

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN**(Traditional & Online Service)**

February 9, 2025 • Comfort Those Who Mourn, Part Two

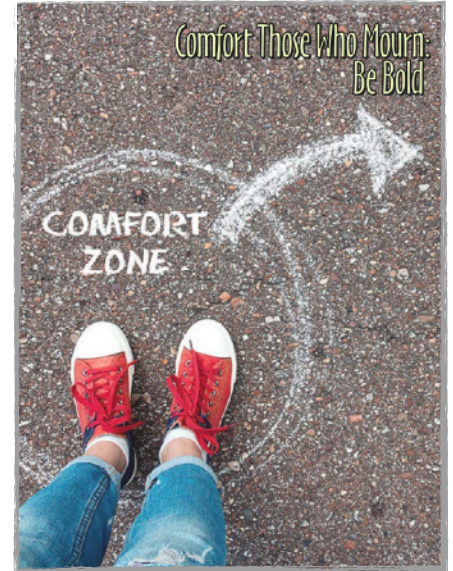
Genesis 2:15-17, 19-20 • Matthew 5:1-12*"Be Bold"*

Naming our grief opens us to God's grace in dealing with it.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If you don't have a particular item, fret not:

- a piece of white cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a piece of paper and a writing tool
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week



For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you. Be ready later in the service to make use of the paper and writing tool. Have enough for each person in your household.

Questions for the announcement loop*In preparing for Worship, consider the following:*

- What comforts you?
- Why do you think God created us with the ability to experience grief and comfort?
- Why do you think God wants us comforting people?
- Grief is ubiquitous. In what ways were you a comfort to someone this week?

(10am only) Choral Introit:*"In His Presence" CEL #618***(10am only) Prelude:***"It Is Well With My Soul" arr. Martha Mier***Opening Sentence****Matthew 5:4 (CEB)**

"Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad." –Jesus

Welcome to this service of Worship, We are glad you are with us! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad you are here! Our nursery is in the Education Building and our restrooms are in the other buildings as well (if you need them).

Name It

When thinking about how we typically interact, it's no wonder we are out of practice. We move so fast that when we ask each other, "How are you doing?", we often haven't set aside time in our minds for an extended answer. We have a human responsibility (and a divine obligation) to both name what troubles us and to make room for them to share what troubles them. Consider your strengths and the ways you choose to use them to make room for grief this week.

Comfort Those Who Mourn

It's as basic as human responsibility there is. *Comfort Those Who Mourn* is an essential part of our faith and a command that comes to *all* of us. But what does it really mean to do this? Over the next several weeks, we will dig into what the Bible says about grief and the Spirit's answers to it. Look for the study materials on our website and Facebook page.

Annual Meeting Notice

As a part of our by-laws, we hold an Annual Congregational Meeting. The purpose of this meeting, largely, is to look back and to look ahead. We will receive the Annual Report for 2024, look at the budget for 2025 and get an update on several questions left from our land use decisions last Fall. The meeting will take place February 9th at 11am in the Sanctuary.

2024 Giving Statements

2024 Giving Statements are available for pick up in the sanctuary for the next two Sundays and will be available for pick up in the office during the week. Please contact the church office with any questions.

Compass Communion Service

On Sunday, February 9th, we are hosting our worship service with Communion at Compass Health and Rehabilitation. We can use your help to make it happen! We need folks to prepare the Communion elements, to gather residents who need assistance, to help residents during the service, and getting folks back in place. We meet at the door closest to the Chapel (facing the front, the door to the right end of the building) at 1:30pm.

Fellowship Soup & Sit

There just aren't that many opportunities to sit down together as a church family and catch up. So on February 16th, immediately following the morning service, we'll serve homemade soups and fixings and mix it up in creative ways. Look for a Sign Up Genius® poll soon to reserve your spot or to bring a recipe to share.

Game Night!

On Friday, February 21st, at 7pm, we'll gather together with cards, board games and more and test each other's mettle and smack talk (if that's your thing). Bring a snack to share and your wits!

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) "The Family of God" CEL #419
I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God
I've been washed in the fountain,
Cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod;

For I'm part of the family, the family of God.
(2X)

Naming our grief opens us to God's grace in dealing with it.

In this moment, let us remain standing, take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship together. Let us be called to worship using the liturgy that is before you...(pause)

(10am only) Call to Worship

God is good

All the time

And all the time

God is good

Not just when we celebrate

But especially when we grieve

Let us sing our opening song together...

Sing:

"I Will Call Upon the Lord " GTG #621

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

God deals with our grief head on. It highlights those moments when we do not. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Loving God, you offer us peace, assurance, comfort, beauty, hope, blessings, direction, cover, healing, time and love, all in the hopes that we would be all of those things for each other. Forgive, Great Lord, when we are not. Even when we squander your gifts, you provide them anyway because you know we need them. May we come to reflect your generosity as enthusiastically as we receive it. Thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. And it is God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

The Peace of Christ be with you

And also with you.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)
Glory be to the Father
And to the Son
And to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning
It is now and ever shall be
World without end: Amen, amen.

Reading of Scripture

Say: The Word of God helps us anticipate what God is going to do. It sets out what we can expect when the unexpected happens. It can help us know that we can count on God's Spirit through it all. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "Wonderful Words of Life" CEL# 406

Words of life and beauty,
teach me faith and duty.
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life

Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and our ongoing place in God's story...

Read: Genesis 2:15-17, 19-20 (CEB)

The human names Creation.

¹⁵The LORD God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. ¹⁶The LORD God commanded the human, "Eat your fill from all of the garden's trees; ¹⁷but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!"...¹⁹ So the LORD God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. ²⁰The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals.

Read: Matthew 5:1-12 (CEB)

The Sermon on the Mount.

¹Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain. He sat down and his disciples came to him. ²He taught them, saying:

³"Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

⁴"Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

⁵"Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

⁶"Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

⁷"Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

⁸"Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

⁹"Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God's children.

¹⁰"Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

¹¹"Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. ¹²Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you."

One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God among us, for the Word of God within us...

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- an image of a pet
 - Don't forget to wait for answers
- "Name It!"*
- (showing the image) So this is my pet...do any of you have pets? Describe them!...Do any of your pets have a name?...Why?
 - We give pets names so that we can know who we are talking about. We give them names so that the Veterinarian knows which animal to care for when they come to the office. We give them names to tell apart their food, their sleeping spaces, even in some cases their clothes.
 - Our problems can be like this. When we can name them, say what is wrong, it makes it easier to care, to help, to heal. It also helps to tell God the name of our trouble.

- So when you're around the people who care about you, be sure and ask them how they name troubles and when they tell God about them.
- Don't forget to pray!

(10am only) Anthem:

"To You, I Lift My Soul" by Diane Hannibal

Sermon: "Be Bold"

So, what does it take to be brave? And would you describe yourself as a particularly brave person? We have this tendency to frame our courage by the things we fear. **Our phobias.** Maybe it's spiders. Or snakes. Is it being in enclosed spaces? Being around hordes of people? Maybe it's germs. Fear of heights is called acrophobia. Bibliophobia is the fear of books. Domatophobia is the fear of houses. Mycophobia is the fear of mushrooms. Nosophobia is the fear of diseases. Xanthophobia is the fear of the color yellow. There's a name for just about every fear we can experience or imagine.

But what name do we give for being afraid to name our pain?

Let's be clear, this isn't a natural phenomenon. We have to learn to do this. When a baby is hungry or cold or needs changing or is in pain, they cry. They name their pain instinctively, loudly, unabashedly. But when we're hurting we do all kinds of things to avoid dealing with it directly. What happened?

For example, a number of you have routinely stopped short of sharing with me something that may be going on with you because, "Other people have it worse..." or "You have enough on your plate..." or, my personal favorite, "I can handle it..." We have all kinds of reasons for hiding our pain from each other. We have our reasons for remaining quiet when things are wrong. We don't it to be real and talking about it forces us to admit it. We can get uncomfortable when someone is unmistakably in pain and we don't want to burden or make people feel bad around us. So we stuff it. We bury it somewhere. All the while our feelings stew and come out in other ways.

Before we get too far thinking about all of this from a self-help perspective, let's be clear: **naming our**

pains before God and each other is divine.

Naming is a part of the authority we share with God from Creation.

Online Read: Genesis 2:15-17, 19-20

When we think about our grief, our wounds, those things in life that challenge us or even harm us, I wonder how often we consider our creative authority.

Our dominion. None of the things that confound are ever meant to have the final word. I remember well talking with the North Carolina Department of Transportation folks who came to talk with us about road plans. Sitting there at the Session meeting, they spoke of the march of progress and the distant plans to widen NC119 right in front of our physical plant. The prospect was raised that they may have to take some of the Cemetery property to do it. We objected to that. And we asked, "Could we really stop such a thing?"

"Unfortunately, no," the official said.

"What can we do then?"

"You can put energy into how the project unfolds."

When presented with the inevitable and the unchanging (a death, a loss, a wound, a betrayal), we can stay with the moment of the those things or we can put energy into what comes next. This is what Jesus is pointing to in perhaps the most famous sermon ever.

Online Read: Matthew 5:1-12 (CEB)

For a long time I always saw this opening to the sermon as a passive deal. It's Jesus describing what is to come for those who endure. I didn't consider that it might be **advice for how to be bold in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.** We talk openly about the idea that everything changes. We're usually talking about our age, our health, even the way our neighborhood looks. But we don't usual make that our go to response for our grief, for our heartbreak.

Sure, the Romans are here now. But not forever. Yes, the Pharisees are running roughshod over our faith, but it can't last. What we do now matters, even if we can't see the results. People hassling you for acting as God leads you to act, even when everything

around you looks like it's falling apart? Well, that happened to the prophets also, you're in good company.

Jesus' sermon points to the big reasons it's important to **name our pains, out loud.** We learn that we are not alone. When problems get a name they get smaller. And when we share our pain we open ourselves to be healed, empowered and encouraged.

That all sounds like a really good deal, a good exchange. So why does it take bravery to open ourselves up? Why does it take courage to talk about our feelings, especially when we are mourning? Because it shows that things get to us. Because it shows that we can indeed be wounded. It can make us vulnerable to further attack. If we talk about it we have to face the reality that we have been harmed.

Now the exchange doesn't sound so great.

But remember the Genesis passage. That power we have from God, to give voice to what ails us, is the beginning of our power over those things. One of the features of the Harry Potter stories I love is the notion that no one dared say the villain's name. It was as though just saying it out loud could invite calamity. But the heroes in the stories learned to say Voldemort's name and in doing so learned not to be afraid of him. To be bold in the face of his evil. God wants that for us. **God wants boldness for us in the face of the evil we experience.**

But the requirement for boldness doesn't just flow in one direction. The need to be brave isn't the responsibility of the grieving alone. It also belongs to those who are not grieving. It's important for us to notice when others are hurting. It's important for us to recognize when people need us. Sometimes, y'all, it's important for us to be nosy...in a Godly way. We shouldn't just keep our distance and give folks space. Sometimes we should invade. Sometimes we should call out isolation and remind people they are not alone. Remember last week we talked about being interconnected and God's intention that rely on each other. Sure, it's an imperfect experiment. We don't always get that right. But it is important, critically important, that

we try. While we aren't alone when we grieve, we aren't alone when we're comforting either. **Naming our grief opens us to God's grace in dealing with it.** Making space for that to happen makes us creative partners with God in healing, repairing, stitching a person back together.

Our theme this month continues to be "Comfort Those Who Mourn." That sometimes means being willing to sit with someone in the reality of their loss. It means making space, for others and yourself, to name our griefs and to discover the truth: we are not alone. We are in good company. And our pains cannot last. Family in Christ, may it be so.

Song of Reflection

"Blest Are They" GTG #172 (lyrics p.8)

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

(10am only) Offertory

"Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel"

arr. Patrick Liebergen; Soloist: David Ealy

(10am only) Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow

Praise God, all creatures here below

Praise God, above heavenly hosts

Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Blessing

(text online only)

Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us. And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt, Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we are meant to be emerge. In the great name of Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.

Prayers of the People

- At God's invitation, let us lift up our prayers together before God who ready to listen, to answer, and to make us part of the answer. The Lord be with you...and also with you. Let us pray...

"Shepherd Me, O God" GTG #473

**Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
Beyond my fears, from death into life. (x2)**

- Loving God, sometimes there are no words. Sometimes there's no way to express all that we feel. We don't dare. But you remind us, Lord: no one and nothing is bigger than you. Help us rely on the reality of you and be bold. Help us be bold in naming and talking about what confounds us, what harms us, what wounds us, what hurts us. Help us be open when others try to talk about it with us, even we're at fault. Help us never be afraid to pursue healing your way. And thank you for your faith in us: for allowing us to share dominion and to have the authority to name everything, even our pains.
- And so help us pay attention. Help be mindful of our need and the needs of others to grieve, especially. Help us do so with courage and your Spirit's assurance. And when we worry about finding the right words, having the right approach, when we worry about our timing, remind us that your grace prevails. While we aren't alone when we grieve, we aren't alone when we're comforting either.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us make a habit of compassion and consolation. Let us make second nature your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us set aside safety and embrace risk-taking with you. May your healing balm reach through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us love and give love. Help us value mercy as you do. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly be washed by you and embrace hope instead...(take time to name your own prayers)
- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **Pray: 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.**

Hymn of Sending

(10am) "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" GTG #834

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Naming our grief opens us to God's grace in dealing with it.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: "Irish Blessing" arr. Eileen Laurence

**May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
May the rain fall soft upon your fields;
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His Hand**

(10am only) Postlude

"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" arr. Anna Laura Page
