

“Open the Eyes of My Heart”

May 31, 2020

*Preparations: **making a meal or snack, a candle,** and a “**worry stone**” for each person. For kids there are **handouts of hearts** you can print out to doodle and color every time they hear the word “heart.”*

SPEND TIME

Gaye:

We have been celebrating Easter for an entire season... and next week we will celebrate Pentecost, which is the official end 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 today, and every time that we gather—physically, virtually, in small groups or simply being 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.

Opening Act of Centering Our Hearts as One

Gaye: We are going to center our hearts as one to begin.
Let's take a deep breath together *[everyone breathe together]*.

I invite you to place your hand on your heart and
let's lightly tap together in a slow heartbeat rhythm

Holy Living God,	Heartbeat of Creation,
help us to take this time	to center on you,
for you made us,	you gave us life,
and you continue to be with us	every moment... <i>[wait]</i>
every breath... <i>[wait]</i>	every step. <i>[the heartbeat tapping fades away]</i>

Hear this assurance from God: *sing to the tune of **Amazing Grace***

**Be still, O heart, you're not alone,
your beat is shared with me.
Come now, and calm, and center here,
you're mine, secure and free.**

Let's take another deep breath, making sure our shoulders and any
tension we feel in our bodies is letting go with the breath.

Let's pick up our heart stone, sometimes called a "worry stone,"
and let our touch on its surface remind us that
God's touch is within us, between us, and around us.
As close and real as this object is in our hands right now,
is how close Love is to us always.

Let us imagine letting go of our worries for now
into God's heart of love. We offer a prayer song of letting go:

*[sing to the tune of **Amazing Grace**]*

**Into your care, we offer now, our worries, fears and strife.
We turn to you and know you're near
– Your light, our love and life.**

Let's light our candles now and set our heart worry stones next to it.
[Light the candle/candles you have on your table and put your stone(s) around the base of it]

Opening Song to Join Our Voices As One (Tune) NCH 245 v.1,3,4

O Christ, When You Ascended

1 The day of res - ur - rec - tion! Earth, tell it out a - broad;
 2 Our hearts be pure from e - vil, that we may see a - right
 3 Now let the heavens be joy - ful, let earth its song be - gin,

the Pass - o - ver of glad - ness, the Pass - o - ver of God.
 the Christ who reigns e - ter - nal in res - ur - rec - tion light;
 the whole world keep high tri - umph, and all that is there - in;

From death to life e - ter - nal, from earth un - to the sky,
 We lis - ten for the teach - ings once heard so calm and plain,
 Let all things seen and un - seen their notes of glad - ness blend,

our Christ has brought us o - ver with hymns of vic - to - ry.
 for we, too, want to fol - low and raise the vic - tor strain.
 for Christ a - gain has ris - en, our joy that has no end.

O Christ, When You Ascended

1. O Christ, when you ascended, you took your rightful throne.
Your time on earth had ended—yet we weren't left alone.
You reign o'er earth and heaven; your Spirit guides our way.
Your prayers uphold your people; you lead your church each day.
3. We're tempted, Lord, to leave you in stories nicely told.
Sometimes we don't believe you and say your ways are old.
Sometimes we feel so lonely and live in doubt and fear—
but your ascension means, Lord, you're present with us here.
4. It's often quite a challenge to follow in your Way.
We're easily distracted! It's hard, Lord, to obey.
Sometimes we give you Sundays—an hour, maybe two—
But your ascension means, Lord, all life belongs to you

BREAK BREAD

Blessing the Meal

Stevie (VIDEO): We are witnesses to the power of drawing together for the sustenance that our bodies and our hearts need. So let us bless our meal by praying this prayer...

(VIDEO): Ever-Present God, we gather in your name,
invited by Jesus, bound together with your spirit,
in union with each other.

**Feed our bodies and our spirits
with your comforting presence
so that we might be your comfort to others...**

**Bless this food... and break open our hearts
Bless this drink... and pour out your love. Amen.**

Gaye: And now I invite you to pick up a plate of food or a cup and let us say the one word that is at the heart of the matter in every blessing we do at our tables, **“Grateful!”**

Let us begin to “break bread”
while we “break open the Word” in our scriptures.

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD WITH SCRIPTURE

Robyn (LIVE):

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.

Linda O (LIVE)

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*

Tithes & Offerings

Stevie Astley & Danny White

Open the Eyes of My Heart/Lord, I Give You My Heart
a medley by Caleb & Kelsey

Robyn (LIVE):

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.

Linda O (LIVE)

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*

Robyn (LIVE):

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.

Message

Action Response

Maribeth Peiniger (LIVE):

I invite you to turn to someone (now or after worship if you are alone right now), and remind them that you love them, God loves them, and we hope they are giving some love to themselves too! Because it is the right thing to do!

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 of at least three things or people in this moment. *[pause to allow time to do this]*

BREAKING OPEN OUR LIVES WITH DISCUSSION

Danny (LIVE)

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. In this week’s scripture, we are encouraged to obey Christ’s commands, which is to love God, to love neighbor, and to love ourselves. 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.
We’ll take a minutes to talk.

For instance, Let’s complete this sentence, “I have an elevated sense of gratitude for _____.”

BREAKING OPEN OUR HEARTS WITH PRAYER

Gaye: Hurts & Hallelujahs

Glenn: It is difficult in this moment not to be near some of the people we love and might be worried about.

Take a moment and say out loud the names of people you wish were right there next to you at your table today. As we name them, they are present with us in our hearts.

[pause and allow people a minute to do so]

We also want to call to mind, the people we cannot name, whose names we do not know. But we know they need our prayers and God's comfort.

For those who have lost loved ones...

For those who are sick and recovering...

For those who are caring for loved ones who are sick at home...

For those who are caring for persons in medical care...

For those who are separated from loved ones...

For those who are feeling alone and isolated...

For those who are helping and are so very tired...

For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort...

For those who are afraid...

Let us take another breath of Spirit.

We know that God sends out our prayers and the Spirit, Breath of God, is blowing from within us outward, as a Spirit of Compassion and Presence.

As our "Amen" let us share together the **Lord's Prayer**

PRAISE GOD!

Lyn LIVE)

It is time to praise God and raise our endorphin levels
to improve our heart-health, both physically and spiritually!

So whether your “dance” is in your bed, in your chair, or all over the
living room, it’s time for the Easter Season Dance Party!

If you are going to dance, go ahead and get ready.

And let’s start with this affirmation,

***(LIVE):* We know Jesus is present among us,
even in this very home
We will not let fear be louder than love...
but with glad hearts and rejoicing souls
we will sing God’s praise for we are Easter People!**

***(LIVE):* Let’s soar together...!!**

[start the music and jam out]

Dance Party Song

Stevie Astley

Wings of the Wind
by Stevie Astley

HAVE GOODWILL

Laura (LIVE):

That was great! I hope you feel some good vibes right now.

So while we have our energy up,
let's decide to send some energy out to the world that needs it!
What message does the world need?

Perhaps you will decide to create a way to let more and more people
know the message of Christ,

“You are not alone. I am here. Do not let your heart be troubled.”

What can we do to create more comfort in our household, in our family,
in our relationships with those we cannot be with right now?

How can we offer comfort to those who are working so hard right now?

How can we offer comfort to anyone who is feeling anxious?

Make your own plan today

Benediction (based on Psalm 16)

Gaye:

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, ready to hold you,
to be a rock for you, guiding and directing your path.
So, acknowledge your fear and your worry
and know it is as true and holy as any feeling,
including joy and hope and love.

Take heart! This is the heart of the matter. **Amen.**

Postlude Jam

Our Postlude Jam is a golden oldie! and send it out to the friends we miss!

“Start a Fire” - Unspoken -

<https://youtu.be/FXHYykW28SA>