



At Home Worship for Faith and Hope

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 9, 2021

*“They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, **along with Mary** the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus. “*

Acts 1:14 (NLT)

*Call to Worship

*We gather together to worship
our loving, nurturing God,
**who, like a mother,
knows us intimately,
loves us unconditionally,**
teaches us the way we should go,
and comforts us in times of need.
**Praise God,
the Source and Sustainer of life!***

*Easter Praise

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

UMH 89

*Opening Prayer

Lord, it has been a tough year for all of us but especially for mothers. On top of the load they normally carry, this year of pandemic stresses piled on so much more. We are grateful for the enduring strength You supplied moms all over the world. Today we gather to express our heartfelt gratitude to You and the mothers You have inspired like Mary. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of praise and gratitude!

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

A Prayer for Mother's Day...When Mother's Day Is Hard

Holy One, we gather in your presence to give you thanks and to celebrate the gift of your love; a love that supports, nurtures and challenges us in ways that strengthen and transform us. We offer you praise and thanksgiving for your unfailing presence in our lives and all of the blessings that you so generously offer us.

Today, as we celebrate Mother's Day, we give thanks for mothers the world over. We give thanks for all those who have nurtured and care for us, remembering especially, birth mothers, adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers, aunts, grandmothers, teachers, neighbors and all women who have shared their faith with us.

We pray, compassionate God, for...

- ❖ *those who have recently lost their mothers*
- ❖ *those who are estranged from them; mothers who are estranged from their children*
- ❖ *expectant mothers, wondering and waiting;*
- ❖ *new mothers, coming to terms with new responsibility;*
- ❖ *mothers who are tired, stressed or depressed;*
- ❖ *mothers who struggle to balance the tasks of work and family;*
- ❖ *mothers who are unable to feed their children due to poverty;*
- ❖ *mothers whose children have physical, mental or emotional disabilities;*
- ❖ *mothers who have children they do not want and those suffering the results of an abortion;*

- ❖ *mothers who raise children on their own;*
- ❖ *mothers who have lost a child;*
- ❖ *those who ‘mother’ the children of others: step mothers and mothers in blended families;*
- ❖ *and for those whose desire to be a mother has not been fulfilled*

Bless all mothers, that their love may be deep and tender, and that they may lead their children to know and do what is good, living not for themselves alone, but for you and for others. Help us to honor our mothers as a gift from you. And help us to let them know that to us they are truly ‘Marvelous Moms’ — today and always. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

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 the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

God’s Word

Acts 1:1-14 (NLT)

(see below)

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Message

“Mary’s Enduring Love”

Pastor Clark

...Peter’s Unexpected Comeback

See Message Below

*Hymn of Faith

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

UMH 384

Blessing

*May the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for our life of faith.*

*May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.*

*May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother’s care,
send us out to live and work for others.*

*And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you always. Amen.*

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
drive the dark of doubt away.
Giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day!

2. All thy works with joy surround thee,
earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
stars and angels sing around thee,
center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
call us to rejoice in thee.

3. Thou art giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
wellspring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our brother,
all who live in love are thine;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.

4. Mortals, join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began;
love divine is reigning o'er us,
binding all within its span.
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward,
in the triumph song of life.

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down;
fix in us thy humble dwelling;
all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation;
enter every trembling heart.

2. Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into every troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit;
let us find that second rest.
Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
end of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

3. Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

4. Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Mary's Enduring Love

Acts 1:1-14 (NLT)

Introduction

In late 2012 seventy-five-year-old Marion Shurtleff purchased a Bible in a used book store near her home in San Clemente, California. After making her purchase and returning home, she discovered a couple of folded pages tucked in the middle of the Bible.

The contents of the yellowed notebook sheets contained a child's handwriting that looked familiar. To her amazement, Shurtleff discovered her name at the top of the first page. When she looked closer, she realized that she was actually reading a four-page essay she had written as a ten-year-old to earn a merit badge for the Girls Scouts in Covington, Kentucky—more than 2,000 miles from where she had just purchased the Bible.

By her own account, Shurtleff was deeply moved. *"I opened the Bible and there was my name,"* Shurtleff said in a phone interview from her home. *"I recognized my handwriting. I was shaking, literally. I was crying."*

Although it remains a mystery how the essay ended up in a Bible in a used bookstore half way across the country, one thing is certain. When we look deeply into God's Word, we see evidences of our lives, too. In the pages of Scripture, we see individuals just like us—people who pursue faith and hope in God, people who also battle depression, doubt, lust, and pride. As we read the biblical stories about Abraham, Ruth, David, **Mary**, and Peter we also recognize our own life story.

On this Mother's Day morning, as we take a big-picture look at Mary's life, we will see evidence of our lives in the midst of her story...we will find our story in the midst of the Bible's story.

*"Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, **along with Mary** the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus." Acts 1:12-14 (NLT)*

With this verse we know that Mary the mother of Jesus is present with the disciples as she is mentioned specifically. It is fitting that Mary be present at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church. Remember the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit upon Mary at the miraculous conception of Jesus as recorded in Luke 1:35. These two instances are bookends of Mary's life experiences with the Holy Spirit. For Mary, there was a whole lot of life in between these two momentous events. And so,

on this Mother's Day, we want to take a panoramic view of Mary's life...the phases of her enduring love through it all.

For Mary a gauntlet of life experiences happens between Luke 1:35 and Acts 1:14! It is truly amazing that Mary made it through that gauntlet to this point! The array of life experiences provides an illuminating portrait of the breadth of Mary's love. Let's take note of a few high points along the way.

- ❖ Mary is a woman of **stunning faith** to say yes to God's call upon her life to bear Jesus into this world!
- ❖ Mary is a woman of **courageous justice** as she had the audacity to confront the rulers of her day about the injustices that held people captive. If they had come to know the essence of what she declared in her Magnificat, they would have come to arrest her and likely stone her to death!
- ❖ Mary is a **woman of sorrow** as she discovers the mysterious encounter she and Joseph had with Simeon as they entered the Temple for Jesus to be consecrated. It seems to be such an uplifting moment as this aged saint and prophet takes Jesus into his arms and declares...

*"Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,
as you have promised.*

³⁰ I have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared for all people.

*³² He is a light to reveal God to the nations,
and he is the glory of your people Israel!"*

Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, "This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. ³⁵ As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul."

A sword will pierce your soul, Mary! This prophesy proves to be chillingly accurate as a foreshadowing of Jesus' death on the Cross.

- ❖ Mary is a woman of **searching wonder** as we see in the later verses of Luke 2. Mary was beginning to see Jesus' Messianic identity shine forth as Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all people.

- ❖ Mary is a woman of ***humble surrender*** as we see in John 2 at the Wedding at Cana of Galilee when she tells the servants to do what Jesus tells them to do. As you remember, something happens to put the family's honor at risk. Mary tells Jesus and then the servants to listen to Jesus.
- ❖ Mary is a woman of ***enduring faithfulness*** as she is found among the few who have the courage to stay with Jesus throughout his crucifixion as we see in John 19. This must have been a crushing and excruciating experience for Mary to endure...her own son being crucified on a Roman cross. Yet her faithful love kept her there. Simeon's prophecy was truly being fulfilled before her very eyes and she felt a sword pierce her heart!
- ❖ Mary is a woman of ***widening influence*** as we find her here in Acts 1 as a true disciple of her Son! She has immense influence on the Early Church as she knows Jesus better than anyone else.

Mary had quite the ordeal. Think of all that happened from the moment the Holy Spirit came upon her conceiving Jesus in her womb until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. So much life. So many unexpected upheavals. It's a wonder she endured to see the fruition of it all come to pass.

As we have noted throughout our service today, 2020 into 2021 has been a difficult year for all of us but especially for moms. So much already on their plate, so many pressures from so many sides, and now adding all the pandemic pressures to that mix makes it almost overwhelming. What can we learn from Mary? Where can we see our story in the midst of her story?

#1 May Your Faith Be the Golden Thread Woven through the Tapestry of Your Life

Mary's faith led to Jesus! Her faith was personal. Her faith was real. Her faith developed over time through all the ups and downs of a sometimes delightful and sometimes distressing life. Her faith demonstrated deep courage. Her faith is what kept her together, kept her resilient, kept her hopeful. Her faith was indeed the golden thread woven through the rich tapestry of her life.

May our faith be all of that to us as well!

#2 Be Open to the Unexpected Movements of God in Your Life

God can birth something new for His kingdom! No, you won't give birth to the Messiah, but you may well give start to a new move of God to reach folks unreachable before. That's what Mary did! She was receptive and open to what God would do next. Even in the storm of unexpected circumstances, she was able to hoist a sail to the wind of God's Spirit and dare to pray, take me wherever you wish! That's what Becky O'Connell did too.

Becky O'Connell has been given a unique unofficial title—*"The Baby Whisperer."* Officially, the 65-year-old woman is a temporary foster care worker. According to a 2013 article in the *Chicago Tribune*, "She keeps baby clothes arranged by size in the guest room. The hand-knit caps are stacked on a table near the door. And the white wicker bassinet is always within reach." Becky O'Connell is prepared because at any moment of the day or night she could receive a call from a social worker who needs to place an infant in her care. Some of the children have been abandoned. Others have been abused. All of them are desperate for love, for touch, and for attention. So far Ms. O'Connell has taken in 77 infants, or about seven babies per year that stay from one night to four months.

The road to this unique call wasn't easy. In 1999 her youngest son, Ian, was killed in a car accident. "For years and years after (his death), I couldn't concentrate," she says. *"I looked and acted like a normal person, but you don't feel like a normal person."* A few years later, as she was just beginning to regain her balance, she read an ad from a local adoption agency. They needed someone to be a temporary foster parent for newborns. To O'Connell, who had always loved babies, it sounded like a dream job.

If she has a secret, she says, it is simply giving each child her undivided attention. She adds, *"People think that babies bring a lot of disorder and confusion to a household,"* she says. *"But I'm here to tell you it's not the babies who are disordered and confused. It's the adults."*

O'Connell simply says, *"My job is to fall in love with these babies."*

#3 Trust God through It All

Deepen your trust through all the ups and downs, twists and turns of life. Embrace the reality that life has its joys and sorrows alike. Hold on...wait as Mary waited...hold on long enough to discover that God is really holding onto you! God's sovereign purposes will be fulfilled if we are obedient to His call!

Listen to an unexpected witness: *"I don't think any of us gets off this planet without suffering enormously. And one of the chief ways we suffer is by loving people who are incredibly limited by the fact that they're human beings, and they're going to disappoint us and break our hearts. We are all heart-broken. It's the human condition."*

Mary Karr wrote this. She is an award-winning writer, best known for her NY Times best-selling books *Lit* and *Liar's Club*. In 2009, Karr, who described herself as a "blackbelt sinner and lifelong agnostic," surprised the literary world by embracing the Christian faith.

Mary dared to believe that God was at work even when life seemed to unravel at the seams. She trusted God even at Golgotha. We can too! Even when the doctor's diagnosis is unsettling, even when the promotion at work falls through, even when a hoped-for relationship never pans out, even when a loved one dies far too early, even when a pandemic alters your plans. Hold on...trust God.

#4 Love to the End!

Mary's love endured to the end. Her resilience carried her to the finish line. You can too. Just when you are almost persuaded to give in and give up, remember Mary. Remember when she pressed through her dilemmas and apparent dead-ends and kept on loving.

Frederick Douglass grew up as a slave in Maryland in the early nineteenth century. He escaped and became one of the century's leading abolitionists, who fought to end slavery forever. He writes in ***Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*** about being torn away from his mother's love:

My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant—before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart, who lived about 12 miles from my home.

Nonetheless, young Frederick's mother several times found ways to see her son:

She made her journeys to see me in the night, traveling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping was the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise.... She was with me in the night. She would lie down with me and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone.

How amazing is the power of a mother's love! Frederick Douglass's mother worked all day long in the scorching heat of the tobacco fields, and then, when her body was crying for rest, she walked 12 miles in the dark to see her son. After comforting him and holding him as he fell asleep, she had to walk another 12 miles back. She gave up a night's sleep. She risked getting a severe whipping if she were discovered, or if she got home late. But nothing could keep this mother from her son.

Conclusion

I think Mary lights the way for us. In these stress-filled days with a pandemic that won't die and our world in ever-deepening chaos, we need what Mary possessed. Genuine faith. Daring openness to God. Deep trust. And an unfailing love to press on for the sake of others.

Acts 1:1-14 (NLT)

¹ In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. ³ During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

⁴ Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

⁷ He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, **along with Mary** the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

Joint Choir to Sing May 30

You can participate in the joint Hope and Faith Choir that will sing on Sunday May 30 which is Memorial Weekend. There will be one practice at Hope on Wednesday May 27 at 7:00 PM. See Dwight and Theresa if you are interested.

Dinner Church Exploratory Team

We would like to form a small team of folks who might join Pastor Clark in exploring more about the Dinner Church model. A team of three to five would be ideal in addition to me. We have resources we can use for this including a DVD that not only introduces the Dinner Church model but also highlights Dinner Church in action in several churches across the US. Email Pastor Clark if you'd like to participate at clarkhess.cw@gmail.com

Sharing Your God Story...Guide Available!

As highlighted on Sunday May 2 when we looked through the lens of Peter's life to discover that we too have a God story. That morning we walked through some elements of a process to help you begin to write your God story. The Sharing Your God Story Guide is available for any who wish to receive it. Email Pastor Clark at clarkhess.cw@gmail.com

Faith Café Thanks Patty Adams!

While many have provided pastries and muffins and cookies for Faith Café for which we are grateful, Patty Adams has become our Faith Café angel by providing an array of delights each week for our ministry of hospitality and connections. Thank you, Patty Adams!





Summer Movie Event!

The Chosen is multi-season television drama about Jesus Christ. Series creator Dallas Jenkins wanted to create a series about Christ that could be binge-watched. Jenkins intention was not only to dig deeper into the people who encountered Jesus and to see Jesus through the eyes of those who met him, but also to show him in a way that is more personal, intimate, immediate.

The first season introduces Jesus and the calling of his initial disciples. The second season focuses on the beginning of his public ministry and what happens as word of his ministry began to spread. We will offer this on Sunday evenings at Faith UMC at 6:00 PM during the summer starting June 13 (skipping July 4) for eight weeks. Each episode is about 45 minutes to an hour. After viewing the episode, we will be led by Matt Fields in a discussion based on the episode...including studying the Scriptures that undergird each one.

We are planning on opening this up the Canal Winchester community through a Facebook advertising campaign. We would also like to provide free refreshments to attendees. For those who are unable to attend in person, they will be able to watch at home online and then join in a Zoom discussion after the episode later in the week.