

**Christ's Reformed Church – United Church of Christ**

*~ growing people of faith who live in Jesus, love one another and bear abundant fruit ~*



*“Taste and see that the Lord is good!”*

*Psalm 34.8*

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SEPTEMBER 24, 2017

9:30 AM

THIS MORNING'S THEME: *God's Large-Hearted Goodness*

“Our [purpose] is a ministry of grace and salvation. It subjects us to great burdens and labors, dangers and temptations, with little reward or gratitude from the world. But Christ himself will be our reward if we labor faithfully.” – Martin Luther

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WELCOME

PRELUDE

~ GATHERING IN GOD'S PRESENCE! ~

CALL TO WORSHIP

Whether we embrace God's call in our lives or try to avoid it,

**God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

Whether we are long-timers or latecomers in the life of faith,

**God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

Whether our lives in Christ are comfortable or bring hardship,

**God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

**We praise God's name forever and ever!**

\* HYMN

*Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty*

Red 8

OPENING PRAYER

Generous God, you come to us again and again, no matter how late it is in the day or in our lives.

**Calling to us, gathering us in, you give us your good work to do, daily bread, and boundless grace.**

Increase in us a generous spirit so that we may do your work with joy alongside others whom you also love, even if we find them unlovely.

**Align us with your ways and help us receive your gift of justice and mercy as good news, and then pass it on. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

BELL ANTHEM

*Chant to the Great Spirit*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Because we do not always live our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, we confess before God and one another our sins and shortcomings. In repentance, let us turn toward God's grace and mercy:

**God of abundant goodness, we confess that we want your grace for ourselves or for those like us, but not for those "others." We often judge their faults while ignoring our faults.**

~ Silence ~

**Forgive us, we pray, when we are petty even in the presence of your generosity. Forgive us, we pray, when we feel that you've been gracious to those who don't deserve it. So, once again we ask for your mercy. Will you help us to be more merciful toward one another? We pray in the name of Christ Jesus, by whose grace we are saved. Amen.**

O Holy and loving God...

**holy and mighty, holy immortal One, have mercy on us.**

#### WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

God extends to us mercy beyond our deserving, grace beyond our ability to earn it.

**God has granted us the privilege of being saved by the goodness of Christ; therefore we will live as grateful and forgiven people full of your goodness! Thanks be to God!**

#### RESPONSE

*Spirit of the Living God*

Black 283

#### THE LAW

~ Proverbs 3:5-6

As God's forgiven people, how are we to live? Hear now the Word of God:

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.**

~ LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD ~

#### PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Gracious God, your Word surprises, challenges, upsets, and overturns our way of seeing and thinking.

**Come and find us today wherever we are, however we are. By the power of your Holy Spirit, cause to see as you see, and thereby glimpse the kingdom you are bringing. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

#### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Philippians 1:21-30 (NLT)

<sup>21</sup> For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.<sup>22</sup> But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. <sup>23</sup> I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.

<sup>24</sup> But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

<sup>25</sup> Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. <sup>26</sup> And when I come to you again, you will have even more

reason to take pride in Christ Jesus because of what he is doing through me.

<sup>27</sup> Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. <sup>28</sup> Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. <sup>29</sup> For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. <sup>30</sup> We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

Matthew 20:1-16 (NLT)

<sup>1</sup> "For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.

<sup>3</sup> "At nine o'clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing.

<sup>4</sup> So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. <sup>5</sup> So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o'clock he did the same thing.

<sup>6</sup> "At five o'clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, 'Why haven't you been working today?'

<sup>7</sup> "They replied, 'Because no one hired us.' "The landowner told them, 'Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.'

<sup>8</sup> "That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. <sup>9</sup> When those hired at five o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage. <sup>10</sup> When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day's wage. <sup>11</sup> When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, <sup>12</sup> 'Those people

worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.'

<sup>13</sup> "He answered one of them, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? <sup>14</sup> Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. <sup>15</sup> Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?'

<sup>16</sup> "So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last."

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

TIME ON THE STEPS

Pastor Gregg

\* HYMN

*Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult*

Red 207

SERMON

*Saying Yes to: Generous Goodness*

Pastor Gregg

~ RESPONDING AS GOD'S PEOPLE ~

DEDICATION OF PRAYER SHAWLS

PASTORAL PRAYER, PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (DEBTS)

RESPONSE

*Hear Our Prayer, O God*

Black 769

GIVING OUR GIFTS TO GOD

Whether we have much or only a little, we can share our daily bread so that all will be fed. As we have received, so now we give, in the vineyard of the Lord, our tithes and offerings.

OFFERTORY

\* RESPONSE

*The Doxology*

\* PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of the harvest, we are privileged to be counted among those whom you have called, graced to have been given your work to do, blessed to receive more than we will ever earn.

**Accept, we pray, our thanksgivings and offerings, and do what you choose with what already belongs to you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

~ GOING IN GOD'S NAME ~

\* CLOSING HYMN            *God of the Ages, Who with Sure Command*            Black 592

\* SENDING AND BLESSING

Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ: Go out this day practicing God's generous goodness towards others, and rejoicing in their well-being.  
May the generous grace of Christ attend you, the astounding love of God find you, and the surprising movement of the Holy Spirit guide you, everywhere and always. **Amen!**

\* CLOSING SONG                            *Shalom to You*                            ~ See Insert

POSTLUDE