

In A Perfect World

Congregational responses are in **bold**.

Collect: Say- please join me in an attitude of prayer.

God calls us to a ministry of love.

Beloved, let us love one another.

We are called to love our parents and our children,
our friends and our neighbors.

Love is from God.

We are called to love the neighbor that hurt our feelings,
the parent who was cruel,
and the co-worker who is selfish.

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

We are called to love even the people we cannot see...

in Chicago's tenements

in Bosnia's war

in South Africa's election.

Those who love God must love their sisters and brothers also.

May we accept God's call to this mysterious ministry. Amen.

Prelude:

Call to worship: Say- please join me in the call to worship.

Leader: Jesus offers a new – old commandment, that we should love each other.

All: **With the incredible power and the unfathomable depth of God's love for us, we can, we must love one another.**

Leader: And it is in this our love for one another that the world will know whom and what we worship.

All: **Come, children of God, let us love one another.**

Hymn: Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Call to confession:

The world teaches us many ways to love, but all are based on selfish desires and needs.

God teaches us how to love: completely, uniquely, and unconditionally.

Let us confess our difficulty in loving the way that God calls us to.

Please join me in the Prayer of Confession:

We are hesitant to confess, Holy God, how hard it is to love as you wish. It is easy to love you with all that we are, except when you ask us to love our neighbor with all that we have. We find it hard to love our neighbor, when it is linked to the way we love ourselves. And it is difficult to love anyone- even You- more than we love ourselves.

Forgive us, Holy God, as you took a risk in creating us, help us to take risks to love others compassionately, to love ourselves genuinely and to love you as completely as you love us; in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Prayer of confession:

In God's Kingdom, we are loved for who we are, not what we do;

In God's Kingdom, we are forgiven for what we do, and what we don't do;

In God's Kingdom, we are welcomed and fed by God's grace and by God's hope.

Praise the Lord!

The Lord Be Praised!

Song Response

Glory be to the Father; and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be; world without end, Amen. Amen.

Scripture reading: Excerpts from John 13

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to be with the Father.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already persuaded Judas, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so, he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

When he got to Simon Peter, he said, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

When Jesus had finished washing all of their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place at the table. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you that you should do to others as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Then Jesus said to them, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come".

"A new command I give you: Love one another, as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Anthem: The Lord is My Shepard (sung by the youth choir)

Scripture reading: 1John 4:7-21

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Message: In A Perfect World

Pastoral Prayer:

Reading: Interview With God (located at the bottom)

Offertory:

God calls us to be generous,
not when all the bills are paid,
not when we have everything we need,
not when we see our way clear.
God calls us to be generous now,
in this moment,
trusting in God who is our Provider.
And so we give freely, as we have received freely,
we love fully as we have been fully loved.

Prayer of dedication:

Gracious God, we ask that you accept the gifts of our hands
And the thankfulness of our hearts.
Hearts and hands and voices, all lifted in praise to you,
God of unending love. Amen.

Hymn: They'll Know We Are Christians

Benediction

An Interview With God

Person: I dreamt I had an interview with God.

God: Come in- so, you would like to interview Me?

Person: If you have the time.

God: My time is eternity- what questions do you have in mind?

Person: Well, what surprises you most about mankind?

God: That they get bored of being children, are in a rush to grow up, and then long to be children again.

That they lose their health to make money and then lose their money to restore their health.

That by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live neither for the present nor the future.

That they live as if they will never die, and they die as if they had never lives.

Person: God's hand took mine and we were silent for a while and then I asked – "As a parent what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?"

God: To learn that they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is to let themselves be loved.

To learn what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives, but who they have in their lives.

To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. Everyone will be judged individually on their own merits, not as a group.

To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most but is one who needs the least.

To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in the people we love, and that it takes many hours to heal them.

To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness.

To learn that there are people that love them dearly, but simply do not know how to show them.

To learn that money can buy everything but happiness.

To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it totally differently.

To learn that a true friend is someone who knows everything about them-and likes them anyway.

To learn that it is not always enough that they be forgiven by others, but that they have to forgive themselves.

Person: I sat there for awhile enjoying the moment. "Thank you for your time", I said, "Is there anything else you want your children to know?"

God: I just want them to know that I am here—Always.