

*“Open the Eyes of My Heart”*  
7th Sunday of Easter/Ascension Sunday  
**May 24, 2020**

*\*Communion not celebrated this week*

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## Spending Time

We have been celebrating Easter for an entire season and next week, Pentecost, is the last week of the Easter Season. But just like Jesus has been reminding his disciples since the resurrection, this is not the end of his presence with the world, but the beginning of how we will carry his heart within ours. And so it is. As we gather together today, and every time that we gather together – physically, virtually, in small groups or simply together in our memory of one another, **Christ is still with us:**

*“Day by day, as they **spent much time together** in the temple, they **broke bread at home** and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, **praising God** and **having the goodwill of all the people.**” ACTS 2: 46-47A*

We create a “temple” of worship in our hearts that connects us across boundaries, distance and time. But as we share this worship, we will stay connected. At the “heart of the matter,” we are connected through the Spirit that makes us one in love.

## Welcome and Announcements

### Invocation

P. In the name of the Father and of the Son ☩ and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*Please feel free to make the sign of the cross on yourself from your head to your heart and from your left side to your right side over your heart.*

### Opening Act of Centering Our Hearts as One

- P: Jesus prayed for his disciples, giving them into God’s eternal care.  
We place our hands on our hearts and lightly tap together in a slow heartbeat rhythm.
- C: Jesus prays for us, giving us into God’s care.**
- P: Know that you have been blessed with the love of the Savior.
- C: We live in that love and seek to serve God.**
- P: Open your hearts and spirits now to hear God’s word.
- C: May our lives be open to God’s Spirit and reflect God’s love.**

## Hymn: *Shine, Jesus, Shine*

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**Shine, Jesus, Shine, fill this land with the Father's glory;  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.  
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy;  
Send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light!**

**Lord, the light of love is shining, in the midst of the darkness, shining;  
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us,  
Set us free by the truth you now bring us.  
Shine on me, shine on me:**

**Shine, Jesus, Shine, fill this land with the Father's glory;  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.  
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy;  
Send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light!**

**C: AMEN.**

## Prayer of the Day

P: God of incredible surprises,

**C: as we gaze into the clouds, remind us that we are standing on holy ground. Place our feet on the pathways of peace and hope. Draw our attention from the vision of the Lord rising to the heavens to be with you and help us to focus on the ministries that you would have us do. Keep us ready and willing always to serve you all our days. AMEN.**

## Confession

P: Forgiving and gracious God,

**C. you have called us to be the church, to live out our Resurrection faith. You have asked us to place our trust in you and to bring to all, the good news of your saving love. But we have failed to do this. Forgive us for the smallness of our faith. Clear our spirits of the clutter of everyday living. Help us to be open always to your word and your love. Challenge us to move in directions of peace and hope for all people.**

## Forgiveness

P: Forgiveness and love have been poured out upon us, to offer hope to all nations. We are no longer distant from God. We are ones whom God has blessed. We are an Easter People. We know we are to be a blessing to all whom we meet, in God's name. **AMEN.**

## Breaking Open the Word with Scripture

Leader:

Today we commemorate the moment when the disciples witnessed Jesus' leaving this physical world. He had spent some quality time with them, helping them understand more about their faith and the continued mission that they must now carry on in the world. He asked them to encourage people to a change of heart—to believe in hope and life and love that was his message on earth. As we often do when we take our leave from someone we love, Jesus blessed his followers.

Reader:

Jesus said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He said to them, “This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Look, I’m sending to you what my [Abba, God] promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power.”

He led them out as far as Bethany, where he lifted his hands and blessed them. As he blessed them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy. And they were continuously in the temple praising God.

- LUKE 24: 44-53

Leader:

We have been reading some of the apostle’s letters that circulated among the early churches. They read these letters as they gathered for meals, just as we have been doing. Here is an excerpt from a letter sent to an early Christian community. We can imagine it being written for us, as a community that needs prayers, that needs a spirit of wisdom.

Reader:

Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, this is the reason that I don’t stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sovereign of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God’s call, what is the richness of God’s glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God’s power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of God’s powerful strength. God’s power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God’s right side in the heavens, far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. God put everything under Christ’s feet and made him head of everything in the church, which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way. - EPHESIANS 1: 15-23

Leader:

To be the “body of Christ” as the church is to see the world through the eyes of Jesus—to see through the eyes of love. As Christ’s body here on earth, we try to create the same conditions of love that he did while he was here on earth. We hope that “the eyes of our hearts” can be continually opened, as the disciples’ were that day of Jesus’ ascension, so that we can be the best representation of his love here on earth. Perhaps we can see “ascension” with Christ as an “elevation” or “heightening” of our gratitude and of our commitment to do good in the world.

## **Action Response**

Leader:

What does it mean to look through the eyes of our hearts? How do we see things around us in a heightened way? When our level of love goes up, our level of appreciation and gratitude

goes up as well. I invite you to look around you. What do you see in front of you that may be something or someone you see every day but could see with new eyes of gratitude? Let your gaze rest on at least three things or people in this moment.

*[pause to allow time to do this]*

## **Breaking Open our Lives with Discussion**

Leader:

Our theme scripture says, “*they ate their food with glad and generous hearts.*” One way we can be glad and generous is to share about how we are finding strength, hope, love and peace in these days. This is part of “breaking bread” with each other as we break open our hearts to one another as well. Let’s share today about a new way of seeing with our hearts, with an eye of heightened gratitude.

What did you just see when you looked around?

And did looking at it with “the eyes of a grateful heart” offer you a new perspective?

What else are you grateful for at this moment?

What do you want to “elevate” in your commitment to make the world a better place?

Let’s take some time at our tables to talk about these questions or spend some time journaling.

## **Confession of Faith**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **Hymn – *Be Thou My Vision***

PUBLIC DOMAIN; Text-Irish Traditional, 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> cent. Vss- Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, Alt.; Tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931

- 1      **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 and by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**
  
- 2      **Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.  
Thou my soul’s shelter, and thou my high tower,  
raise thou me heav’nward, O Pow’r of my pow’r.**

**Sharing of the Peace of Christ**    ...Peace Be With You

**Offering Our Gifts**

**Prayers**

## 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 and ever. Amen.

## Hymn – *Be Thou My Vision*

- 3 Riches I heed not, nor 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.
- 4 Light of my soul, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.



## Blessing - *Based on Psalm 16*

As we close this time together,  
remember: God is always with you.  
No matter what you face,  
no matter what trials or hardships come your way,  
God is right beside you, whispering "Peace be with you,"  
guiding and directing your path.  
So do not live in fear, but in joy.  
Take heart! This is the heart of the matter.  
**Amen.**

## Hymn: *For All the Saints*

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SINE NOMINE Music © Oxford University Press

**For all the Saints who from their labors rest,  
Who thee by faith before the world confessed,  
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest,  
Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Dismissal:** Christ is risen, just as he said.  
Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!  
**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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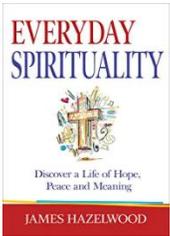
**CONNECTING OPPORTUNITIES**

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**REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

Faye Marcuson, Ron Grose, Mary Ravlin Gould, Ken Wold, Barb Schaller, Lila Cole, Colette Flom, Stephen Berge, Jeannie Ellingson, Sid Strandemo.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**



**BOOK GROUP ON ZOOM: EVERYDAY SPIRITUALITY** - *Discover a Life of Hope, Peace & Meaning*, by James Hazelwood, former bishop, We will meet at least three times toward the end of May. Please let Pastor Julie know if you would like to join the discussion.



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