

Safe Keeping

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Date: 28 February 2021

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you. Good morning. It's good to see you on this beautiful day. The sun's not shining, which from standing up here is not a bad thing.

Last night at the 5 o'clock service, and I know that sun's in different places at different times. You have to pick your place. Otherwise, you're blinded.

But sunshine yesterday and warm today, but sunshine yesterday and warm today, it makes you think a little bit about spring. And of course, tomorrow begins March. And March is always like, who knows?

We are seeing signs of spring and hope, and that is a good thing. Some of the news around the church is that we had 286 fish fry sold on Friday night.

[3 : 52] Woo-hoo! The work and the worry that goes into these is just phenomenal.

The worry is not phenomenal. It's just natural because we want to be successful, but it's just good. And when people enjoy their meals and we happen to be a part of that, then we're grateful to God for all the servants that make that possible.

Any other news that needs to be shared this morning? All right. We are continuing through this Lenten season, and the piece of paper that was on your seat is next on the agenda.

So I invite you to join with me. We continue our Lenten season of recovery as we focus on health as essential to our spiritual lives.

God gathered us as one might comb a beach. God gathers and marvels at every beautiful piece of beach glass.

[5 : 14] We are never alone. We are never lost. To the one who seeks humanity's wholeness.

We affirm our commitment to be the body of Christ that knows we cannot be personally healed until we see the interconnected community as part of the process of healing.

Jesus has the power to help us to revision the family of God in which false boundaries are overcome.

In a year of devastating loss of livelihood, we consider the economic health that reimagines the status quo.

People open their lives to Jesus, and we are drawn to Jesus as the healer, opening our hearts with honesty about our lives and finding assurance that can offer us peace.

[6 : 25] Jesus, would you join me as we acknowledge our need to restore, repair, and renew ourselves and our communities. Let us pray together. God of all, you created us for one another.

You created in us a need and a longing for companionship and care for one another. You gave us hearts to have empathy and to protect those around us.

Yet, too often, we have broken down our relationships instead of building them up. We sometimes live as though there isn't enough to share, isn't enough to help, to heal, to include.

We look away from what makes us uncomfortable, feeling helpless and awkward even when our hearts break. Help us healer.

Help us, healer. Remind us of our care. Move us towards greater care for one another. Help us find wholeness in all being whole.

[7 : 32] Amen. Know this. This love, security, and forgiveness is meant for all people, no matter what.

And we are capable of sharing our light and not running out.

Christ's hospitality broke through all the walls, crossed all the lines. For who? For you, for me, and for all. Amen.

Please help us to your wonderful and difficult claim. constitutes a procession of harmony. Father Godgett Herspin hyacin, In BohITHmodern L bearingwoof, Way of children are in vision broken.

Even gefunden is that beautiful. Don't worry about the perfectagem. When you're here, pour yourself together... To the right of the right of the right of the right Now we will apply to infrastructure, Let's pray in worship today As she slips in Trying to fade into the faces The girl's teasing laughter Is caring farther than they know Farther than they know But if we are the body Why aren't His arms reaching?

[9 : 29] Why aren't His hands healing? Why aren't His words teaching? And if we are the body Why aren't His feet going?

Why is His love not showing? Then there is a way There is a way A traveler is far away from home He sheds his coat And quietly sinks into the back row The weight of their judgmental glances Tells Him that His chances Are better out on the road But if we are the body Why aren't His arms reaching?

Why aren't His hands teaching? Why aren't His words teaching? And if we are the body Why aren't His feet going?

Why aren't His arms reaching? Why aren't His hands showing? Why aren't His hands showing? Why is His love not showing? Then there is a way Jesus, He taught you high in Christ For us to pick and choose who should come And we are the body of Christ But if we are the body Why aren't His arms reaching?

Why aren't His hands healing? Why aren't His words teaching? And if we are the body And if we are the body Why aren't His feet going?

[11 : 34] Why is His love not showing? Then there is a way Jesus is the way Amen. You may be seated.

There are so many times when we find ourselves Feeling the weight of the world upon us As we try to care for families As we try to care for ourselves As we try to get through a year now Of a pretty challenging time And one of the authors that I follow Her name is Kate Bowler She offers a blessing for when you feel Like the world rests on your shoulders God, I know that what I am trying to carry Is far too much But I don't know what else to do Oh God, help me God, have mercy Christ, have mercy Spirit, have mercy

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened And I will give you rest God, have mercy Christ, have mercy Spirit, have mercy Blessed are we who say Jesus, I am taking you at your word I am coming to you just as I am Maybe almost worn out Maybe almost worn out, craving rest But still tempted to keep going like I always do Propelled from one task to the next As if the world depended on it But I know this can't go on For this kind of energy is a harsh driver Blessed are we quietly closing the door And we are willing to fold ourselves into small spaces That is the present moment And trust that is your desire, oh God That we no longer be driven but led So God, slow me down Place your hand on me

And calm the beating of my heart Deepen my breathing Quiet my mind So I can catch up with myself And feel what I feel And know what I know And remember whose world it is That is holding me up And not the other way around For before the mountains were born Or you brought forth the earth and the world From everlasting to everlasting You are God And suddenly It's the truest thing in the world That this small enclosure with you here In the spacious place Where little is enough And I know in a new way That not everything has to be done And not everything has to be done by me And I begin to see That it is my limits As well as my gifts That can shape the natural contours Of what is mine to hold And mine to do

It is the narrowness of the riverbanks After all That gives strength To the river God have mercy Christ have mercy Spirit have mercy Depend on it God will take care of all That you cannot And you too Dear one We listen to that opening song And it talks about the arms Of the body of Christ And the feet of the body of Christ And the words of the body of Christ And the hands of the body of Christ And friends As we come to this place That we call the offering time Even though our offering plate Is the box back there The reality is In whatever state Your hands Your feet Your mind

[16 : 03] Your head And your words Are This is the place For you to be refueled For you to know That you bring All the gifts You ever need To being the body of Christ May it be so Amen Amen Family Here dinner■■■ And There All the gifts To be All the things ■■■■■ Another toy es cemetery■■IT E temple Door amor■ ■■■■ e beispiel Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Gracious and loving God, you have shown us the meaning of every gift, that it is the heart behind the giving that matters, that we give with love, that we give from the purest and truest part of ourselves, and that is what helps gifts have their value.

[20 : 42] Help us to give as you give, with love, with spirit, that it seeks the better of the other, not for itself. And as these gifts go to the honor and glory of your name, receive them in that spirit.

In Jesus' most holy name we pray. Amen. Take your seats. It is indeed a joy to come together as church family.

Amen. Whether we are joined here in person or whether we are connected online, it is indeed a joy to be together. We know that God loves when God's people are together in spirit and in truth.

And when we join our hearts in prayer on behalf of those we love and the situations around us, God inclines his ear. And that is indeed a joy to us all. So, as we think of those things on our hearts that burden us, and as we think of those things on our hearts that God has to get the praise and the credit for, let's come to God as church together.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We thank you for the gift that is this day. We thank you for the gift that is this time.

[21 : 59] We thank you for the gift that is this community of faith. As we come today, Lord, we are thrilled to be on the path with you.

Because it is you who makes all the difference. We know that we are in a world that is full of beauty. A world that can lift our spirits, lift our hearts by all the amazing things that you show.

The gift of love that we share. The gift of experiences we walk through together. But Lord, we also know that there are times of deep challenge.

Times when people are suffering mightily. Times when people are in deep and desperate need. And Lord, we come to you because it is in your power and through your grace that these things can be overcome.

So Lord, we come to you today seeking your strength and your power. For all those who need your healing touch. Whether it be from COVID or whether it is some other medical condition.

[23 : 09] Lord, we know that you are the author of healing. True healing. Healing that goes beyond restoration of the body. But healing that restores the mind and the soul and the heart as well.

For those who need that today, we come on their behalf. Praying that we would see you move in the most gentle and loving of ways.

But in the most powerful and the most blessed of ways. And for those who provide care, Lord, we ask for their renewed strength and their continued wisdom. As people are working so beyond what they would expect.

But Lord, we are grateful for all those who open their hearts and give care to those who are in need. And Lord, for those who have other needs.

Whether it be hunger or shelter. Whether it's feeling lonely or needing guidance as they come to important decisions. Lord God, let your people rise up and step into those needs.

[24 : 14] As brothers and sisters in Christ. With love and with compassion. And Lord, whether you choose to work through us or you work supernaturally on your own.

Let the blessing be truly what heals and restores those who are in need. And Lord God, for those who do not know the truth.

Those who do not know the story. Those who are making their way in the darkness. Let your people speak your truth.

Let us live your truth. And let us be difference makers in this world. In your name. The one who has transformed things. The one who has shown us the way.

And Lord, we know that we are blessed. Not because of anything we have done. But only because of your grace and mercy with us.

[25 : 18] Shown most important. In the life and the death and the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. For it is in his name we pray this morning.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

Good morning. Today's scripture comes from Matthew chapter 8. Verses 5-13. When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.

Lord, he said, my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly. Jesus said to him, shall I come and heal him?

[26 : 34] The centurion replied, Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.

I tell this one, go, and he goes, and that one come, and he comes. I say to my servant, do this, and he does it.

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then Jesus said to the centurion, go, let it be done, just as you believed it would.

[27 : 43] And his servant was healed at that moment. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You know, one of the things that our church and our experience offers is that we have a Saturday service and a Sunday service.

And we, as the preachers, often find that when we preach on Saturday, we step away from that and go, hmm, maybe that wasn't exactly what I wanted.

And so for every one of us, pretty much every week, if you hear on Sunday, it's a revised version of what was on Saturday. And we're grateful for that opportunity. And one of the things that I was aware of last night, which is the furthest from what I would hope for, was that people might have gone home with a sense of being maybe burdened or having a to-do list.

It's hard to be a person of faith and not have that. And yet that is not my hope, especially in this season that we are calling a season of recovery.

In this morning's scripture passage, we have several parts that I want us to talk about. We have the centurion who approaches Jesus.

[29 : 23] We have Jesus. We have the people who are gathered because wherever Jesus went, there were people listening. We have the Jews and the Gentiles.

And we also have a statement about who will be gifted with eternal life. And so we'll start with the centurion.

And so the centurion in the time of Jesus in the Roman Empire was a Roman soldier. The centurion would have been in charge of about 100 soldiers.

Centurions in this particular era were some of the best of the best because not only did they have to lead these 100 soldiers in body and in behavior and discipline, it was also up to them to keep the morale, the encouragement going for these 100 soldiers.

And so they were well thought of pretty much everywhere. And Gentiles, not Jews. This particular centurion is one of the most highly thought of, highly regarded among the centurions as we look back in history.

[30 : 49] And even though this centurion has this little bitty window into our experience, he stands out among centurions.

And the reason for that is because he came as a Gentile to Jesus to ask for healing, not for himself, but for his slave.

So let's talk about that. If you're a Gentile in Jesus' time, you are unclean. You do not interact.

This is according to the Jewish people, not the Gentiles. You do not interact with one another. You would not have, as a Jew, you would never go to a Gentile's house because a Gentile's house is as unclean as a Gentile.

So you would never go there. And you hear Jesus asking, would you like me to come to your home? And the Gentile centurion, the reason for his response, I am not worthy for you to come inside my home, stems in history that said that if Jesus, the culturer, would say that if Jesus went into the Gentiles' home, he then would become unclean.

[32 : 09] But it wasn't Jesus who said he wouldn't. It was the Gentile who was saying, that's not a good idea. So just like last week when we talked about Jesus not only healing the leper, but actually touching him as a leper, Jesus is now responding to someone that it is said he, as an upstanding Jew, should not be talking to.

Now we don't have some of those official lines in our own communities, but all communities, all cultures have lines that we sometimes see and we don't always identify.

So maybe think for a minute if you are or have been someone who's in somewhat of a managerial role over other people.

Or if you are in charge of a company that has multiple layers. Or maybe you have been a teacher or are a teacher who is in charge of students and their well-being or a principal.

Or maybe even the manager of a grocery store or a fast food chain. It doesn't matter. In all of our lives, even sometimes in our own families, there are people, now mind you, I'm not saying this is the way it should be, but there are people who are in charge.

[33 : 48] There are people in a next level and a next level and a next level. And how the people at the top treat the people who are perceived to be at the bottom goes back to some of the song that Kelly led us in.

Which is, if we are the body, then why would youth be whispering about another youth in a place where that person could be hurt or offended or left out by what's being said?

If we are the body, then why would a stranger come and sit in the back and feel as if they were absolutely invisible? If we are the body, the hands and the feet, and the mouths and the hearts, then how can that stuff ever happen?

We live in reality. It simply does happen. And part of what this story about Jesus and the centurion is doing is saying, as the body of Christ, every person is as valuable as the next.

Because there are people listening. And the centurion, while the slave is not there, the centurion is coming on behalf of a slave who at that time was thought of, get this, less valuable than an animal.

[35 : 26] whose life or death largely didn't matter. And yet the centurion, who is maybe halfway up the food chain, is coming to Jesus and saying, could you heal my servant?

Could you heal my slave? And that's why Jesus said, in all of Israel I have not heard of such faith, because this man comes with a concern for someone for whom the world doesn't care and asks for his healing.

And he believes that I, Jesus, can heal him. Not only also a Gentile, but the lowest of the low in the culture that they lived in.

Jesus was always a rabble rouser. And we, we sometimes don't look at Jesus that way, but Jesus was and still is a rabble rouser.

Do we have any rabble rousers here? You know, I kind of like to think about myself as being a rabble rouser in the most respectful way. Maybe my brother and sister and my parents growing up would have said a different way, but when I tell people about the trouble I got in growing up, they were like, you cannot even call that trouble.

[37 : 07] But to me, it felt like rabble rousing. But Jesus was a rabble rouser for people that often couldn't speak for themselves.

That often were so unimportant to so many people. And so here's the other part. The people listening. Imagine the people who are surrounding this experience happening and hearing.

Jesus sees this Gentile centurion. He honors his faith and lifts him up as a faithful person across Israel.

He values this servant slave at his home and heals him. Just as he heals so many other people.

So the people listening, some of them, and we know. We know some of the Pharisees and Sadducees were a different kind of rabble rouser because they were like, oh my goodness.

[38 : 19] Oh my goodness. Is he even thinking really about going to this Gentile's house? Because he won't be Jesus anymore if he goes to that Gentile's house.

He'll be someone we don't respect anymore. Did they see him touch the leper? We often put ourselves in some of those categories.

Sometimes we put ourselves in categories of the most important. We run companies, we run churches, we run organizations, we run youth groups and children's ministry or we run companies or whatever it is.

Our household. So sometimes we have that authority and that power. So the people who are listening to Jesus may either be thinking, though you may not, sir, turn this upside down, we have a way of doing things and this isn't it.

The people in charge, the people who are most important are the ones who know the rules and follow the rules and do the rules and live the rules. Gentiles are down there and slaves are down there.

[39 : 45] And there are some people who are listening who may be imagining themselves as the centurion who has a level of power and yet is a Gentile coming to Jesus and possibly in his mind says, he came to him appealing to him and saying, Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed.

And in terrible distress. And Jesus' response was, I will come and cure him. And ultimately, he was cured from a distance.

He wasn't cured in the same space. Some of us might see ourselves at the very bottom. Not because of job or role in life, that might be it, but sometimes because of the way people have treated us, the way that this year has treated us, the way that life has sometimes treated us.

And there are times when people in our faith community here and watching online may think of themselves as the slave or the servant who sometimes feel as though the world does not value them any more than a person might value a car or house.

And sometimes we who live in a community like this, we don't even recognize them. We don't even recognize them because they are among us. They are listening.

[41 : 41] They are the people who have been shamed into feeling as though they are unworthy. Sometimes that shame comes from their own sense of themselves and is not imposed by other people.

Sometimes that feeling of shame is guilt. Past deeds, past misdeeds, a different kind of rabble-rousing.

And some people spend their whole life trying to re-earn a place that's above the place of a slave.

Jesus came to show to the people who were around, who were listening, that is not how we do things in this new world.

That is not how we live the life that I am teaching people. That is not the rules or not the rules that I am offering you.

[42 : 47] I am offering you the rules of love and justice and equality and mercy and forgiveness not only for others but for ourselves.

He came to do a new thing and there were people listening. so it may be the woman at the well or the woman who was accused of adultery.

It might be so many others that Jesus sees and we can imagine ourselves being there. and Jesus says let me lift you up because there is no one person there is no one person who is more important or valuable than the next.

Not in my Christian world Jesus says not in our faith life Jesus says there is no one who is more important than another.

So Jesus goes on to talk about the kingdom and this banquet and he says I tell you many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[44 : 21] We don't really like that weeping and gnashing of teeth thing but the point Jesus is saying is that you who think you are above all others are not the ones who are going to be sitting at the table.

The ones who are going to be sitting at the table are those who recognize that they and the person next to them and next to them are sacred in the sight of God and in the presence of God and as followers of Jesus and as teachers and preachers and holders of the light of hope of Jesus Christ.

You are seen by God and if I don't believe anything else in this world I have known since a young age before I even believed in Jesus that if there was a God in this world that this God that I wanted so desperately to believe in and know would treat me and love me and love one next to me who didn't look like me and one next to them who might look completely different or be completely different that this God found all people sacred all people are you and me friends so I hope that in hearing this that as you go through your days and weeks that no matter whether you're in a classroom in a courtroom in an office in a managerial position at the bottom of the employment list that you'll remember that no matter how other people treat you you are sacred blessed beloved beloved healable saveable and the power that comes in knowing that from Jesus Christ is the greatest power on earth because that is the power that will then change the communities that we live in if someone who's had

COVID can be treated not as unclean but as welcome when they are not contagious as beloved no matter what as our friend when people are unemployed might not feel shame in this space or in any space and that we might be mutually encouraging of all who come before us because there are people who have a huge amount of power like Jesus who have no problem coming right down to the ground and healing someone who's paralyzed and there are people who are some people say that low on the ground that can rise up and preach like no one has ever preached before or be a part of healing so that's you and that's me and together we can not only find healing and restoration in ourselves but be a part of it in the lives of those around us so you know last night when I said

I was adding to people's to-do list I did offer some suggestions and these are suggestions that are part of how we can be a healing community be encouragers and networkers for those without jobs advocate without any sense of that anyone deserves or doesn't deserve what you're advocating for whether it's evictions vaccination supporting families who are both working and homeschooling at the same time we can't necessarily go to their house and do a lot but who says we can't drop a meal off at the front steps or a restaurant gift card lift up those who have been put down find a way to say thank you to not all teachers but your teachers to not all dentists but your dentist to not all hairstylists but your hairstylists to not all physicians but your physicians bus drivers people you know by name send them a thank you card because while there has been big thanks a lot of thanks signs and banners when we recognize that the people people in our lives have risked their lives to help us it's a blessing to be able to say thank you in some way a lot of kids including my own aren't very good at writing thank you notes maybe we've all gotten away from writing thank you notes but they still sell cards and they still sell still sell stamps or do it through my chart or whatever it is you use whatever some way and I thank you for the ways in which you care and are a part of healing and hope amen one of the ways in which we can show thanks one of the ways in which we live the love we profess for our Lord is we come to his table and receive the gift that he has freely offered for us so let us ready our hearts as we come to the Lord's table the Lord be with you lift up your hearts let us give thanks to the Lord our God it is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you in the beginning you breathed life into raw material creating and animating containers of beauty and goodness we your holy vessels were fired in the kiln of love until we shine with your light susceptible to shattering we find ourselves broken unable at times to remember

[52 : 20] your promise of repair you remind us time and again that though broken we are held in your presence and made whole by your grace and so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join there unending hymn holy holy holy lord god of power and might heaven and earth are full of your glory hosanna in the highest blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord hosanna in the highest holy are you and blessed is your son jesus christ holy are you for being a divine presence on earth your spirit anointed him as a container of grace in the form of preaching good news to the poor proclaiming release to the captives recovering sight to the blind setting at liberty those who are oppressed and announcing that the time had come when you would save your people he healed the sick fed the hungry and ate with those considered too broken for company by the baptism of his suffering death and resurrection you gave birth to the path of healing and recovery delivered us from our despair and isolation and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit when jesus ascended he promised to be with us always in the power of your word and holy spirit we are not alone on the night in which he gave himself up for us he took bread and he gave thanks to you and he broke the bread and then he gave it to his disciples and he said take and eat for 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 he gave thanks to you and he gave it to his disciples and he said drink from this olive for this is my blood sign of the new covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins for you and for many do this every time you drink in remembrance of me and so in remembrance of the healing and life transforming acts of jesus christ we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice in union with christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith christ has died christ has risen christ will come again pour out your spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup make them be for us your healing spirit through christ that we may be for the world the body of christ healing agents in a broken world offering the life blood of hope by your spirit make us one with christ one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet through your son jesus christ with the holy spirit and in your holy church all honor and glory is yours healing god now and forever amen and with the confidence of redeemed children of god let us pray together the prayer that jesus taught us to 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and power and glory forever amen i invite you to take your elements now and as you remove your mask open the side that has the bread on and as you are ready to consume it remember that this is the body of christ which is given for you take now and this is the blood of christ which is shed for you and in your heart of hearts remember what christ has done for you and give thanks amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen

Lord, proclaim to all one message with hearts in glad accord. Christ ever goes before us, we follow day by day, with strong and eager footsteps along the upward way.

Though creeds and tongues may differ, they speak, O Christ, of Thee. And in Thy loving Spirit we shall one people be.

Lord, may our faithful service and singleness obey. May thy great prayer be answered that we may all be one.

[59 : 03] May our faithful service and singleness obey. May thy great prayer be answered that we may all be one.

Close, bound by love united in Thee, God's blessed Son. To bring a single witness, to make the pathway bright.

And souls which grow in darkness, may I know one true light.

And now as you go from this place, believe that you are beloved creations of God.

And then be beloved creations of God wherever you find yourself. Take the love, take the light, take the eyes and hands and feet of Christ with you.

[60 : 20] Take the love, take the light, take the love, take the light, take the love.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[62 : 32] Thank you.