

Sunday, May 3rd, 2020
Mantua Center Christian Church
MCCC Home Worship

You will need:

A candle and match

Bible

Paper

Bread and Juice (if desiring communion)

Order of Worship

WELCOME PANEL on the Video

- Welcome to Worship
- Today you can gather
 - *A candle and match*
 - *Bible*
 - *Bread and Juice (if desiring communion)*

GREETING - CHAD

The Peace of the Risen Christ be with you. Welcome to worship this week with the Mantua Center Christian Church. Together...seeking to have Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Arms bearing the love and likeness of the Risen Christ.

Today we will be thinking about what it means to offer a “Labor of Love.”

- To love and give of ourselves isn’t always easy. But throughout time, people of faith have done God’s work despite the obstacles and struggles that come along with it. In seasons of difficulty we are still called to bear God’s light in the world...to work on behalf of others with that something extra that only love can offer. What is our labor of love? What does it look like?

CALL to WORSHIP - Chad

Family in Christ, let's turn our minds and hearts from other things and light a candle to remind us of God's abiding presence.

Light a Candle

OPENING SCRIPTURE - Heidi George

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE - Natalie Langham

OPENING HYMN - I Love To Tell The Story #480

PASTORAL PRAYER - Chad

Today for our time of prayer, I will begin with a Prayer by Nick Fawcett based on today's 1 Thessalonians passage today. Within the prayer is a response. I will say "Your presence travels with us:" and you can respond if so led, "**In You we find our rest.**" Let us pray....

Companion God, we praise you for your grace which is always on the move, from death to life, desolation to hope, famine to feasting. As we travel this road of pain and rejoicing, we give thanks that you go with us as our guardian and friend: that you have taken us by the hand and led us, giving guidance and support.

Your presence travels with us: **In You we find our rest.**

-We give thanks that you have strengthened us for the work of faith, the labour of love, the steadfastness of hope.
Your presence travels with us: **In You we find our rest.**

- We give thanks that you have made us imitators of your saints and disciples, and of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Your presence travels with us: **In You we find our rest.**

- We give thanks that as we have received your Word with joy, even in the midst of our suffering, you have revealed to us your ways.
Your presence travels with us: **In You we find our rest.**

- We give thanks that we belong to you and you have shown us your glory.
Your presence travels with us: **In You we find our rest.**

- We give thanks that through our example others have been encouraged and inspired.
Your presence travels with us: **In You we find our rest.**

God, we lift to you all those who labor on our behalf. Those working in hospitals and emergency rooms. Those in ICU and recovery. Those packing our groceries and making deliveries. First responders and law enforcement. We pray for those who are mindful of those around them....and we pray for those who aren't. Move us by your spirit to look out for the meek, the mild, the vulnerable, the hurting, the sick. Give us wisdom, give us courage, to be who you call us to be. May our activities, our work, our labor spring forth from your love. And give us rest and renewal through your presence so we might be ready for the challenges and sorrows, the joys and excitements that each new day may bring.

We lift now our silent joys and concerns to you.....

Now join us together in your Spirit as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us saying....

SPECIAL MUSIC - Bob Stehli

SCRIPTURE & SERMON - Chad Delaney

2020 - 15 - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 - May 3rd - Labor of Love

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. ² We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Here in his letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul is writing to a persecuted church. Attacked from every angle they are striving to survive but also share the Good News of the Risen Christ. Rome was demanding worship and fealty to Caesar. Demanded undivided loyalty to the cult of Empire. But these people of faith embodied resistance to the political, economic, and religious powers of the time...at great risk. Their example of love, their insistence on God's reign...not Rome's...would draw a sharp contrast to the powers of sin, violence, and death in the world and so it made them a target. There's would be a labor of love and sacrifice...but if they didn't share the Gospel by their words and more importantly their deeds....then who would?

So, Paul wrote them to encourage them, assure them, and strengthen them for their journey. To tell them their steadfastness and labor of love would matter. It would not be in vain. The word in the Greek here for love is "agape" and points to that deep undercurrent of love that comes from God. Love that emerges in the deepest of relationships and looks out for the good of everyone. Paul calls their work a labor of *that kind of* love....it's a love that works hard, that sees the big picture. A love that doesn't look for loopholes.

It is this kind of love that people of faith have been called to for all the centuries since in big and small ways.

I remember a time when the kids were little I witnessed a labor of love in a much different context. We were driving back from an evening event and we could hear one of the kids squirming and clearly upset in the back of the van in their

carseat. Not long after we heard the dreaded sound no parent wants to hear in the car. The sound of a kid getting sick in their carseat.

I'll admit that as we pulled into the driveway I was hoping for the best. Maybe its not as bad I thought. But then we got out and saw the seats. The seatbelts. The floor. Ok you get the picture. I'll admit I stood there trying to think of ways we could get around this. There was a ton of work to do. Put it off til morning? Put the whole car seat in the washing machine? Just hose down the whole car? Started wondering about the van's trade-in value....

While I was equivocating...my wife Christin got to it right away. She didn't think twice. See...in this scenario...there really is no shortcut. There is no way around it. You just have to dig in, get to work. No one else is going to do it and there are no loopholes. It was going to be a labor of love for our kids and our family.

Where have you seen a Labor of Love in your life? Maybe it was something you did for someone else....or maybe it was something that someone did for you. Maybe it went without recognition. Big and small ways that people have reached out with that Agape love to give that something more....that something extra that only love can provide. And it made a big difference.

Today, all around us there are labors of love. From our medical professionals, local service providers, farmers and truckers, cleaners, restaurants and grocery stores. This week I invited some of our active duty nurses serving during this pandemic to share some of their ideas about what a labor of love is and where

they have seen it in the world around them. Be inspired, Be encouraged by what they have to say....

NURSES

What a gift it is to hear their stories and words of wisdom. Now, each of these three are humble as they come and do not want to be lifted up over anyone else...but all of us are blessed for knowing them and for all they are doing.

I speak for all of us in expressing our gratitude to these and all the others giving of themselves during this time. So how will each of us this week dig in and get to work for others. How might I give a little something extra, rooted in the love of God as known in the Risen Christ, to share a little more hope, joy, and love? May you be blessed as you find ways to share and live the Good News. May it be so. Amen.

COMMUNION

Meditation and Prayer - Drema Herron
Words of Institution - Sarah Smith

CLOSING HYMN - Shine, Jesus Shine (Insert)

BENEDICTION - Chad Delaney

Thank you all so much for joining us for worship. We hope you have been blessed and inspired by the music, scripture, and stories shared. Please feel free to share this service with others and to visit our website to find ways you can support our ministry as a congregation.

Howard Thurman said, “There is a quiet courage that comes from an inward spring of confidence in the meaning and significance of life. Such courage is an underground river, flowing far beneath the shifting events of one's experience, keeping alive a thousand little springs of action.”

Family God, may God bless you with that confidence and assurance. May God bless you through the Power of the Holy Spirit that strength and courage you need to offer yourself---your words, your actions, your being---as a labor of Love in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

BENEDICTION SONG - Blest Be the Tie that Binds by Pam Auble

Questions:

- 1. What does the phrase “Labor of Love” mean to you?**
- 2. Where do you see “labors of love” in your work?**
- 3. What inspires you to get up every morning and serve during this time?**
- 4. Is there a story or wisdom or thought you would like to share with the congregation that has inspired you during this time?**
- 5. Are there ways the church can support you in your work?**