



# NEW MILFORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



**Worship Celebration | 10.04.2020 | 9:30am**

*You are invited to worship with us in the quiet of prayer,  
in the joy of song, and in the desire to grow in the grace and  
knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ.*

*Part of our mission is to be a place for all people.*

*All are welcome here!*

*Whatever your gender identity, age, race, religious background,  
economic status, sexual orientation, or condition of ablebness,  
we greet each other as beloved children of God.*



\* **The order of service is** subject to change at the leading of **the Holy Spirit**.  
***Italicized Bold print*** invites congregational response in unison.

† Means you are **invited to stand** if able and comfortable.

**Please invite** your friends to join our worship services on Facebook & share our livestream.

## **ENTRANCE & PRAISE**



### **Prelude**

Brethren we have met to worship by William Moore, arr. Cindy Berry- Kimberly Rothen



### **Welcome**

#### † **Call to Worship** [© enfleshed]

Take heart, beloveds. We are not an aimless people!  
**It is the Kingdom of Heaven we desire.**

The path does not need to be clear.

**We need not fear if we wander or we stray.**

Love will be an ever-present guide, calling us with patience and truth.

**As we go, we practice healing.**

We keep learning and unlearning.

**We right our wrongs.**

We set down our defenses, our power, our closed-minded thinking.

**The practice of justice will be our guiding light.**

Thanks be to God, our way in the wilderness.



#### **Prayer of Invocation** [© enfleshed]

God of deliverance, when we feel crushed, overwhelmed, or despairing over evil's grip on life, remind us that we are not helpless nor are we without hope. Assure us again that the Spirit of Christ, the power of resurrection, the force of Love Eternal is alive in us. Make us your gentle, angry people unwavering in faith. Amen.

## **PROCLAMATION & RESPONSE**



#### **Prayer for Illumination** [by Pastor Sophy]

Be with us, Lord of Love, our Liberator and our Light.  
Dwell in these moments with us and tune our souls to sense your presence,  
that we may perceive how Your Spirit is moving in our midst today.  
May the words we share today and the stories we tell  
be transformed into vessels  
for Your truth and Your good news. Amen.

**21: 33** "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.  
**34** When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce.  
**35** But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.  
**36** Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.  
**37** Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' **3**  
**8** But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.'  
**39** So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.  
**40** Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

**41** They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

**42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
this was the Lord's doing,  
and it is amazing in our eyes'?

**43** Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.

**44** The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

**45** When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them.

**46** They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Word of God for all who chose to receive it. **Thanks be to God!**

### Listening for God's Message

"Who's Who in this Story Anyway?"

Pastor Sophy

### Sermon reflection questions:

The parable teachings of Jesus are never perfectly clear in what their metaphors are meant to represent. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus tells a crowd of Pharisees and other high-up Jewish leaders a story about a vineyard, a landowner, some tenants and slaves, and a son. In verse 45, we're told that the Pharisees and the chief priests know almost instantly that Jesus is talking about them, but we don't know how they know this! Did a guilty conscience expose them to themselves? This parable is the second of three parables critiquing the ruling Jewish establishment, who, according to Jesus, have been neglecting their responsibilities as community leaders and abusing their privilege over the people in their care. Instead, they've turned the temple into a common marketplace, they've gotten far too cozy with the Roman imperial rulers who've colonized Jerusalem, and they've been colluding with the Romans to exploit the people. They're supposed to be people of God, but Jesus believes they really aren't acting like that.

The parable of the tenants unfolds over the end of chapter 21, and it's vexed plenty of people who have tried to interpret it, even with all the historical context that we have about the Pharisees and their tense, fatal relationships with Rome and to Jesus.

Though we learn that the Pharisees knew Jesus was talking about them, we never which characters in the parable are meant to represent them. I found myself asking, *wait a second, who is who is this story anyway?* We aren't told explicitly if the Pharisees are the landlord or the tenants, but this distinction really matters! Are they the landlord or the tenant? Who in the story represents God, Jesus, and... us? How does the message change when our understandings of the metaphor shift?

The more I tried to move the metaphoric puzzle pieces around, the more lessons I started learning how the Kingdom of God works. If you suppose that God is the landlord, as most Bible scholars and interpreters do, you get a fairly standard reading that reinforces God's dominion over all creatures and God's desire for faithful stewardship and cultivation of creation according to God's will for creaturely flourishing. But, if you suppose that the Pharisees are the landlord, you get a very different story indeed. This interpretation leads us to think about how God dismantles oppressive labor arrangements and exploitative power dynamics.

Do you follow me? It's kind of hard to follow, because there are so many layers to the metaphor! But if we follow the metaphors through, then both of those interpretations offer some really important truths and insights into who God is and how God's justice work and what the Kingdom of God means. Just the very fact of the mystery of multiple interpretations suggests to me that there is never one perfect answer or formula for "how God works," but rather, God is revealed in the spaces between certainty, where we're willing to ask questions, shift our perspective, do things differently, and look afresh on old stories and old ways of doing things.

### Invitation to Offering [© enfleshed]

One way we do things differently is by claiming and celebrating that we belong to each other. We are each other's to protect, to hold accountable, to feed, and to nurture. Like iron sharpens iron, we grow together. With commitment to this shared journey, let us bring our offerings to God.

**Please consider making an offering online <https://bit.ly/NMUMCGive>**



In the midst of struggle, collective and personal, this community is meant to be a holy refuge. Here, we are invited to be real about our lives - what makes us weep or rage or feel nothing at all. We hear one another and hold one another, seeking wisdom together. In gratitude for this gift and God's presence with us, let us bring our offerings.

### **Offering of Tithes and Gifts**

Holy Holy holy by John B. Dykes arr. Cindy Berry- Kimberly Rothen

### **Doxology 94**

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power up lifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***



### **Prayer of Dedication [© enfleshed]**

Marilyn Fuller Oct 05  
Sarah Taranto Oct 06  
Martin McMahon Oct 07

Ralph Williams III Oct 09  
George Hicks Oct 11  
Arthur Carlson Oct 14

Spirit of Imagination, come to us with your creative and radical visions of hope. Deepen our collective capacity to live in nonconformity with destruction; to practice alternatives to what deadens and destroys. Bless our offerings to the work of love that can make all things new. Amen.

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

*Communion is a time when we celebrate and share  
in the presence of the risen Christ around His Table.*

*We share an open Table and all are invited.*

**You need not** be a member of this Church or any Church;  
**you need not** be baptized.

**You need only desire a closer encounter with God.**

*John Wesley, the founder of the people called Methodists,  
believed that it is possible to have a conversion experience during Communion,  
and so all are welcome at the Lord's Table.*

*For congregants worshipping in Chapel in the Pines, please take great care to only remove the  
smallest portion of your mask necessary to partake of the Elements. Please immediately readjust your  
mask to cover your nose and mouth, and dispose of your Communion packaging as you leave the  
Chapel.*

*For congregants celebrating Holy Communion at home via Live Stream, please prepare a small  
amount of food and drink to have with you, which will be blessed during the service.*

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,  
always and everywhere to give thanks to You,  
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 Creator, 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 God.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are You, and blessed is Your Child Jesus Christ.  
By the baptism of His suffering, death, and resurrection  
You gave birth to Your Church,  
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,  
and made with us a new covenant  
by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which He gave himself up for us,  
He took bread, gave thanks to You, broke the bread,  
gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Take, 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,  
gave thanks to You, gave it to His disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for all  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it,  
in remembrance of Me."

And so,  
in remembrance of these Your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,  
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving  
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 is risen; Christ will come again.***

Pour out Your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,  
and on these gifts of bread and fruit of the vine.  
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,  
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,  
redeemed by His love.

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 in Your holy Church,  
all honor and glory is Yours, almighty Creator,  
now and forever. **Amen.**

## **The LORD'S Prayer**

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray:

***Our Creator, 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. Do not let us fall into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory forever. Amen.***

## **Breaking the Bread**

Because there is one communion,  
we, who are many, are one body,  
for we all partake of the one bread of life.  
The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.  
The cup over which we give thanks  
is a sharing in the life blood of Christ.  
**Amen.**

## GOING FORTH

### Closing Hymn

#### **Benediction** [© enfleshed]

The Spirit sends us to be living testimonies  
to the power of God in the midst of struggle.

**May we be reminders of liberation past.**

**May we be sources of solidarity and companionship.**

**May we be witnesses to futures still possible.**

Through our words, our relationships, and our actions,  
**may it be so.**

#### **Postlude**

He is Exalted by Twila Paris – Kimberly Rothen



**Go Now in Peace to Love God and One Another!**



**Cover image:** © enfleshed 2020

**Note:** Deep gratitude to our volunteers and staff members who make our worship online and in person possible, and to our congregants whose continued efforts help to keep our community safe from Covid19. We lift up gratitude for the collaboration involved in making this worship service happen for the glory of God and the delight of Creation.

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**Ministers: All members of the New Milford UMC**