the people at church drive us nuts! God, continually point us back to your Word, where you Son Jesus shows us the way. Where Jesus explains your love for us and how we should reflect that love back to everyone we meet. Pour your Spirit over us so we can stand firm to the task, because it isn't easy. We pray for the strength to love. Amen.

Check out our weekly video at www.fcclincoln.org, First Christian's Facebook page, or search for First Christian Church, Lincoln, Nebraska on YouTube.

www.fcclincoln.org/youtube

Even if you are worshipping from home, please continue your regular giving to the church in addition to your faith giving. The FCC office is accepting checks at 430 S. 16th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508. We can also mail you a debit authorization form to do automatic withdrawals. Finally, there is a "GIVE" button on the top right-hand side of the fcclincoln.org website to make an online donation via PayPal.

Scripture Reading

Genesis 45:1-15

¹ Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, ‘Send everyone away from me.’ So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³ Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?’ But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come closer to me.’ And they came closer. He said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, “Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.” ¹² And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.’ ¹⁴ Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Luke 6:27-38

²⁷ ‘But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² ‘If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷ ‘Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.’

Reflection

Meditation for 7th Sunday After Epiphany

“Is This a Set-up for Failure?”

Jesus started off so well at the beginning of his sermon on the plain. We all want to hear how blessed we are. The “woes” he threw in were not so comforting, but we do love those blessings. Once he finished with the blessings and woes, Jesus moved on to share additional teachings. While there are those who believe that this well-known portion of Scripture is straight forward and easy to understand, I believe it is actually quite challenging. Although at first glance the language may seem direct, Jesus urged his followers to a lifestyle that probably seemed impossible to those listening. I know it certainly seems impossible to me. Jesus spoke about the importance of loving the most difficult to love, our enemies, and provides a whole list of examples. Is Jesus simply setting us up for failure?

In the midst of this passage, Jesus offered up what has become known as the Golden Rule. In verse 31 Jesus said “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Most people would agree that this is a good rule to live by. In many of his books, leadership expert John Maxwell comments that the gist of the Golden Rule appears in various religion traditions. However, Jesus did not end there. He went on to push his followers to take that extra step, to love our enemies and those who seem to hate us. In his comments for *Lectionary Homiletics*, Bruce C. Birch notes that “We are asked to initiate love not just respond to it. We are called to return violence with forbearance.” Birch goes on to comment that the disciples of Jesus are called not simply to follow Jesus but to emulate him.

Lest we get discouraged, Sharon Burch from First Baptist Church in Lexington, MA reminds us that in this passage Jesus was making statements about the nature of God, not people. Jesus described the reality that God gives love abundantly and to all God’s creation. The Greek word translated as “love” throughout this passage is the word “*agape*.” Sadly, the English language is limited and often less descriptive than other languages. Greek uses various words to describe the experience of love. There are different words for erotic or sexual love and what we often call “brotherly” or sibling love. In this passage, *agape* is the form of love that God gives to creation. We are invited to *aspire* to this kind of love as children of God, but only God can express *agape* love

in its fullness. Jesus describes God’s love and encourages us to respond by emulating it, by showing unconditional love ourselves.

Unfortunately, there are often distortions to what this means for us as God’s creatures. The call to selfless love is not an invitation for abuse. It is important to recognize that these are statements about the nature of God. God gives love abundantly to all God’s creation. Burch goes on to say that “Luke calls us to a kind of love that seeks the fulfillment of the other simply because that is the kind of love God demonstrates, not because people deserve it. We love people even when, and because, it does not benefit us in some way.” It is critical to know that Jesus was not advocating a form of selfless love that allows for “abuse.” In the opening verse of our Gospel today, the NRSV translated “pray for those who abuse you.” Truly, the Greek can mean abuse, but a more sensitive translation would be “mistreat” or “insult.” The point Jesus sought to make was the importance of loving all people in a radical way that often seems contrary to our human nature. We are called to love those who may mistreat or insult us. Jesus modeled this kind of radical love and invites us to strive to love others just as deeply.

There is no better illustration of this Gospel lesson than our reading from Genesis. Joseph emulated the type of love described by Jesus. Although hurt and deeply wounded by his brothers, Joseph displayed a God-like love toward them. Joseph was able to forgive the very brothers who sold him into slavery. He was willing to love them in a way that brought fulfillment to them. Joseph’s love enabled him and his brothers to more fully realize and live into the reality that they were loved and cherished by God.

Responding to Jesus’ teaching can be challenging indeed. But, the most challenging component is recognizing the abundant love God has for us and for all creation. Jesus is not setting us up for failure after all. He invites us into a new way of being that rejoices in the abundant love given to us and to all those God has created. Truly Good News for us all!

AMEN

Prayers & Praises February 20, 2022

In Our Church Family:

- Arlene Heimer
- Marvin Thurber
- William Deterding
- Vic Burgess
- Kindra Foster
- Our sympathy to the Effle family, upon the passing of Doug's mother Diane
- Harold & Donna Baker
- Polly Putney
- Jessica Vocasek
- Lois Frogge

Relatives:

- Friends and Family of Vic Burgess
- Greg Ogren, prayers for healing, still ill after surgeries and treatments, son of LaVonne Ogren
- Mark Carpenter, with colon cancer, brother of Jill Carpenter and Dick & Roxie Pickel
- Lorie Chrastel, Mark Carpenter's fiancée, prayers for recovery from a stroke
- Roger Christianson, with stage 4 cancer, father of Brady Christianson

Friends:

- Tallu Schuyler Quinn, prayers for diagnosis of glioblastoma, friend of Kaleo and D'Arcy Blosser
- Cedric Gibb, healing prayers, friend of Cec Burkhardt
- Jim Bottolfsen, for stage 3 lung cancer, friend of the Vocaseks
- Carson Mousel, grandson of Bob and Eileen Kunz, from Mildred Brockemeyer
- Jamin and Hailey, for the safe delivery of their baby girl, from Tony Flack
- The Norfolk Regional Center, for multiple diagnoses of COVID-19
- Dr. Bob Kunz, prayers for healing after surgery for pancreatic cancer

Our Timothys:

- Bruce Frogge at Cypress Creek CC in Spring, TX
- Glenda Dietrich Moore, Creative Arts Ministry in Lincoln, NE

In the Nebraska Region:

- Brownville Christian Church

Our Global Ministries Missionaries:

- RJ Howard serving in Fiji

Find more information and stories about our Global Ministry partners at

www.globalministries.org



Song of the Week Arise, Your Light Is Come!

Words: Ruck Duck, 1974
Music: William H. Walter, 1894

Arise, your light is come!
The Spirit's call obey;
show forth the glory of your God,
which shines on you today.

Arise, your light is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
proclaim the captives' liberty,
good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come!
All you in sorrow born,
bind up the brokenhearted ones
and comfort those who mourn.

Arise your light is come!
The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing;
God's power will make us strong.

