

## May 31-Written Service

**Praise team-** Lindsay Hunter, Katie Kirby, Jeremy Russell, Merlin Thompson, Collen Turner

**Special Music-** Lindsay Hunter

### Prelude

### Welcome

### Call to Worship

Leader: We come down from the mountaintops of our lives and enter the crowded, often chaotic valleys of this world.

All: Here, we are surrounded by desperate needs, heavy burdens, and our own human limitations.

Leader: Yet, in the middle of every struggle and every doubt, Christ is present. He hears the cries of our hearts.

All: Let us witness the power of Christ and be astonished at the majesty of God! We come to worship today.

### Song: Shout to the Lord

Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing  
Power and majesty, praise to the King;  
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar  
At the sound of Your name.

I sing for joy at the work of Your hands,  
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand;  
Nothing compares to the promise  
I have in You.

My Jesus, my Savior,  
Lord, there is none like You;  
All of my days I want to praise  
The wonders of Your mighty love.

My comfort, my Shelter,  
Tower of refuge and strength;  
Let every breath, all that I am,  
Never cease to worship You.

Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing  
Power and majesty, praise to the King;

Mountains bow down and the seas will roar  
At the sound of Your name.

I sing for joy at the work of Your hands,  
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand;  
Nothing compares to the promise  
I have in You.

### **Prayer**

#### **Song: In Christ Alone**

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This cornerstone, this solid ground,  
Firm thro' the fiercest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when striving cease.  
My comforter, my all in all,  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain;  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again.

And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine-  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.

No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand;  
Till He returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I stand.

## **Announcements**

**Special Music: Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me... sung by Lindsay Hunter**

## **Congregational Prayer**

### **Song: #293- Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness**

Praise the One who breaks the darkness  
With a liberating light;  
Praise the One who frees the pris'ners,  
Turning blindness into sight.

Praise the One who preached the gospel,  
Healing every dread disease,  
Calming storms and feeding thousands  
With the very bread of peace.

Praise the One who blessed the children  
With a strong yet gentle word;  
Praise the One who drove out demons  
With a piercing two-edged sword.

Praise the One who brings cool water  
To the desert's burning sand;  
From the well comes living water  
Quenching thirst in every land.

Praise the one true love incarnate:  
Christ, who suffered in our place;  
Jesus died and rose for many  
That we may know God by grace.

Let us sing for joy and gladness,  
Seeing what our God has done.  
Praise the one redeeming glory;  
Praise the One who makes us one.

## **Offering/Offertory**

**Offering Song: Spirit of the Living God**

**Offering Prayer**

## Children's Message

### Scripture: Luke 9: 37-43a

<sup>37</sup> The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. <sup>38</sup> A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. <sup>39</sup> A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. <sup>40</sup> I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

<sup>41</sup> "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

<sup>42</sup> Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. <sup>43</sup> And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

## Message

When was the first time you saw something demonic?

For me, it was here in Sioux City maybe 10 years ago or so  
I had met Ruth (not her real name) several months before while she was in the county jail  
She was kind, funny, cared deeply about her family, and loved God  
She had also lived a hard life and struggled for years with an addiction to alcohol  
While in jail, she had gotten clean again and had plans for how to do things differently when her time was up  
After getting out, she and her husband were doing OK  
When I would check in, she talked about the new friends she was making, life in a new community, and some general health issues they were dealing with  
But addiction would keep popping back up for her  
She had more good days than bad, but that was slipping too  
Until I was called that she was in the hospital here  
When I came for a visit, she had drunk herself into a coma  
She looked weak, small, defeated  
It was the first time I remember thinking, this is a demon that has a hold of her  
We can debate about the biological nature of addiction, and I believe that to be true  
But I also believe that there was something foreign and destructive at work in this wonderful person

In the Bible, we often see language of people wrestling with demons

And we can be quick to dismiss that today  
Because we know more about the biology and diseases  
But it also feels like sometimes there is more at play than we can explain  
And more than we can understand

I don't know where to draw the line and what falls cleanly into what category  
But my experience with Ruth has helped me to stop viewing those stories in the Bible as just something that happened back then  
Today, we still wrestle with demons we can't defeat on our own  
We need all the help we can get

The medical expertise that God has revealed through science  
And the spiritual freedom that we find in Christ

As we read today's story from Luke, I'm asking if we can have an open mind when we read about the young man and his family impacted by demon possession

Regardless of how we understand that piece of it  
Here was a person who was suffering  
And unable to find healing and relief  
Which brought him into the presence of Jesus

Luke 9:37-43a

Mark 9:14-29 (also Matthew)

All these are the same story, same bones, same timeline/setting

The mountain they come down from was transfiguration  
Son, seizures, falls into fire and water, suffering terribly  
Disciples couldn't heal  
Faith like a mustard seed, to move mountains  
Only by prayer

What was life like for this family?

I wonder, how would his parents have responded to the danger of having fire or water around?

We had kids who were climbers when they were little and made sure there were no "mountains" available to climb

We child proof our outlets and cupboard doors  
Because these present real threats to small children  
This boy, even as he learned and grew, presented some special considerations for his parents

How long since the family had a hot meal if avoiding fire

How many cold nights through winter

Likely to avoid large pools of water, don't bathe regularly

Burns not likely to heal quickly or well, because he kept getting burned

How long since they've gone to friends' house or had someone over to theirs

What does their house even look like after years of this

What has this done to their faith?

Do you really think this family hasn't prayed? Fasted? Etc?

When your child struggles, how many appointments will you go to?

How many nights praying for healing or relief?

In this case, it has been years

He's been like this since he was little

The only thing that's changed is that he's gotten bigger and stronger and harder to control

How long could you exist like this?

What would it do to your faith

Do you believe more because faith is all you have to hold onto?

Or is your belief withered and worn down by the years of hardship and isolation?

Honestly, I have seen both happen to people

When his faith is questioned, this man has one of the most honest responses to Jesus we see in all of Scripture

I believe

Help my unbelief

It sounds as if both are true

He is exhausted, hope seems fleeting, but a chance at helping his son cannot be ignored

The stories about Jesus have given him hope, in spite of everything that hasn't worked

In spite of all the prayers that seem unanswered and all the remedies and treatments that produced no results

How do we respond to prolonged struggle/suffering?

This man is a hero of mine

Ruth and her loved ones are heroes

All who carry on with ongoing diseases, with trauma, with addictions

And refuse to lose hope

And continue to believe, even if it is sometimes mingled with our unbelief

Who drag themselves and their loved ones into the presence of Jesus

I pray that we find relief, find healing, find freedom like this boy and his father did

But whether the outcome is what we desire or not, I pray that we continue to hold onto belief

That someday, in this life or the next, the demons plaguing us will be gone and we will stand in the presence of the One who sets us free once and for all

**Song: #43- All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name (vs. 1,3,4)**

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all.

Let every kindred, every tribe

On this terrestrial ball,  
To Him all majesty ascribe,  
And crown Him Lord of all;

To Him all majesty ascribe,  
And crown Him Lord of all!

O that with yonder sacred throng  
We at His feet may fall!  
We'll join the everlasting song,  
And crown Him Lord of all;

We'll join the everlasting song,  
And crown Him Lord of all!

**Benediction**

**Postlude**