

## GATHERING IN GOD'S WORD

Prelude

Sharing Our Lives in Prayer

Prayer Requests

Silent Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Welcome

Letting God In

*During this time, we invite you to prepare your heart and your mind for worship. We want you to be able to use this quiet time to settle your thoughts, set aside any distractions that may be troubling you, and focus your whole self on God. Open your heart, your mind, and your spirit, and let God into your life.*

*Centering Prayer: I am your child, God. Whom shall I fear?*

*As you breathe in, pray, "I am your child, God."*

*As you breathe out, pray, "Whom shall I fear?"*

\* Opening Praise (from Psalm 89):

One: We will sing of the Lord's loyal love forever.

**Many: We will proclaim God's faithfulness,**

One: With our mouths and our hearts,

**Many: With our lives and our hopes.**

One: We will sing of the Lord's unending love forever.

**Many: We will embody God's faithfulness,**

One: In all that we do and all that we say,

**Many: In all that we are and all that we seek.**

One: Bless the Lord forever!

**ALL: Bless the Lord forever!**

\* Invitation to Confession

\* Joining in Prayer (from the *Book of Common Worship*, © 2018):

**Holy and merciful God, in your presence we confess our failure to be what you created us to be. You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love. By your loving mercy, help us to live in your light and abide in your ways, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior.** (*Please take a moment for silent reflection and confession.*)

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we pray.

**Amen.**

\* God's Promise of Grace

\* The Peace of Christ

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

**Many: And also with you.**

\* Song of Peace: "Let There Be Peace on Earth"

(reprinted with permission, © Jan-Lee Music, copyright-protected alternate lyrics)

**Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.**

**Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.**

**With God our Creator, we are family.**

**Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.**

**Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.  
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.  
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.  
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.**

## HEARING GOD'S WORD

Prayer to Open Minds and Hearts

Scripture reading – Esther 1:1-21 (from the *Common English Bible*)

<sup>1</sup> This is what happened back when Ahasuerus lived, the very Ahasuerus who ruled from India to Cush—one hundred twenty-seven provinces in all. <sup>2</sup> At that time, Ahasuerus ruled the kingdom from his royal throne in the fortified part of Susa. <sup>3</sup> In the third year of his rule he hosted a feast for all his officials and courtiers. The leaders of Persia and Media attended, along with his provincial officials and officers. <sup>4</sup> He showed off the awesome riches of his kingdom and beautiful treasures as mirrors of how very great he was. The event lasted a long time—six whole months, to be exact! <sup>5</sup> After that the king held a seven-day feast for everyone in the fortified part of Susa. Whether they were important people in the town or not, they all met in the walled garden of the royal palace. <sup>6</sup> White linen curtains and purple hangings were held up by shining white and red-purple ropes tied to silver rings and marble posts. Gold and silver couches sat on a mosaic floor made of gleaming purple crystal, marble, and mother-of-pearl. <sup>7</sup> They served the drinks in cups made of gold, and each cup was different. The king made sure there was plenty of royal wine. <sup>8</sup> The rule about the drinks was "No limits!" The king had ordered everyone serving wine in the palace to offer as much as each guest wanted. <sup>9</sup> At the same time, Queen Vashti held a feast for women in King Ahasuerus' palace. <sup>10</sup> On the seventh day, when wine had put the king in high spirits, he gave an order to Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who served King Ahasuerus personally. <sup>11</sup> They were to bring Queen Vashti before him wearing the royal crown. She was gorgeous, and he wanted to show off her beauty both to the general public and to his important guests. <sup>12</sup> But Queen Vashti refused to come as the king had ordered through the eunuchs. The king was furious, his anger boiling inside. <sup>13</sup> Now, when a need arose, the king would often talk with certain very smart people about the best way to handle it. They were people who knew both the kingdom's written laws and what judges had decided about cases in the past. <sup>14</sup> The ones he talked with most often were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. They were seven very important people in Persia and Media who, as the kingdom's highest leaders, were in the king's inner circle. So the king said to them, <sup>15</sup> "According to the law, what should I do with Queen Vashti since she didn't do what King Ahasuerus ordered her through the eunuchs?" <sup>16</sup> Then Memucan spoke up in front of the king and the officials. "Queen Vashti," he said, "has done something wrong not just to the king himself. She has also done wrong to all the officials and the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. <sup>17</sup> This is the reason: News of what the queen did will reach all women, making them look down on their husbands. They will say, 'King Ahasuerus ordered servants to bring Queen Vashti before him, but she refused to come.' <sup>18</sup> This very day, the important women of Persia and Media who hear about the queen will tell the royal officials the same thing. There will be no end of put-downs and arguments. <sup>19</sup> Now, if the king wishes, let him send out a royal order and have it written into the laws of Persia and Media, laws no one can ever change. It should say that Vashti will never again come before King Ahasuerus. It should also say that the king will give her royal place to someone better than she. <sup>20</sup> When the order becomes public through the whole empire, vast as it is, all women will treat their husbands properly. The rule should touch everyone, whether from an important family or not." <sup>21</sup> The king liked the plan, as did the other men, and he did just what Memucan said.

Sermon: "Vashti: Woman of Doomed Dignity" – Rev. Lisa Johnson

Hymn #731 – Give Thanks for Those Whose Faith Is Firm  
(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Give thanks for those whose faith is firm  
When all around seems bleak;  
On God's good promise they rely,  
So while they live and when they die  
How forcefully they speak:  
The strong, who once were weak!

Give thanks for those whose hope is clear,  
Beyond mere mortal sight:  
Who seek the city God has planned,  
The true, eternal promised land,  
And steer on toward that light,  
A beacon ever bright.

Give thanks for those whose love is pure,  
A sparkling precious stone:  
They show by what they say and do  
An inward beauty, warm and true,  
For God's concerns they own:  
God's love through them is known.

Give thanks for saints of ages past  
And saints alive today:  
Though often by this world despised,  
Their hearts by God are richly prized.  
Give thanks that we may say  
We share their pilgrim way.

### RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Coming Together in Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer: **Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

Hymn #312 – Take Us As We Are, O God

(from *Glory to God*, © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press)

Take us as we are, O God,  
And claim us as your own.  
As once you chose to tell your love  
In human flesh and bone,  
So let our lives be used to make  
Your saving purpose known.

Bless us for your service, Lord;  
No power we devise  
Will ever give us strength enough  
Or make us truly wise,  
Yet by your promise we can know  
The peace your grace supplies.

Break us open to disclose  
How brokenness can heal,  
Wherever broken loaves suffice  
To give a crowd a meal  
And graves break open to release  
New life from death's dread seal.

Give us to the world you love  
As light and salt and yeast,  
That we may nourish in your name

The last, the lost, the least,  
Until at length you call us all  
To your unending feast.

Prayer of Gratitude and Blessing

*Our offering plates are located at the entrance to the sanctuary. This offering allows us to continue our outreach and mission both here in the community of Oronoco and beyond – in the greater Rochester area, in Minnesota, and even around the world. We are grateful for your willingness to join us in this mission and thank you for your generosity.*

Announcements

### **BEING SENT OUT IN GOD'S WORD**

\* Charge & Blessing

Postlude

*\* indicates please rise in body or spirit as you feel led*