

**August 23, 2020 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Isaiah 51:1-6, Psalm 138**

**Romans 12:10, Matthew 16:13-20**

[Based in part on a sermon by Rev. Jane McBride, 8-2-20, "The Worship of Our Lives",  
First Congregational Church of MN, UCC. Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom of Jesus*, pg. 150.]

**May the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our rock and our salvation. Amen.**

**Grace and peace, beloved of Christ Jesus.**

**Over these last week's** I've been intentionally seeking to craft sermons that take some involvement, some action, or interaction.

...Sermons that invite us—all of us—to grapple with God's claim on our lives and our response as individuals and as community.

To do that today, I invite you into the practice of Lectio Divina.

Some of us experienced this practice during Lent a couple of years back, and today we'll modify it to suit our Zoom and live stream worship.

I'm using pieces from a sermon that the good folks across the freeway at First Congregational experienced earlier this month.

I was intrigued as I heard their pastor (my spouse) Jane McBride, describing what they did and how they did it, so with permission I am borrowing liberally.

**This practice of Lectio Divina, or "sacred reading",** is an ancient method of praying with scripture.

"It began with the desert mothers and fathers during the church's first few centuries of life.

Cynthia Bourgeault writes:

*'The early monks talked about 'ruminating' scripture:*

*not ruminating on scripture (as in pondering it),*

*but ruminating it like a cow chewing its cud.*

*Lectio Divina is a time-tested way of 'chewing scripture'—*

*feeding on it,*

*absorbing it deeply into one's being where, like all food,*

*it provides nurturance and energy for growth.'*

*She continues [and I'd add, this sounds a lot like Martin Luther]: 'The practice is based on the wager that scripture is a living word—*

*not just history,*

*not just facts and figures you can read in a book,*

*but a source of ongoing personal guidance that can speak to your heart*

*in the here and now, offering insight and uncannily timely assistance.'* (p. 150)

**Today it's the passage from Romans that we'll ruminate.**

Two things to mention as a means of framework:

**First:** It says present your bodies as a living sacrifice, but this could also be translated:

***present your bodies as a living offering, holy and acceptable to God.  
which is your spiritual worship.***

“Bodies’ here are not separated from, or in opposition to, minds, hearts, and spirits.

Paul is simply remembering that we are embodied creatures.

Worship happens when our bodies show up in the world with reverence.

Worship means making an offering to God,

[an offering] of all that we say and think and do.”

These months of distance and physical separation seem to me to be an opportunity to get serious about the worship of our daily lives.

**Secondly, in** all the reckoning happening right now, racial, social, economic, environmental, political,

I’m thinking about how “prayer lays the groundwork for the radical change we need.

That’s what Paul is talking about:

***Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed  
by the renewing of your minds.***

“...to respond to the world’s problems with faith and faithfulness

we need to enter a safe, open space...

[a space] that listens and learns,

that responds to the stirrings of the Spirit.

And, yet, we can, and must, find that quiet space, that sacred hum

in the middle of noise and activity,

amid the hopes and fears, annoyances and delights,

injustices and dilemmas of ordinary” daily life.

“...The renewal and transformation at the heart of the Gospel

is always connected to...daily life.”

**So, let’s get into Romans, just the first 5 verses.**

**Thanks to Matt for putting the words before us.**

Listen, as I read it two more times, with silence between readings.

Listen with your heart, as much as your ears.

Listen for a word or a phrase that tugs at you,

that speaks to you, that seems to be particularly for you.

**Romans 12:1-5**

I appeal to you therefore, beloved, by the mercies of God,  
to present your bodies as a living sacrifice (a living offering),

holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds,  
so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.  
For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you  
not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think,  
but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.  
For as in one body we have many members,  
and not all the members have the same function,  
so we, who are many, are one body in Christ,  
and individually we are members one of another.

And again....

Now, if you're on Zoom and your device allows it,  
I invite you to post your word or phrase in the chat box.  
It's fine if you're repeating what someone else already said.  
That amplification is part of the process.  
I'll read some of these out loud

[READ SOME]

**"Beautiful. Thank you."**

Now, let's take a minute "of silence to ruminate your word or phrase.  
Repeat it to yourself. Let your mind go free.  
Let memories and experiences bubble up.  
Let feelings arise.  
Ask what food, what nutrition, there is for you in the text.

How is the Spirit speaking to you through this text, touching your daily life?

You'll hear a bell at the beginning and the end of the silence."

[1 minutes, bell]

**If you wish, you can type to share any reflections in the chat**

**Thank you for entering into this practice, for ruminating the living word.**

**To close, this morning** we take time to remember Ken Lynes who died in early August.

A memorial service for Ken was held yesterday by Zoom and live stream.

Some of you were able to join with Ken's nieces and family for this special time.

It was a moving service for many and reminded me how in so many ways we all were part of Ken's  
family, and the grief is real for the congregation.

Thanks to the Zach and the ULCHers for adding music,

and to Kathy Knudson and Granger Whitney for the eulogies.

**Ken lived 81 years**, and with the exception of time spent in the Navy during the Vietnam conflict, and time in school, he lived his entire life in the same house on 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave. in Southeast Como.

**Ken studied as an electrical engineer and was a master electrician.**

So much of the facilities work around church includes Ken's skill and finger prints, particularly the lighting in the sanctuary.

In our church community Ken was an active usher,

helping with Families Moving Forward and the bread oven build,

joining in the Green Team,

and savoring the companionship of the SE Como Hope Connections small group.

**These last months** were incredibly difficult for Ken.

His health declined quickly and he lost much of his strength—fighting to survive.

You all—his chosen family—were so vital through this illness, time at the care center, and then COVID.

**When members of this congregation die**, we remember how the same waters that first washed over them in baptism, hold them now in death.

In his death, like in his life, Ken is held by God.

We pray at the baptismal waters, linking ourselves to God's powerful waters of promise.

**Let us pray...**Holy God, holy and powerful, we remember before you today our brother Ken. We thank you for giving him to us to know and to love as a companion in our pilgrimage on earth. At the waters of baptism, you welcomed him into your love. At the waters, you comforted him in times of trouble and encouraged him in delight. At the waters, you now enfold him into Jesus' death and resurrection and the promise of life everlasting. Console us who mourn and bring us together to feast with all the saints of God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.