

Sunday, February 7, 2021  
Mantua Center Christian Church  
MCCC Remote Worship

**Order of Worship**

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS - Chad**

Good Morning everyone!

Welcome to the Mantua Center Christian Church. We are a community seeking to have open minds, open hearts, and open arms. We gather not as perfect people, but people on a journey seeking to live and love like Jesus!

Today in worship we will explore a wonderful story in the Gospel of Luke and encounter a quite unexpected example of faithfulness. Jesus' encounter with this person may move us to reconsider how we might view others in the world around us.

As we prepare to open our minds and hearts for worship, let's take a deep breath and Light a Candle.

Together we have set this time and space aside for the worship of God. Let's give to God our joys, worries, and sorrows and open ourselves up to what God has to say to us today. Let us worship the Lord...

**SONG - Weave (Pam and Beth - in the folder)**

*Weave, weave, weave us together. Weave us together in unity and love.*

*Weave, weave, weave us together. Weave us together, together in love.*

**SCRIPTURE READING - Psalm 119:105-107**

**Laura Parker**

**OPENING HYMN**

**Standing on the Promises (chalice)**

**CHILDREN'S MOMENT - Ally Hurd**

**WEEK of COMPASSION - Chad Delaney**

Church Family, this is the time of year when we start preparing as a congregation to give an offering to the Week of Compassion. The Week of Compassion is the disaster relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) partnering with wonderful organizations on the ground all over the world. As a congregation we are part of their Circle of Compassion and every year they appreciate the offerings we give as a congregation. Please pray about and discern with your family what kind of contribution you might want to make to their great work helping

the “least of these” around the United States and around the world.

The scripture theme they are using this year is from Isaiah 49:10 which says,

**Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,  
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,  
For the Compassionate One guides them,  
takes them to the best springs.**

Together, Let's Let Love Flow...

### **PASTORAL PRAYER - Chad Delaney**

To begin our time of prayer I want to offer you this prayer written by Arianne Braithwaite Lehn from her book “Ash & Starlight” called When I need perspective...

*In this day, O God...*

*May I be alert. May I be kind. May I be compassionate.*

*May I be authentic, May I be generous. May I be forgiving.*

*May I be honest. May I be brave. May I be forgiving (again).*

*May I be open. May I be creative. May I be strong.*

*May I live from my intentions, not simply my habits.*

*And may I hold closely in prayer the people you bring to my heart and mind right now...*

*May I focus, may I trust, and, above all, may I be yours. Amen.*

God, indeed, you have called us to faithfulness in such a time as this. Empower us with your Holy Spirit to be the people you have called us to be. Open our minds and hearts to ways you are moving in the world. Give us a new awareness to the ways you could be working in ways and in people we wouldn't expect. Make fertile our hearts to see you and those around us in loving ways. To look at the world through your eyes.

In this season of uncertainty we pray that you be with all those who are shining light and giving love. For the doctors and nurses and first responders and vaccinators. For the scientists and manufacturers and truck drivers and packagers. For teachers and caregivers and cleaners and chaplains. God, move in us so that we might, too, add to the light and not the darkness.

Guide us, hold us, fill us with your grace, forgiveness, and love. In Jesus Name, Amen.

### **SONG RESPONSE**

**Open My Eyes, Lord (Pam and Beth - in folder)**

*Open our eyes Lord. We want to see Jesus.*

*To reach out and touch Him. And say that we love Him.*

*Open our ears Lord. And help us to listen.  
Open our eyes Lord. We want to see Jesus.*

## **SCRIPTURE READING      Luke 7:1-10**

### **SERMON - Change the Angle - Chad**

Luke 7:1-17

After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>A centurion there had a servant whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. <sup>3</sup>When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, 'He is worthy of having you do this for him, <sup>5</sup>for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.' <sup>6</sup>And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, 'Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; <sup>7</sup>therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, "Go", and he goes, and to another, "Come", and he comes, and to my servant, "Do this", and the servant does it.' <sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.' <sup>10</sup>When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant in good health.

A few years ago our family read a wonderful little book called *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. The book is about a 5th grade boy named Auggie who hadn't gone to public school yet, because his parents feared the difficulties he would face as a boy with facial differences. The book will make you laugh, cry, and warm your heart. The Delaney family highly recommends!

What is wonderful about the book and the second in the series is that you get to read the action of the story from different points of view. You read part of the story from Auggie's point of view, but then you even get to read from his sister's, his friends, and even those he sees as enemies. From one person's point of view, you get a certain narrative about a person...and you're absolutely sure about them...but then it changes with just a slight angle change. All the sudden, you see it differently. The author does a wonderful job keeping you on your toes and it moves you to be more and more cautious about judging any of the characters.

In the story here in the Gospel today we get to experience a narrative change from the perspective of the listeners at the time. Jesus encounters this strange centurion and the oddity of him would not be lost on the first century listener.

Centurions were officers of the Roman Empire who were charged with the command of around 80-100 soldiers. Centurions assigned their soldiers tasks, gave out punishments, and dealt with prisoners. They wore armor, carried weapons, and were battle-hardened. More than likely, they weren't Jewish but instead worshipped the Greco-Roman gods. The Galilean ruler, Herod, would have had centurions around to keep order in the ranks, but also in the community. Centurions did general policing, oversaw executions, and were generally feared by the people. They were seen as cruel, violent, and people who only looked out for their own interests.

So...THIS particular centurion is strange. He doesn't fit the profile. He cares about a servant enough to plea for his/her healing. He was sympathetic to and in good standing with the Jewish community, even helping them build their synagogue. He doesn't bully Jesus into doing anything, but even says, "Do not trouble yourself for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." He recognizes Jesus' authority and has faith in him. Who is this guy? He must have thrown everyone for a loop.

AND...It is not by coincidence that this story comes in chapter 7 of Luke's Gospel when in chapter 6 Jesus has shared a few of his most important teachings during his sermon on the plain. Among them are two of his most challenging, "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." and another..."Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you."

The story of the centurion gives the listener a chance to consider these teachings in real time. Certainly they have a narrative in their mind of who Centurions were always violent, cruel monsters without a shred of human decency or reverence for God....or maybe not all. Now likely the community would not all of a sudden get chummy with all the Roman soldiers...one seemingly decent centurion doesn't make up for previous cruelty or terror of others. YET...it was a reminder of the humanity of each person. The glimmer of the divine spark found in every person. Even in the enemy. To judge them is to neglect their humanity and that they are a child of God. One instance to shatter our preconceived notions and the narrative we've created about someone else.

Part of loving our enemies is remembering the story we tell ourselves about those we hate may often be dehumanizing. It is a snapshot in time, likely at their worst moments. And while there are consequences for those worst moments, we mustn't lose touch with the humanity of each one created by God.

- What narrative have you created about those of another religion? About Muslims or Hindus? About even those within our own faith?
- What narrative is in your mind about Republicans or Democrats? Those who are pro-life or pro-choice? Who mask or are anti-mask?
- What narrative have you created about someone based on their Facebook or Twitter posts?
- What narrative have you created for those who appear to be your enemies?
- Can you still see their humanity? The light God placed in them? That God loves them even when we can't?

Whatever moved the Centurion in those moments...his reaching out to Jesus brought life to another. Maybe the servant would be surprised that the Centurion would make this appeal? Certainly those observing these events would have been surprised. What we know is that Jesus was AMAZED by the Centurion's faith. One of the only instances in the Gospel where they describe Jesus' reaction in that way.

As the novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says, “There is a danger in a single story.” The narratives we create about others and even ourselves need to be held lightly, ready for revision, repentance, and openness to the light of God to move in ways we may never have anticipated. The story shows that healing and hope and resurrection can be assisted by those around us we may not expect. Sometimes our lives are illuminated and set free by acquaintances, strangers, or even our enemies. For all...whether we recognize it or not--our children of God carrying God’s light. To see it, all we might need to do is look from another angle. May it be so...

## **HOLY COMMUNION - Ruth Anne Ruehr**

### **Communion Song - I need thee every hour (Chalice)**

#### **Meditation**

Communion Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Words of Institution

*As we gather around Christ’s Table we remember that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took the bread and broke it, gave thanks and said to his Disciples, “This is my body which is given for you, eat of it all of you in remembrance of me.” In like manner he took the cup and blessed it saying, “This is the cup of the new covenant in me, as often as you drink of it do so in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s life, death, and resurrection until he comes again. Remember, all...ALL are welcome at the Lord’s Table.*

*(Share in the Bread and Cup together)*

## **CLOSING SONG**

### **O How I love Jesus (chalice)**

## **BENEDICTION - Sarah Smith**