

Open: Into the Light

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 May 2022

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 00] Thank you.

You are here, moving in our midst. I worship you. I worship you.

You are here, working in this place. I worship you. I worship you.

You are, way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. My God, that is who you are.

You are, way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. My God, that is who you are.

[1 : 27] You are here, healing every heart. I worship you. I worship you.

You are here, turning lives around. I worship you. I worship you.

You are, way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. My God, that is who you are.

You are, way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. My God, that is who you are.

That is who you are. That is who you are. That is who you are.

[2 : 37] Even when I don't see it, you're working. Even when I don't feel it, you're working. You never stop, you never stop working.

Even when I don't see it, you never stop, you never stop, you never stop working. You never stop, you never stop working.

You are, way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. My God, that is who you are.

You are, way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. My God, that is who you are.

That is who you are.

[3 : 47] You are here, and in every heart, I worship you. I worship you. I worship you.

You may be seated. Good morning.

Good morning. And happy Mother's Day to those who celebrate this day and prayers for all of those who find this a complicated kind of day.

Welcome to those of you who are watching us online, and I hope and pray that this will be a celebratory service for us all.

The song about God being here and working and way maker and all of that is a perfect segue into our opening words, which are from Carrie Job's song, Here.

[4 : 56] Come and rest here. Come and rest here. Come and lay your burdens down. Come and rest here. There is a blessing of ourself now.

We'll bow our knees and we'll bow our knees and we'll bow our knees and we'll bow our knees and we'll bow our knees. He is near. You'll find his healing and your heart won't be shattered anymore.

He is near. We live in through our heart. We will find him here. We will rest in you, our God.

We will find him. We will find him here. We will find him. We will find him here. Let our hearts and spirits worship the risen Lord.

Now I invite you to join in this liturgy that is a Mother's Day liturgy in celebration of and prayer for all of those who find themselves included in this litany.

[6 : 04] We gather this day in worship, esteeming the light of Jesus Christ, the center light in the candelabra, who is both God and human, born of his mother Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is from God, the source of all light, that every good and perfect gift has come, including the gift of mothers. May we thank God for this good gift today and always.

May we light the candle of memory. We light the candle of memory. We remember the light of women in our lives who birthed us, adopted us, fostered us, nurtured us, cared for us, shaped us, and disciplined us, who are no longer beside us.

May God's light shine upon each one, and may God's comfort embrace each and every grieving family. We light the candle of honor.

We honor the women in our lives who bring forth new beginnings, embrace us as their own, foster our growth, nurture us, care for us, and help form us into better people by the power of their love, which comes from God.

[7 : 23] May God's blessing be upon each one. We light the candle of peace. We pray for the mothers who have buried children. We pray for the women who long to be mothers but are not.

We also pray for each mother-child relationship that has been strained or broken by action, inaction, distance, or illness. May God grant peace to each one who finds this day difficult.

We light the candle of hope. We encourage the many mothers who are overwhelmed, trying to make ends meet, who, while exhausted, love anyway.

We encourage parents who must raise their children alone, grandparents and other guardians who nurture children in their parents' stead. May God empower each one with hope.

Let us pray. God, teach us to recognize your light in all of its many forms as we remember, honor, and reflect on, especially the gift of motherhood this day.

[8 : 32] Fill us with your hope that we might shine your light to the generations after us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So we come to a time of offering. And I'd like to share Romans 12, verses 5 through 9.

So in Christ we, although many, form one body. And each member belongs to all the others. If we have different gifts according to the grace given each of us.

If your gift is of prophecy, then prophesize in accordance with your faith. If it's serving, then serve. If it's teaching, then teach. If it's to encourage, then give encouragement.

If it's to give, then give generously. If it's to lead, then do so diligently. If it's to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

[9 : 39] God calls us to use our gifts and the graces that he gives us to serve him. So we ask that you're in prayerful consideration at this time of your gifts and your offerings.

We have one last new song to share with you this month that we'll be singing together later in the month of May. It's called The Father's House. And as always, if you know it already, the words will be on the wall.

Please join in and sing with us. But this is really a song. I know for a lot of us that may have grown up with wonderful relationships with our mothers, this is a day of honoring and remembrance.

And for those of you that may have had a difficult relationship with your mother, this song just speaks to healing. And I pray that for every one of you. vanilla ends minor■■■
Sometimes on this journey I get lost in my mistakes What looks to me like weakness is a canvas for your strength My story isn't over, my story's just begun Failure won't define me, cause that's what my father does Failure won't define me, cause that's what my father does Ooh, lay your burdens down

Ooh, here in the father's house Check your shame at the door, cause it ain't welcome anymore Ooh, you're in the father's house Rivals at the end, he turned his way off Never wanted perfect, he just wanted my heart If the story isn't over, if the story isn't good Failure's never final when the father's in your room Failure's never final when the father's in your room

[12 : 25] Ooh, lay your burdens down Ooh, you're in the father's house Check your shame at the door, cause it ain't welcome anymore Ooh, you're in the father's house Ooh, you're in the father's in your room The pride goes home The helpless swine home Love is on the move When the father's in your room The doors can fly Dead come to life Love is on the move When the father's in your room

The miracles take place The cynical find pain Love is breaking through When the father's in your room Jericho was a-quaking Strongholds now are shaking Love is breaking through When the father's in your room I said Love is breaking through When the father's in your room Ooh, lay your burdens down Ooh, here in the father's house Check your shame at the door, cause it ain't welcome anymore Ooh, you're in the father's house Ooh, lay your burdens down Ooh, you're in the father's house

Check your shame at the door, cause it ain't welcome anymore Ooh, you're in the father's house The father's house Applausesmooch beat uncles outstanding Wahl Tripleeta militia Germanasis Amazing God, we thank you.

We thank you for this beautiful day. We thank you for the gift of life and all of the people who make us who we are meant to be. Take our gifts, take our love, take our talents, and help us to help you spread your love and your word throughout our world that needs it so desperately.

Thank you. In your name we pray. Amen. Good morning, church.

[16 : 15] As we prepare for our conversation with God this morning, we know that there is much we carry that we have to lay at the Father's feet. We also know that there is much for which we give thanks.

So I invite you now to open your heart as we go to our conversation with God, as we focus on the movement and presence of God among us. Let us go to God in prayer. Source of true and perfect love, we give you great thanks this morning.

Thank you for the cause we celebrate, for those who's in our lives, whose touch, whose presence reflects so much love and joy.

For those who have walked with that particular blessing, we know what it means to lift up this day and to give thanks for those who touch us in such a joyful and incredible way.

But Lord, as we come today, we are also mindful of the ways in which people are hurting. There are those among us who need your healing touch, those on our hearts who are also struggling in their bodies.

[17 : 26] We look around our world and we see many situations in which your hand is desperately needed. People seeking safety, people seeking food, people seeking shelter and justice.

Lord God, we do cry out on their behalf because we know that there are hearts that must change and only you can change human hearts. So for those who are making those decisions, for those who are engaged in those violent actions, Lord, touch their hearts as only you can.

Let us bear witness to the truth of who you are, that they will see and come to know the truth. Let us also be your hands and feet, Lord. For those who are desperately in need, let us show love in real ways.

Those who need that place of safety, those who need that meal, those who need allies as they speak up and fight for their justice. Let us live as Jesus lived, speaking your truth, doing your work and showing your love.

Lord, we know you are, Lord. Lord, we know you are, Lord. Lord, we know you are, Lord. Lord, we know you are, Lord. Lord, we know you are, Lord. All those names that we know. All of those situations that seem so much.

[18 : 43] Lord, we know you know all things. But for those on our hearts whom we know need your wisdom, need your strength, need your courage, pour yourself into them in a fresh way, that they may face whatever is coming, that they may speak your truth to those who need it.

And they may indeed reflect your light into the world. Because as we have already lifted up today, we know your light. We have seen it in the faces of so many.

We have felt it in the embrace of those who have called us mothers. And so we give you thanks. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Amen. Good morning.

Good morning. This morning I'll be reading from the book of Genesis, chapter 17, verses 1 through 8 and 15 through 19.

[19 : 59] When Abram was 99 years old, God showed up and said to him, I am the strong God. Live entirely before me.

Live to the hilt. I'll make a covenant between us. And I'll give you a huge family. Overwhelmed, Abram fell flat on his face.

Then God said to him, This is my covenant with you. You'll be the father of many nations. Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham, meaning that I'm making you the father of many nations.

I'll make you a father of fathers. I'll make nations from you. Kings will issue from you. I'm establishing my covenant between me and you, a covenant that includes your descendants, a covenant that goes on and on and on, a covenant that commits me to be your God and the God of your descendants.

And I'm giving you and your descendants this land, pardon me, this land where you're now just camping, this whole country of Canaan to own forever.

[21 : 16] And I'll be their God. God continued speaking to Abraham. And Sarai, your wife, don't call her Sarai any longer.

Call her Sarah. I'll bless her. Yes, I'll give you a son by her. Oh, how I'll bless her.

Nations will come from her. Kings of nations will come from her. Abraham fell flat on his face. And then he laughed thinking, Can a hundred year old man father a son?

And can Sarah at 90 years have a baby? Recovering, Abraham said to God, Oh, keep Ishmael alive and well before you.

But God said, that's not what I mean. Your wife, Sarah, will have a baby, a son. Name him Isaac, which means laughter. I'll establish my covenant with him and his descendants, a covenant that lasts forever.

[22 : 20] This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's talk about why Abraham fell on his face.

A hundred years old, having a baby. Ninety years old, his wife having a baby. Most of us would just be like...

The reality is that God had shown up twice before in Genesis to tell Abram that he was going to be the father of these nations.

He was going to be so important in the country around and kings and people of power would come from him.

And yet, they waited. And they waited. And they waited. Twenty-four years they waited. Most of us think about that. Well, in 24 years, we're all done.

[23 : 23] Like, there's no more babies coming after 24 more years, depending on how old you are, of course. It got so desperate that they had Sarai's servant have a child with Abram.

That's Ishmael. And Ishmael is now 13 years old. And now God shows up again. And what's different this time?

And you can see, I think it's funny that Isaac means laughter. Because laughter is both joy and an expression of gratitude. And it's also, oh my gosh, can you believe that this is happening?

Because, in fact, Abraham and Sarah had a baby named Isaac. And Isaac was to be the father of many nations.

Very important. So was it the name change that made it so that they finally could believe that this was real, this was going to happen? And there is something significant about having your name changed by God.

[24 : 40] If God changed my name, I'd be like, okay, how do you spell it? You know, sure. Whatever you say. Wait a minute. So let's look at this a little bit.

Where else in the Bible do we read about names being changed? Anybody? Saul. Saul, who was a nasty, vicious man who persecuted and killed Christians, became a Christian.

And in that, he was named Paul. Who else? The disciples? Were some of them given new names?

What's that? Peter? One more. There should be a tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, ding, ding, ding, ding.

It's Jacob, who's renamed into Israel. So, yay, Jacob. But, yeah, that's not, that's not all of what I'm talking about.

[25 : 50] I'm talking about how some of our names have been changed. For those who are parents, you know, when I walk down here and then I realize that it's hard for some people to see me.

So I'm going back up here. I'm a wandering preacher. Think about it. How are names changed in our faith in God or even before we have faith?

I think about people in the Bible. Yes, those we have named already. But I think about people. David.

David blew it in a big way. And yet, he was called mighty and a prophet. He did big things in the name of God.

I think about in the Gospels. I think about Zacchaeus. You know, a tax collector.

[27 : 03] Someone who people didn't like. And then add on top of it that he was a short person who couldn't see. Go short people. And he was called down and he was blessed by God, by Jesus, in that space.

Because he was a good person, even though he did what was considered to be a bad job. Because tax collectors were considered dishonest. The woman at the well did not get a new name, per se.

And yet, didn't she? Didn't she, when Jesus named the mistakes that she had made, didn't Jesus rename her as beloved and nourished her with the fruit of the spirit rather than the fruit of her labors?

The lepers. Lepers were condemned until death. And yet, Jesus was willing to be with them and touch them.

They were renamed, alive, living, healed. They were once again able to be called by their own names.

[28 : 24] Because as lepers, they were not called by their own names. They were just called outsiders. Get out, get away. And being healed, they were then brought into the community of faith.

Able to return to their homes, their families, their work. There are so many stories of people being renamed.

Given new names. I'm mindful that in this particular biblical story, on this day called Mother's Day, that Sarai's name, as it becomes Sarah, and then it becomes Mother.

Now, everybody feels differently about motherhood. But I'm guessing, given the culture that Sarah had waited 50, 60, 70 years, 75 years, because she would have been a childbearing age around 15, what a long time before she could be called Mother.

From the time I was 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20, 24, and then 25.

[29 : 53] I could not wait to have my name changed from just Kathy to Mother. Because it was what I wanted, more than anything else in my life.

And I know that is not everyone's story. But that name changed my life forever. For all the complications, all the goodness, all the hard.

It changed my life in the very best ways. As I'm sure mother or father has changed many of your lives.

I want to tell you a story. My daughter, Katie, who lives in Arizona, she is married to Jeff, who also lives in Arizona.

Jeff has a son whose name is Oakley. And Katie is now Oakley's stepmother. As they were preparing to get married, and they told Oakley that they were going to get married.

[30 : 56] I don't know, he was five, maybe. And they said, you know, Jeff said to Oakley, if you want to call her mom, you can call her mom.

It just happens that with his other set of parents, he doesn't call anybody mother. He has other names for them. So Katie would be his only mom, by word.

You know, I, uh, you can't hear this story without the pose. I don't think so, Papa.

I don't think so. Because she's not a mom. Okay? So, not going to call her mother. Not going to call her mom. So then he tells further that until she has a child, she can't be called mom.

And, you know, many of us would beg to differ from that. If you ever see, if you saw, I'll go with Instagram, PC Dr. Mom.

[32 : 04] That was a name created for me by a bunch of teenagers over at the Harris Hill United Methodist Church who, when I got my doctoral degree, decided I was PC, Pastor Kathy, doctor, mom.

Because they felt like I had a mothering role in their lives. So, then, they learn that they're pregnant, my daughter and Jeff, with Sadie.

And so now the question is, well, now will you call her mom? Nope. Not until, not until, not until. And, as you know, Sadie was born, and she didn't live very long, and Oakley never met her.

He, eventually, when they had the heart to tell him, he accepted it very matter-of-factly because he could never relate to her anyway because he didn't see her.

You know, he's a little boy. Even still. Nope. Not until I see a baby. So, you can hear that as a bittersweet, sad story, but it's just a little boy who just has an idea that this is how it works.

[33 : 12] It's an absolute. If I don't see a baby, and you're not the mother of this baby, then you're not a mom. You're not my mom. Little does he know that she is his mom in so many ways.

It's unbelievable. Doesn't matter what he calls her. He calls her Katie. So, names have both power and influence.

They are changed and provided. We are given names. We are given names in some cultures and some religious backgrounds. People are given a new name at baptism or at confirmation.

Someone last night was trying to remember what their Catholic confirmation name was. And I didn't even know. I knew before last night, but I wasn't even aware that this was something that happened.

And my response in my ignorance was, what do you do with that new name? It's not like you get called that name in school or whatever. being named is part of the lights, the butterflies, because when we are called by the name that God wants us to hear more than anything and we hear it, it is as though the stage curtain goes up or out and the lights come up and we say, wow.

[34 : 52] We cannot, maybe you can, I cannot watch the transformation of a caterpillar who literally dies into a butterfly without being amazed.

amazed. I can't watch animals without being amazed at God's creation and flowers and all that the spring brings and I'm sure when fall and winter come back I'll have something good to say but not yet.

Nope. Done. We name ourselves a lot of things. sometimes we mutter under our breath.

Anybody mutter? Any mutterers here? Are you saying no or are you just like, okay, who mutters to themselves? Let's see it. Come on, be honest. Are the things we mutter to ourselves the kindest things we could say?

Not usually. Oh, it might sound like, oh, way to go, Kathy. I can tell you that's probably when I dropped something or couldn't find something. this is where the lights are sometimes dark because the human condition, so to speak, you and I and all the people that I know find themselves in places and moments and times when they feel inadequate, insufficient, unkind, stubborn.

[36 : 30] Wait, stubborn is bad? we might rethink a conversation.

Said too much, didn't say enough, all those things. We didn't know something about someone and we feel like we should have known that they were struggling or suffering or that they were experiencing a great thing.

that's where Jesus came into. Jesus came in and I want to, this inspiration actually came from someone at the service last night who looked up the lyrics and read them rather than listening to the song.

and the song is Lauren Daigle's You Say. I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough. Every single lie tells me I will never measure up.

Am I more than just the sum of every high and low? Remind me once again just who I am because I need to know.

[37 : 45] We need to know and when we do know it's as beautiful as anything that God has ever ever created. You say I'm loved even when I can't feel a thing.

You say I'm strong even when I think I'm weak. And you say I am held when I am falling short and when I don't belong you say I am yours.

What you say of me I believe. The only thing that matters now is everything you think of me. In you I find my worth. In you I find my identity. You say you say I'm loved when I can't feel a thing.

The song goes on but I think the basics are there. No matter what we say about ourselves Jesus came to have a counter offer a counter opinion a counter knowledge of ourselves because remember in the Old Testament it says I knew you before you were born I knew you before you were named I knew you in your mother's womb and no matter how and where and into what circumstances any of us were born into we were known and not just known but loved so you may say about yourself or about others those things but what Jesus wants is for us to open the door if you open a door just a crack and there's light outside

I'm telling you it fills the room with light not bright light but you go from not being able to find your hand in front of your face to being able to find the door and the doorknob and the way out and the way in and you know where you are you reorient so when we're wandering and kind of going off the shoulder and onto the rumble strips and when we're not sure our headlights are really working all that well turn on the light say to God tell me who I am I need to be reminded I think that's what we all need to do is just invite God over and over and over again it's not a one time deal because we're forgetful people and we have different seasons of life so on this day of beauty maybe of celebration it's time to plant so if there's nothing else good in your day it's safe to put flowers in the ground as of mother's day you heard it here actually I heard it elsewhere but and Heather shaking her head no but I'm doing it anyway because I'm brave and bold and

[40 : 59] God said go in faith and plant I still have a bunch of those seed balls from Easter I'm putting them in why because I expect I don't just hope and wish I expect life to come may life come in you and in me and in all of us one last thing in one of the parsonages that we lived in there was a bathroom that was in the middle of the house on the main floor it was the guest bathroom it was the bathroom also that the kids ran to when they were toddlers and we were potty training and all that but more than anything else it was what we called the gloaming room because there were no windows so if somebody got something that glowed in the dark we all would pile into this little bathroom and turn off the lights oh and our oldest son he used the term gloaming look mom my ghostbuster shirt is gloaming that is the light of Christ may it be in you and around you in

Jesus name amen let us ready our hearts as we prepare to come to the Lord's table today Lord be with you lift up your hearts let us give thanks to the Lord our God is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you almighty God creator of heaven and earth you formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life when we turned away and our love failed your love remained steadfast you delivered us from captivity made covenant to be our sovereign God brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey and set before us the way of life and so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn holy holy holy

Jesus ascended he promised to be with us always in the power of your word and Holy Spirit on the night in which he gave himself up for us Jesus took bread he gave thanks to you he broke the bread and he gave it to his disciples and he said take and eat this is my body which is given for you do this in remembrance of me when the supper was over he took the cup and gave thanks to you he gave it to his disciples and he said drink from this all of you for this is my blood sign of the new covenant which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins every time that you drink it do this in remembrance of me on the day you raised him from the dead

[47 : 48] With today's service, join us down front, please.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. When I fall down, you pick me up When I am dry, you fill my cup You are my all in all Jesus, Lamb of God Worthy is your name Jesus, Lamb of God

Worthy is your name Jesus, Lamb of God You are the treasure that I seek You are my all in all Jesus, Lamb of God Seeking you as a precious Jew Lord, I give for what we have for Worthy is your name Worthy is your name We all have an opportunity to gloam

Because we have a God whose love is forever and always I'm going to invite you to stand as we sing our closing song forever Thank you For his good is above all things His love endures forever For his good is above all things His love endures forever Sing praise, sing praise Sing praise, sing praise Hear the mighty hand and an answer shine His love endures forever For the right and right and right For the right and right His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise Sing praise, sing praise Sing praise, sing praise Sing praise Forever God is faithful Forever God is strong Forever God is with us Forever Forever Forever Forever Forever I'm rising to the sunny sun There's love in yours forever By the grace of God we will glory on There's love in yours forever Sing praise, sing praise Sing praise, sing praise

[56 : 16] Forever God is faithful Forever God is strong Forever God is with us Forever, forever Forever God is faithful Forever God is strong Forever God is with us Forever Forever As you go from this place, keep in mind and heart that the God of all creation has brought you life and love and hope.

If you can't find it today, God will keep at it because he said, I will be with you for all times. All times. So go in that love, in that hope, and in the peace of that God, Father, Son, and Jesus Christ.

May the Holy Spirit wrap around you and send you forth. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

[58 : 37] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.