



## **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Know that you are forgiven by God's great mercy, and have the grace to forgive each other, just as you have been forgiven.

### **\* GLORIA PATRI**

**Blue Hymnal #579**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

### **\* SHARE THE PEACE OF CHRIST (From your seats, please)**

Leader: Peace be with you!

**All: And also with you!**

Leader: As God's forgiven people, share the peace of Christ with each other.

## **CHILDREN'S TIME**

**Martin Luther**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l3dlhwBA34>

### **Hear the Word of God**

## **PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Wise and patient God, In the midst of distractions, help us focus on your presence with us. In the midst of confusing voices, make your Word plain. In the midst of competing desires, show us the path to follow for the sake of Jesus, our friend, teacher and guide, **Amen.**

### **FIRST READING**

**Ruth 1:1-18**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ruth%201%3A1-18&version=NIV>

### **PSALTER READING**

**Psalms 146**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+146&version=NIV>

### **CHORAL ANTHEM**

**"I Will Sing of The Mercies"**

**Choir**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgFzREi2n\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgFzREi2n_c)

### **NEW TESTAMENT READING**

**Hebrews 9: 11-14**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+9%3A+11-14&version=NIV>

### **GOSPEL READING**

**Mark 12: 28-34**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12%3A+28-34&version=NIV>

### **SERMON**

**"Love Is Not Easy, but It Is Necessary"**

**Fred Archer**

**Written by The Rev. Kathy Walker**

There are times in life when directions are given that seem very simple. For instance, if you are driving a car, in almost every state in the union, you are required to put on your directional signal to indicate that you are turning a corner. If you want to interrupt a conversation, you should say, "Excuse me." You tell your kids to put away their toys when they are finished

playing. That way they will know where they are the next time they want them. These instructions seem very easy to follow and yet they are constantly violated.

The commandments by which early members of the Jewish community lived were directions from God handed down to Moses about how to live in the world and in community. Jewish leaders added hundreds of more rules that stated the beliefs of the followers of God.

When Jesus was asked by members of his contemporary community, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus redirects part of his answer to the words contained in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He says, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." And then Jesus adds the second instruction: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." That was a very straightforward and familiar statement.

Presumably, this was a part of the daily practice of those who were listening to Jesus. Many members of the Jewish community prayed a daily prayer called the Shema, which incorporates the first statement that Jesus quoted to them. That tradition continues to this day.

Like the first illustrative directions offered at the beginning of this text, the commandment that Jesus gives to the scribe seems pretty simple. He tells him that the most important rule is that they must love God above all things and with every fiber of their beings. While the scribes and the Sadducees may have been somewhat skeptical about the true identity of Jesus, they had been formed by God's teachings and requirements for a holy life. Still, they were still struggling with these ideals.

As contemporary faith followers, the struggle to live fully into these commandments is apparent throughout our society. If loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind were easy, there would be no room for doubt when difficulties would arise. Yet, there are times for many when doubts arise – especially when prayers are not answered as quickly as one would want or in the way one would hope. When loved ones die unexpectedly, many will express a crisis of faith. "If there is a God," people will say, "why did God allow this to happen to me?" Why did God allow me to lose my job? Why did God allow my marriage to fall apart? Why is my best friend addicted to drugs? It is not uncommon for regular churchgoers to question the existence of God at very challenging points in life. There have been many books written about this subject. Some of you may have read *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Harold S. Kushner.

Trust is a main source of love. Jesus reminds us that when God is fully trusted, there cannot be any room for second-guessing. When there seems to be no explanation for occurrences in life, those are the moments to let your faith sustain you and lean on God for support and strength, instead of turning away from God.

There is more to this assignment than loving God with all your being. Jesus takes it a step further and says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." In the Gospel of Mark, the scribe agrees with Jesus and understands the requirements. But take a look at the discussion Jesus had with the Pharisees in the account from Luke about the greatest commandment. When Jesus says to them, "Love your neighbor," they immediately push back by asking, "Who is my neighbor?" This

is where things seem to get a little tricky. Jesus demonstrates the answer with the parable of the Good Samaritan. He tells the story of the man who was robbed, injured, and left in the road for dead. A priest saw the incapacitated man and walked right past him. And A Levite encountered him and actually crossed the street away from him. It was the Samaritan, the unlikeliest person of all, who stopped, offered aid, and even got him to a place where someone could care for him. Jesus' admonition to the Pharisees was that love for your neighbor is wrapped tightly in care, compassion, and mercy.

The Covid pandemic has created great tension in the United States. It has literally pitted geographical neighbor against neighbor and relatives against each other. There are thousands of news accounts of people fighting in restaurants and in other public spaces and even on airplanes over mask-wearing and vaccinations. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? What would Jesus say at this moment? Perhaps being less judgmental about us versus them is a place to begin. Instead of physical altercations, what would it look like to embrace your neighbor so that a dialogue could commence instead of accusation? If we follow the lesson of the Good Samaritan, how are we caring for our ill neighbors and where are we being led to help one another? Christians are called to do all that we can to love everyone, not just those who agree with us. Love means striving for unity and moving towards becoming Beloved Community.

The same holds true for many of the controversies of the world today. Think of the great conversational shift that could occur if love took the lead. Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has written a wonderful book called *Love Is the Way*. Bishop Curry has said consistently, "If it's not about love, then it's not about God." There is no compromise on this commandment. You cannot love God and hate your neighbor.

When we love God completely, we are bound to find ways to answer the call to love our neighbors also. We will be accepting of people who look different from us and those whose lifestyles are not the same? Resistance to courageous conversations that could lead to greater understanding of differing opinions prevents us from loving each other in the ways God describes.

More importantly, there is liberation in a willingness to trust God enough to believe that neighbors are the same as we are. They have the same dreams and desires to love the Lord and to follow God as faithful disciples. They, too, have picked up their crosses and have made the commitment to follow Jesus. What greater love is there? The Good News from Jesus is that this kind of love is achievable. It is possible to love others so much that polarization ends, and healing begins.

Undoubtedly, the directions given by Jesus are not so easy after all. Loving God and each other is worth it, people of God. The next time you are asked, "Who is my neighbor?" feel free to use a quote that has been turned into an Episcopal meme:

*Love Thy Neighbor*

Thy homeless neighbor

Thy Muslim neighbor

Thy Black neighbor  
The White neighbor  
Thy gay neighbor  
Thy immigrant neighbor  
Thy Jewish neighbor  
Thy Christian neighbor  
Thy atheist neighbor  
Thy disabled neighbor  
Thy addicted neighbor  
Amen.

\* **HYMN**

**"O Word of God Incarnate"**

**Blue Hymnal #327**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rgPoEprlUI>

**Respond in Love and Service**

\* **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Leader: Let us declare our faith in God.

We believe in God who was before all things, maker of all things, source of all life. We were made in God's image for vital work in this world – to do justice, to speak truth, to live in love. But we recognize that God's image also blossoms in our lighter side when we are curious, playful, laughing. God has given us the gift of humor to laugh at ourselves, to unmask the weaknesses of sin, and to turn back to the arms of love. In Christ Jesus, God came and walked among us, teaching us to embrace the weightier matters with a light touch. Though we sinned and rejected him, he still chose to die for us. The forces of evil grasped to contain him, but he arose, laughing, breaking all the bounds of sin and death. As we follow him, we laugh with him, following the true light that cannot be conquered. We believe in the Holy Spirit who teaches us to smile, to bear with difficulty, and to endure from now until the joyful resolution of all creation. We look forward to the coming kingdom of heaven where laughter and love resound in every home and every heart. *Amen.*

### **PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS**

On this Sunday, we give thanks for the lives of saints throughout the centuries who have shown in many ways what it costs to follow Jesus. Our offering is one way in which we share in the costs of serving him in this generation. May the example of others, who shared their faith in Christ so that we may believe, inspire our generosity today.

Please, continue to support the life and work of Crestholme. You can mail your tithes, pledges, and offerings to...

CPC  
PO Box 23919.  
SA TX 78223-0901

Or you can save them and gather them until we meet again. Thank you!  
Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.

**\* DOXOLOGY**

**Blue Hymnal #592**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyg6-htOtHU>

**\* PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God of all generations, past, present and future, we offer our gifts in gratitude for the inheritance of faithfulness we have received as followers of Jesus. Bless these gifts so that today's ministries may flourish and provide an inheritance for those who come after us, as you guide them into a future only you can see. *Amen.*

**\* HYMN FOR OUR NATION**

**"Heal Our Land"**

**Red Hymnal #800**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTm\\_rA54EGw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTm_rA54EGw)

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Enduring God,

On this Reformation Sunday, we thank you today for your faithfulness to us and to the tradition that has shaped us as disciples of Jesus  
Thank you for your living Word which continues to reveal him,  
and for the gift of your Spirit to help us interpret your wisdom  
in the midst of challenging times.

God of guidance,

**Speak into our lives today.**

Eternal God,

On this Sunday marking the faithfulness of all your saints,  
we give you thanks for people in our lives and across the ages  
who have shown us your loving kindness through their witness to Christ  
in so many different situations.

Inspire us by their examples and show us how we, too, can live out our faith  
in the midst of challenging times.

God of guidance,

**Speak into our lives today.**

Loving God,

You keep calling us to care for those in need and show hospitality to strangers in our midst.  
Thank you for your persistent love which continues to comfort and challenge us all.

Open our hearts and eyes so that we can see how to offer that love to others  
in the midst of challenging times.

God of guidance,

**Speak into our lives today.**

Living God,

You bring new life to the discouraged and those facing danger and death.  
Thank you for signs of hope which break into pressures of the pandemic

and its consequences for so many,  
in the midst of challenging times.  
God of guidance,

**Speak into our lives today.**

Creating God,  
we praise you for the beauty of this world and the rhythms of nature which sustain us.  
Give us courage to act on behalf of your creation where it is stressed or broken,  
and nurture our commitment to act as your stewards within creation  
in the midst of challenging times.  
God of guidance,

**Speak into our lives today.**

Wise God,  
hear us in this time of silence as lay before you the people and places on our hearts this day:  
*(Keep a time of silence for 15–30 seconds.)*

Now we join our voices with the followers of Jesus in every time and place in the words he taught us all:

**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 debts,  
as we forgive those our debtors,  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.**

**\* CLOSING HYMN**

**"How Firm a Foundation"**

**Blue Hymnal #361**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwGW8qRqz4I>

**\* BENEDICTION**

The Spirit of God inspires...  
listen!  
The Spirit of God transforms...  
grow!  
The Spirit of God empowers...  
go...and be...and do!

And may you...  
those you encounter...  
and those who are touched beyond that encounter...  
discover and know the grace, love, and peace of God  
each and every day.  
Amen.

**The End of Today's Worship Service – The Beginning of Service**

**Announcements**

Welcome to worship with us this morning! We're glad that you're here! If you do not have a church home, we invite you to become a part of our compassionate church family... ask Carlos, Larry or an Elder about meaningful participation and membership!

Next Sunday Dr. Carlos Baladez will lead the service.

**See Calendar Below**



## Weekly Calendar

|        |          |                 |
|--------|----------|-----------------|
| TBD    | TBD      | Food Pantry     |
| TBD    | TBD      | Clothes Closet  |
| Sunday | 10:00 AM | Sunday School   |
| Sunday | 11:00 Am | Worship Service |

Holy Communion is observed the First Sunday of each month.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Crestholme Presbyterian Church Officers

### Session

|                      |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Class of 2021</u> | <u>Class of 2022</u> | <u>Class of 2023</u> |
| Cathie Owen          | Irene Thomas         | Katie Lamb           |
| Netsy Williamson     | Steve Tovar          |                      |

Clerk of the Session: Dick Crist  
Church Treasurer: Fred Archer

### Trustees

|                      |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <u>Class of 2021</u> | <u>Class of 2022</u> | <u>Class of 2023</u> |
| Penny Christoff      | Fred Archer          | Tommy Rudwick        |

\*\*\*\*\*

## Crestholme Presbyterian Church Staff

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Stated Supply Minister  | Vacant  |
| Pulpit Supply Preachers | Dr. Carlos Baladez<br>CP, Larry Sears<br>Elder, Fred Archer |
| Choir Director          | Robin Bernhard  |
| Organist                | Cathie Owen   |
| Secretary/Coordinator   | Vacant  |

\*\*\*\*\*

Membership in the Presbyterian Church is open to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Every member and officer will be more than happy to visit with you about salvation by faith in Jesus and membership at Crestholme.

\*\*\*\*\*

Telephone: 210-333-1301

FAX: 210-333-1301

Email: [crestholmepec@satx.rr.com](mailto:crestholmepec@satx.rr.com)

Web Site: [www.crestholmepec.com](http://www.crestholmepec.com)