



Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

It is a blessing for me to be able, at long last, to welcome you to worship with Valley Christian Church as your new minister. We will be taking this Labor Day weekend to talk together about how we can labor in love and for love as we continue Valley's work of building the kingdom of God here, inspired by a passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians.

If you have not had the opportunity to join us for worship, I encourage you to do so this Sunday. The following phone numbers and links are the ones to dial between 10:15am and 10:30am. You can join in one of two ways:

By telephone (audio only)

1 (312) 626 6799

Meeting ID: 867 5713 3623

By video with computer, tablet, or smartphone – click the link below

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623>

(if you need a live link you can go to the homepage of our website at www.vccbhm.org)

This Sunday has been a long time in the making. It is a great joy for my family and me to be here and share in today with all of you.

Christ's and yours,
Pastor Eric

Valley Christian Church

Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost

September 6, 2020

PRELUDE

"How Great Thou Art"

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: May we adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus.

People: Who did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.

Leader: But He emptied Himself, by taking the form of a slave, and becoming like human beings.

People: When He found himself in the form of a human, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross

Leader: Therefore, God highly honored Him, and gave Him a name above all names

People: So that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Philippians 2:5-11)

HYMN OF PRAISE

Be Thou My Vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

Naught be all else to me, save that thou art

Thou my best thought by day or by night

Waking or sleeping thy presence my light

Riches I heed not, not vain, empty praise

Thou mine inheritance, now and always

Thou and thou only, first in my heart

Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art

Great God of heaven, my victory won

May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall

Still be my vision, O ruler of all

INVOCATION

O God, we turn to you in worship today to seek encouragement in Christ, comfort in love, and the sharing of the Holy Spirit, that our joy might be completed together by having the same love and being united in our worship of you. Be with us as we seek your Word and will in our lives, and for our lives. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:19-24

MEDITATION

"Labor of Love"

See Insert for Meditation

HYMN

Pass It On

It only takes a spark to get a fire going

And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing

That's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it

You spread God's love to everyone, you want to pass it on

What a wondrous time is spring when all the trees are budding

The birds begin to sing, the flowers start their blooming

That's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it

You want to sing, it's fresh like spring, you want to pass it on

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

Eternal and mighty God, as we enter into this time of prayer as part of our worship of you this Sabbath day, we first give you thanks for the many ways in which you have built the foundation for our faith, by giving us your Word and sending us your servants. We thank you for the ministry of Pastor Edd, and of all the ministers who came before him to serve Valley Christian Church, and we ask for your wise and guiding presence as we continue in the path they trod. We also ask for your grace and healing power in the lives of the people whom we have named here today, as we lift them up to you by name...

PASTORAL PRAYER

**CALL TO
COMMUNION**

May we remember how Christ labored for us, in ministry and on the cross, that we might be saved.

**COMMUNION
HYMN**

God of Grace and God of Glory

God of grace and God of glory

On thy people pour thy power

Crown thine ancient church's story

Bring its bud to glorious flower

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage

For the facing of this hour

For the facing of this hour

Set our feet on lofty places

Fill our lives that we may be

Strengthened with all Christlike graces

Pledged to set all captives free

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage

Lest we fail our call from thee

Lest we fail our call from thee

**COMMUNION
PRAYER**

Pray together the Lord's Prayer

**HOLY
COMMUNION**

Partake of the holy communion (bread, juice, or whatever is available to you)

**WORDS OF
INSTITUTION**

Hear the words of Jesus when He said, "Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink, this is the cup of the covenant poured out for you."

**SHARING OUR
OFFERING
WITH GOD**

Share your financial offering with the church by mail or bring it by the church office. Thank you for your love gifts.

**OFFERTORY
PRAYER**

Lord, we thank you for the gifts of life and love that you have freely given to us through your son Jesus Christ. May you bless these gifts that we have freely given back to you. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now may the God who has called you to perform labors of love guide you out in the world with the strength and compassion with which to do those labors, and may the blessing of that same God be with you on this day and all days. Amen.

HERMITAGE/ART
COMPANY



Behold,
this is the
JOY
of his way.

JOB 8:19

MEDITATION

Sunday, September 6, 2020

“Labor of Love”

Colloquially, the term “a labor of love” tends to refer to something we are doing out of sheer passion, without thought of recompense or recognition. Yet labors of love within the church take all forms—paid and volunteer, recognized and, sometimes, unrecognized. And a labor of love, when it is compensated, does not have to stop being a labor of love—it can become a labor for love.

This dynamic is how Paul describes Timothy here. A son who worked for his father in the ancient Near East was not doing so purely out of filial piety or selfless familial love—the son would work for the father as a sort of apprentice, as part of an economic bargain struck to ensure that the family’s livelihood would outlive the father. Timothy is working for Paul to ensure that Paul’s work for the church outlives Paul. And it did. It still does.

Paul’s work outlived him in no small part because of Timothy’s love—for him, for the nascent church, for God as revealed through Jesus Christ. Labor creates things that are meant to endure, sometimes far beyond your or my lifetimes.

Ralph Chaplin, the songsmith of the labor movement of the early twentieth century, wrote in his anthem *Solidarity Forever*, “We have laid the wide foundations, built it skyward stone by stone/It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own.” On a weekend in which we are asked to set aside a day to honor the contributions of labor not merely through sales and discounts, but with reflection and prayer, I think those lyrics have an extra meaning for us as Christians.

Chaplin’s words can invoke for us the imagery of the church—the church’s foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, built skyward stone by stone with the ministry of one generation after another. And we need to master our command of that story, that history, as

(over)

part of our own labor of love and for love to be this generation’s church that testifies for labor and the financial security and dignity it is designed by God to provide, but in our unsparing economy too often does not provide.

These are weighty things, I realize, to be diving straight into with an inaugural sermon. But this is a weighty season, a weighty year, in our lifetimes, and it is up to us as the church to rise to meet the moment with the Word of God. I don’t need to tell you about how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted each of us. We are entering a deeply divisive presidential general campaign. Across the country, whether in Minneapolis, or Kenosha, or Louisville, justice continues to be sought for Black lives. And just a couple of states across from us, our neighbors and siblings in Christ are facing down the long work of rebuilding their lives in Hurricane Laura’s wake.

Navigating all these circumstances is labor—it is work, and how could it not be? But together, you, me, all of us, we can make this labor *of* love and *for* love.