

GATHERING

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

One: We stand before the Lord this day,
the Lord of the burning bush and the cloud upon the mountain.

All: To God be praise and glory! This is the Lord of our lives.

One: We acknowledge the risen Christ – our Savior and Redeemer –
the Master recognized in the breaking of bread and amid the dust of the Emmaus road.

All: To Christ be praise and glory! This is the Savior who makes all things new.

One: We acknowledge the Holy Spirit who enables us,
seen in the descending dove, heard in the rushing wind and tongues of fire.

All: To the Holy Spirit be all praise and glory! This is the One who empowers us.

One: Even now, in this time, in this place,

All: We have seen signs of God's greatness.

One: Come, let us sing our praise as we worship our Lord!

Gathering Song: Gather Us In

Here in this place, ... new light is stream-ing, now is the dark - ness
Here we re-ceive new life in the wa - ters; here we re-ceive the
Not in the dark of build-ings con - fin - ing, not in some heav en,
4 van-ished a - way. See in this space our fears and our dream-ings,
bread of new birth; here you shall call your sons and your daugh ters,
light years a way, here in this place the new light is shin ing;
7 brought here to you in the light of this day. Gath-er us in, the
call us a new to be salt for the earth. Give us to drink the
11 now is God pres ent, and now is the day. Gath er us in and
lost and for - sak - en; gath-er us in; the blind and the lame;
wine of com pas sion; give us to eat the bread that is you;
hold us for ev er; gath er us in and make us your own;
14 Call to us now, and we shall a - wak-en; we shall a - rise at the
nour ish us well, and teach us to fash ion lives that are ho ly and
gath er us in, all peo ples to geth er, fire of love in our
17 sound of our name.
hearts that are true.
flesh and our bone.

PRAISING

Prayer of Adoration

To You, O God, we lift up our souls.
To You we offer our praise and prayer,
our worship and thanksgiving, even our very lives.

Make Your ways known to us.
Show us the path on which we should walk.
Lead us in Your truth and teach us.
For You alone are the God who saves, the God in whom we trust;
and the One on whom we wait. Amen.

How Firm a Foundation

How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

“Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed, for I am your God, and I will give you aid;
I’ll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
upheld by my gracious, omnipotent hand.

“When through the deep waters I call you to go, the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with you, your troubles to bless, and sanctify to you your deepest distress.

“When through fiery trials, your pathway shall lie, my grace all-sufficient shall be your supply.
The flame shall not hurt you, I only design your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.

“The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose, I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake!”
John Rippon**

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone, my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease.
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.
For every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

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’ll stand!
Keith Getty and Stuart Townend**

BELONGING

Kids on the Steps

Prayer of Confession

Jesus said, “those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.” Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, we admit before God and one another our faults and failings. Let us pray, first in silence.

God of love, you come to us in the person of Jesus Christ,
who embodied humility for our sake.
We confess that we have chosen pride rather than humility.
We have tried to take advantage of our position and abilities,
rather than offering them up for the sake of others.
We have not listened to your Word made flesh.

Forgive us.

Teach us to give glory to you alone,
to humbly serve each other,
and to follow as disciples of Jesus Christ,
our risen Lord.
Amen.

Song: Rock of Ages

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.
Let the water and the blood, from Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure.

Not the labors of my hands can fulfill Thy law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling.
Naked, come to Thee for dress; helpless, look to Thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown, see Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.
Augustus Montague Toplady and Thomas Hastings**

Assurance of Forgiveness

One: The grace of God is always doing a new thing —
whether we are prepared, or worthy, or not.
Let yourself live and believe this good news:

All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

FORMING

Sermon: 1 Corinthians 8

Resurrection for the Real Life: *Love Over Liberty*

Dan Cravy

-Several years ago, in the middle of our Covid crisis, a friend of a mentor of mine posted a short Bible passage on Facebook. It was from this obscure and one-might-think irrelevant chapter of 1 Corinthians – which will be part of our text for today. Two verses from 1 Corinthians went viral. Quite unexpectedly. Can you imagine what they were?

I realized this week that since I was a young man the passage he posted has been really crucial for my own walk of faith. Really central to how I navigate the world as a follower of Christ. But since I've been a pastor, I've never opened it in worship. And I wonder if it might become a chief reference point for you, too.

Here's the question at the heart of the controversy in Corinth Paul is addressing: *Should a faithful Christian eat meat that has been sacrificed to the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses?* I'm sure you can just imagine scores of social media posts and real-life applications coming from Paul's answer to this riveting question.

Should a follower of Christ who longs to be faithful eat meat that has been sacrificed to the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses?

Imagine the lay of the land in Corinth. I'm going to paraphrase Eugene Peterson's teaching. In Corinth (as in other Greek cities) *all* animals were butchered sacrificially. Meaning that this was the unexamined culture. When people took their animals to market and sold them, the butcher spilled their blood as an offering to Zeus, Aphrodite or Hermes. And there were ritual incantations that dedicated the meat to a god or goddess. It was kind of a perfunctory official religion. Little statues of the gods watched on. In truth, it probably didn't mean too much to people.

But followers of the risen Christ had to ask the question. If I eat this meat, am I bowing to false gods? Am I somehow endorsing the superstitions of Greco-Roman mythology? What should I do?

One Christian answer was: Hey - these gods are illusions. Of course we can eat the meat! In Christ we've been set free. Even the butchers, if pressed, probably consider it all nonsense. We can't get spiritually contaminated by what we eat. Peterson would have us note that this answer, sincere as it was about Christian freedom, also came with superiority – with patronizing sarcasm and impatience toward Christians who thought otherwise. The less knowledgeable. The less mature. Those who don't yet get it.

Which made the Church – the Body of Christ - feel less free. At least for the sisters and brothers with hesitations about eating 'idol meat.' They themselves felt unsure, even guilty to keep consuming idol meat – whether from a sense of unfaithfulness to Jesus, or from a sense of unfaithfulness about what it communicated to pagan friends. (They might have also wanted to suggest how convenient it was for their 'mature' Christian counterparts that freely eating meat meant not having to swim against the stream of the prevailing culture.) But those with hesitations about eating felt inferior – were *made* to feel inferior – by those who were certain that it was their liberty, their *right*, to eat. They were being criticized for not having quite grown to full knowledge and maturity. They were embarrassed about voicing their objections and insulted by condescension.

So should a follower of Christ eat meat that's been sacrificed to the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses? (We might ask: Should a follower of Christ drink alcohol at parties? Or: Should a follower of Christ get a Covid vaccination?)

Steve Lympus shared with us last week how Paul's first letter to the Corinthians gets at viewing all of life - not just life in religious spaces, but *all* of life - through the lens of the gospel.

Listen, then, to how the Apostle Paul answers the question. This is from 1 Cor 8.1-13. It's Eugene Peterson's *Message* translation.

8¹⁻³ The question keeps coming up regarding meat that has been offered up to an idol: Should you attend meals where such meat is served, or not? We sometimes tend to think we know all we need to know to answer these kinds of questions— *but* sometimes our humble hearts can help us more than our proud minds. We never really know enough until we recognize that God alone knows it all.

4-6 Some people say, quite rightly, that idols have no actual existence, that there's nothing to them, that there is no God other than our one God, that no matter how many of these so-called gods are named and worshiped they still don't add up to anything but a tall story. They say—again, quite rightly—that there is only one God the Father, that everything comes from him, and that he wants us to live for him. Also, they say that there is only one Master—Jesus the Messiah—and that everything is for his sake, including us. Yes. It's true.

7 In strict logic, then, nothing happened to the meat when it was offered up to an idol. It's just like any other meat. I know that, and you know that. But knowing isn't everything. If it becomes everything, some people end up as know-it-alls who treat others as know-nothings. Real knowledge isn't that insensitive.

We need to be sensitive to the fact that we're not all at the same level of understanding in this. Some of you have spent your entire lives eating "idol meat," and are sure that there's something bad in the meat that then becomes something bad inside of you. An imagination and conscience shaped under those conditions isn't going to change overnight.

8-9 But fortunately God doesn't grade us on our diet. We're neither commended when we clean our plate nor reprimanded when we just can't stomach it. But God *does* care when you use your freedom carelessly in a way that leads a fellow believer still vulnerable to those old associations to be thrown off track.

10 For instance, say you flaunt your freedom by going to a banquet thrown in honor of idols, where the main course is meat sacrificed to idols. Isn't there great danger if someone still struggling over this issue, someone who looks up to you as knowledgeable and mature, sees you go into that banquet? The danger is that he will become terribly confused—maybe even to the point of getting mixed up himself in what his conscience tells him is wrong.

11-13 Christ gave up his life for that person. Wouldn't you at least be willing to give up going to dinner for him—because, as you say, it doesn't really make any difference? But it *does* make a difference if you hurt your friend terribly, risking his eternal ruin! When you hurt your friend, you hurt Christ. A free meal here and there isn't worth it at the cost of even one of these "weak ones." So, never go to these idol-tainted meals if there's any chance it will trip up one of your brothers or sisters.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.** Let's pray. [...]

-OK. So so what does Paul say? How does he respond?

He suggests that how we handle even our liberty *matters* because of the gospel. He suggests that we *practice viewing all of life through the lens of the gospel*.

Remarkably, the life of faith - it's not just about getting our thinking, speaking and acting *right*. Not just about knowing what's right. (Did you notice Paul actually *agrees* that those more certain are technically right. That followers of Christ are *indeed* free in whether they eat or don't eat the meat!) Still. It's not enough to know something. Not enough to get it right. The danger that seems to come with being right – and perhaps even more-so among those who achieve religious certainty - is coming to demand our rights. 'Christ gave up his life for that person,' says Paul. 'Wouldn't you at least be willing to give up going to dinner for him.'

So here are the verses from Paul's letter to Corinth (Chapter 10.23-24) that went viral on Facebook during Covid:

*"I have the right to do anything," you say
—but not everything is beneficial.
"I have the right to do anything"
—but not everything builds up.
No one should seek their own good,
but the good of others.*

Even though it may be just fine morally to eat meat, it may not be fine ethically. Because something that may cause no offense to God may still cause your sister or brother to stumble in their faith. Even though it may be right by God, it may not be beneficial; it may not build up. And so, even though it may be right by God, it may not be right by God. Do you follow me?

-When I was an upperclassman in college, I helped to lead a freshman Bible Study. It must have been one of our first nights together when a couple of the freshmen guys found out I was a member of a fraternity. And hesitantly, but with more confidence than was comfortable to me, they let me know that if they were to see me out at a fraternity party on campus drinking beer they would (quote) 'lose all respect for me.'

In my memory I can actually see the lighting of the room at that moment. I think I must have been nearly 21 if not there already. I was from West Texas, the land of the cowboys. I had worked in Washington DC for a year before even coming to college. I felt like I was a responsible guy. I styled myself a sincere and somewhat passionate follower of Christ. And I was really joyful about the freedom I had found in Jesus from fussy, rule-bound religion. And here were these guys – frankly a little new to the terrain of college – who were telling me point blank that if they were to see me out and about, I would become a stumbling block to their faith. That I would transgress 1 Corinthians, chapter 8. Which, yes, I had been taught to hold central in considering my ethics; which, yes, sprang to mind.

The standard for our conduct is not only liberty but love. And the standard for love is whether our thinking, speaking, and acting build other people up. Especially the Body of Christ.

- Wow! It's hard enough to restrain myself from things that are outright wrong. But now we're talking about restraining ourselves from things that are not necessarily morally unobjectionable. Things that may simply mislead or injure others in their journey of faith. Love has restraint at its core.

Where does the rubber meet the road for you in these verses? What practical situations do they speak to?

How should a follower of Christ consider what they consume?
How should a follower of Christ steward relationships and sexuality?
How should a follower of Christ handle their money?
How should a follower of Christ vote?
How should a follower of Christ dress?
How should a follower of Christ parent or grandparent or
How should a follower of Christ think participate in politics and public policy?
How should a follower of Christ think about gambling?
How should a follower of Christ think about aging and end-of-life care?

-Consider the call to generosity, maturity, and wisdom in these verses:

*"I have the right to do anything," you say
—but not everything is beneficial.
"I have the right to do anything"
—but not everything builds up.*

No one should seek their own good,
but the good of others.

Says Eugene Peterson: 'The church isn't a place where we know all the right answers and insist that others do, too. If we focus only on getting right answers in church, we become stuffy and arrogant and look down on the people who don't have it straight yet. We're in the love business, not the knowledge business.'

Now, just to be plain, here's what I suspect made these words go viral. I imagine tons of people being really grateful that someone was finally calling out 'all those other people' on seeking their own good, on not seeking what was beneficial for others.

But that's not the point, of course. Not those other people. What would a world look like – what would a *church* look like, what would a neighborhood look like, what would a family look like, where we heard these verses to us ourselves?

What if this obscure meat-sacrificed-to-idols passage became a centering point for Christian ethics? Even if we followers of Christ came to different conclusions about meat and vaccines and money and sex – and we would; we most certainly would and do – still *wouldn't the world so touched by such care for the conscience of others* be a better place?

Viewing all things through the lens of the gospel means we are in the love business, not the knowledge business. Viewing all things through the gospel sends you and me to do what is *beneficial*, sends you and me to *build up*. 'Build up.' I see those who are struggling to find their way given direction. Those dispirited given hope. Those who are weak offered dignity. Those who are ashamed covered in mercy. Those who are broken down lifted to security and strength. Those who are uncertain or confused given freedom to work out their faith in grace.

-What do you hear the Lord saying to you...?

Listen for Jesus now. And speak to him in the quiet of your heart....

Song of Response: Speak, O Lord



Speak, O Lord, as we come to You to re - ceive the food of Your
Teach us, Lord, full o - be - di - ence, ho - ly rev - er - ence, true hu -
Speak, O Lord, and re - new our minds; help us grasp the heights of Your



ho - ly word. Take Your truth, plant it deep in us; shape and
mil - i - ty. Test our thoughts and our at - ti - tudes in the
plans for us. Truths un - changed from the dawn of time, that will



fash - ion us in Your like - ness, that the
ra - di - ance of Your pu - ri - ty. Cause our
e - cho down through e - ter - ni - ty. And by



light of Christ might be seen to-day in our acts of love and our
faith to rise, cause our eyes to see Your ma - jes - tic love and au -
grace we'll stand on Your prom - is - es; and by faith we'll walk as You



deeds of faith. Speak, O Lord, and ful - fill in us all Your
thor - i - ty. Words of pow'r that can nev - er fail; let their
walk with us. Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built and the



pur - pos - es, for Your glo - ry.
truth pre - vail o - ver un - be - lief.
earth is filled with Your glo - ry.

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend**

STEWARDING

Invitation to Offering

Our gifts this morning are one way we lean into the belief that following Christ means living with others in mind. When we give of ourselves - our time, our energy, our resources, our gifts – we live out our desire to seek the advantage of others, not ourselves. So let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

Musical Offering: Fantasy on All Creatures of Our God and King

Arr. Sandra Eithun

Prayers of the People

One: Please reveal Your compassion.

All: Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

God of all things seen and unseen, if you had insulated yourself from the pain of the world, then your name could not be love and our condition would be without hope. Thank You for being so personally involved, for revealing Your complete commitment in Jesus of Nazareth. Through Him we pray with hope, in Him we pray with love.

Let Your healing love be known this day by all who suffer ailment of body, or distress of mind, or agony of spirit.

Please reveal Your compassion.

Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

Let Your intimate love be known today by all who feel forgotten or lost, and all who are walking in the dark valley of despair.

Please reveal Your compassion.

Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

Let Your fierce love this day redress the wrongs of all who suffer exploitation, injustice, abuse, neglect, violence, or unwarranted imprisonment.

Please reveal Your compassion.

Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

Let Your nurturing love today encourage those who are gathering resolve to make tough decisions, take on new responsibilities, or break free from some bondage.

Please reveal Your compassion.

Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

Let Your relentless love this day upset congregations that have become self-centered or even contemptuous of other churches.

Please reveal Your compassion.

Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

Let Your reconciling love this day gather together the separated Christians, and make them aware of the fellowship and mission of the one, universal body of Christ.

Please reveal Your compassion.

Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

Let Your inspiring love this day rejuvenate pastors, priests, and prophets who have become weary to the very roots of their souls.

Please reveal Your compassion.

Loving God, bring wholeness to all.

Thank You for hearing us, most loving God. With the whole body of believers in time and eternity, we want to love, praise, and serve You, today and evermore. Through Jesus Christ Your true son, who taught us to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

**Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

SENDING

Sending Song: May the Peace of God

May the peace of God our heavenly Father, and the grace of Christ the risen Son,
and the fellowship of God the Spirit keep our hearts and minds within His love.

*Refrain: And to Him be praise for His glorious reign.
From the depths of earth to the heights of heav'n,
we declare the name of the Lamb once slain: Christ eternal, the King of kings!*

May this peace, which passes understanding, and this grace, which makes us what we are, and this fellowship of His communion
make us one in spirit and in heart. *Refrain*

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend**

Benediction

Leading in Worship This Morning:

Liturgist: Ron Righter
Kids on the Steps: Maddy Hill
Sermon: Dan Cravy
Musicians: Emma Thackston, Heather Flesch.
Joselyn Thomsen, Madison Spencer, Mike Forbes
Slide, Sound and Video Techs: Char Davis,
Zane Reneau and Bill Maitland

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Pastor: Dan Cravy
Worship Director: Emma Thackston
Children, Youth and Family Director: Austin Graef
Church Operations Manager: Becky Kress
Program Support Administrator: Jo Ruby
Church Secretary: Haleigh Adair
Bell Choir Director: Tomi Kent
Parish Associates: Rev. Janet Malone and Rev. Bob Schurr
Preaching Pastor, Blackfoot Church of the Potomac: Natalie Mauer

Prayer List

Ongoing Prayer Support: Victor Schlimgen, Eva Tsosie and son Chaske, Tom Tucker,
Sheryl Tegelberg, Lou Power, Kelley Nicholson, Peggy Schalk, Betty Winchell

Prayers for Health and Healing: Bob Maitland, Haleigh Adair, Carl Miller,
Annabelle Olds, John MacDonald, Pam Dubois, Janet Malone, Bob Davis, Jill Gilliam