

Finding the Good News in the Sermon on the Mount

Third Sunday in Lent



“Sermon on the Mount” (1965) by Sadao Watanabe (Used with permission)

CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR MARCH 3, 2024
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Today is a communion Sunday. Before joining the worship service, you are invited to get whatever you eat and whatever you drink. It can be bread and grape juice or wine or as simple as a cracker or rice cake and water for use in our worship.

“Like millions of other little citizens of Christendom, I was infected with the dangerous idea that there is a double standard, the world’s and another, and that the other is higher, and all true life flows from it.”

John Updike

PRELUDE “Fugue “ Johann Pachelbel

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

*** CALL TO WORSHIP**

All who love and serve your city,

All who bear its daily stress,

Seek the Lord who is your life

[Unison]

Come, let us worship God together.

***HYMN 427 (vs. 1-3) “Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service”**

**Lord, whose love in humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
worked your mercy’s perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone, but heart;
consecrating to your purpose
every gift which you impart.**

**Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As you, Lord, in deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
by your Spirit send your power
to our world to make it whole.**

**3 As we worship, grant us vision,
till your love’s revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness
dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens
your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to ardent service,
your abundant life to share.**

***OPENING PRAYER**

Merciful God, whose care never ceases, we come to you as we are. We are tired from trying to do more than we can manage. We are anxious about problems which go unresolved. We are worried about events beyond our control. We do not easily let go.

For mistakes we cannot redeem, for tasks left undone, for uncertain goals, we need your forgiveness and ask for your understanding. For recovery of strength and enthusiasm, we pray for your Spirit. For fullness of life and generous hearts, we pray to be followers of Christ Jesus. In your mercy, restore us and lead us. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#298, vs. 1&2)

**There's a wideness in God's mercy, Like the wideness in the sea;
There's a kindness in God's justice, Which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings Have such kindly judgment given.**

**For the love of God is broader Than the measure of the mind;
And the heart of the Eternal Is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful, We would gladly trust God's Word;
And our lives reflect thanksgiving For the goodness of our Lord.**

ANTHEM "Set Me as A Seal" David Childs

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory "Andante" J. Hochstetter

*Response

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Christ, all creatures here below,
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.**

*Prayer of Dedication

(At this time, children are dismissed to attend Children's Church.)

SCRIPTURE LESSON Job 31:24-28

PSALM 16

Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you;
I have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord,
my good above all other."

**All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land,
upon those who are noble among the people.**

But those who run after other gods
shall have their troubles multiplied.

**Their libations I will not offer,
nor take the names of their gods upon my lips.**

O Lord, you are my portion and my cup;
it is you who uphold my lot.

**My boundaries enclose a pleasant land;
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.**

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
my heart teaches me, night after night.

**I have set the Lord always before me;
because you are at my right hand I shall not fall.**

My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices;
my body also shall rest in hope.

**For you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor let your holy one see the pit.**

[Unison]

**You will show me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy,
and in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Matthew 6:19-24

SERMON “Deciding from the Heart”

THE LORD’S SUPPER

INVITATION

HYMN 508 “For the Bread Which You Have Broken (vs. 1, 2, & 4)

**For the bread which you have broken,
for the wine which you have poured,
for the words which you have spoken,
now we give you thanks, O Lord.**

**By this promise that you love us,
by your gift of peace restored,
by your call to heaven above us,
hallow all our lives, O Lord.**

**In your service, Lord, defend us;
in our hearts keep watch and ward;
in the world to which you send us
let your kingdom come, O Lor.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

REMEMBERING

On the night of his arrest...

Faithful God, in this communion, with this bread and with this cup, increase our faith and hope and love. Lead us in the path of Christ who brings your word of life. Amen.

SHARING OF ELEMENTS

(Communion will be served in the pews today. Please receive the bread or cup as they are offered to you by a deacon. Hold it until all have been served, and we will eat and drink together at the pastor's guidance. We serve grape juice, not wine. Gluten-free wafers are on the trays with the bread. In the Congregational United Church of Christ, we celebrate the Lord's Supper with openness and welcome. Everyone is invited to the table, regardless of church membership or denominational affiliation.)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let this meal we share with you, O God, center us, put our minds on the things that lead to life, and give us hearts to seek your kingdom. Amen.

* HYMN 339 "Be Thou My Vision"
**Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art--
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.**

**Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure Thou art.**

**Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.**

*BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE "Toccata" J.G. Walther

Cover Art: "Sermon on the Mount" (1965) by Sadao Watanabe. Used with gracious permission from the artist's son, Tatsuo Watanabe. Sadao Watanabe (July 7, 1913 – January 8, 1996), was a Japanese printmaker, famous for his biblical prints rendered in the *mingei* (folk art) tradition of Japan. Watanabe once remarked that he preferred that his prints hang in the ordinary places of life: "I would most like to see them [his prints] hanging where people ordinarily gather, because Jesus brought the gospel for the people."

Opening Prayer from Allen Happe. Reprinted by permission of the publisher from *Touch Holiness*, ed. Ruth C. Duck and Maren C. Tirabassi, Copyright © 1990 The Pilgrim Press.

Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Children's Programs:	The Rev. Ann Molsberry
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Dr. Chris Nakielski
Children's Choir Director	Majesty Constable

Office Manager

Jenn Harden

TODAY

- ❖ Church School Breakfast
- Choir Rehearsal 9:00 am
- Christian Education 9:15 am
- Worship Service 10:15 am
- Choir Rehearsal 11:30 am

TUESDAY

- ❖ Board of Christian Education 6:30 pm
- Mission Board 7:00 pm

FRIDAY

- ❖ Church Office Closed

NEXT SUNDAY

- ❖ Choir Rehearsal 9:00 am
- No Church School
- Adult Education 9:15 am
- Worship Service 10:15 am
- Choir Rehearsal 11:30 am

WE'RE GLAD THAT YOU HAVE JOINED US FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING.

Everyone is invited to Coffee Hour in Rockwood Hall after worship.

PLEASE NOTE—The church office will close at noon this coming Friday, March 8. Thank you.

IMPORTANT DATES IN LENT AND EASTER

March 3—Third Sunday in Lent; Communion Sunday

March 24—Palm Sunday

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

March 28—Maundy Thursday

Communion and Service of Tenebrae at 7:00 p.m.

March 29—Good Friday

Worship at Noon

March 31—Easter Sunday

Sunrise Service at 7:30 a.m.; Breakfast in Rockwood Hall; Festival Easter Service at 10:15 a.m.

ADULT EDUCATION FOR LENT LOOKS AT THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: Join Bill Lovin in Rockwood Hall, Sunday mornings at 9:15 for *Sermon on the Mount: A*

Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven, using material by the New Testament scholar, Dr. Amy-Jill Levine.

CONGREGATIONAL UCC MEMBER, MEGAN CARNES, WILL BE READING FROM HER DEBUT NOVEL, *THE CELDAN HERESIES*, AT PRAIRIE LIGHTS on Wednesday, March 6, at 7:00pm. Megan's novel will be published on Wednesday, March 6. Annie Dillard says of this book: "Megan Carnes has written a work of startling imagination. Here is a world, both strange and deadly, that feels at once feudal and extremely current. Along the way, Carnes acquaints us with heretics, horse smugglers, poisoners, and church thieves. These medieval people are criminals. They are also wonderful company. Grab this book now. You won't put it down." *Kirkus* calls it: "A deeply-imagined tale of faith and revolt." And Megan says that Congregational UCC has "helped me become both faithful and revolting, in all the best ways."

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS ON SUNDAY, MARCH 10. Please remember to set your clock ahead one hour on Saturday evening, March 9, so that you get to church on time.

HOPE LODGE: Our next Hope Lodge dinner will be Monday, March 11. If you would like to participate, see the sign-up sheet in Rockwood Hall for the March dinner. If you have questions, contact Sue Dayton, cdayton7@mchsi.com

SHELTER HOUSE BOOK SALE—Event Dates: Sorting and Book Drop Off: Sunday, February 18 – Wednesday, March 20; Sale: Saturday, March 23 and Sunday, March 24 from 10:30am-4:00pm both days
Sorting Shifts are Mondays 10:00am-2:00pm, Wednesdays 10:00am-2:00pm, Saturdays 10:00am-2:00pm, Sundays 2:00pm-4:00pm

They are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help sort books, organize donations, and prepare the space for the big sale. There are more than one hundred slots that need to be filled: add your name to one today! Sign up at <https://bit.ly/booksale2024> or just show up at 860 Quarry Road in Coralville, Iowa River Landing.

John Fieselmann, Kathy Fait, and Donna Hirst are on the Steering Committee. If you have questions, please contact one of us. You are welcome to bring book donations to the church and one of us can take them to the sale site.

LOOK FOR THIS YEAR'S LENTEN DEVOTIONAL arriving daily in your In Box. Each day brings a new reflection on words from the Sermon on the Mount from a member or friend of Congregational UCC. Thanks to Patte Henderson and Bryan Clemons for coordinating this project of the Diaconate. If you are not receiving these, please contact Bill Lovin or the church office to be put on the list.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING: On Palm Sunday, March 24, we will dedicate our One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. This offering has long been an important part of the life of our congregation. For many years now, we have been on the list of Top 100 giving churches. In a world where communities are being displaced by the catastrophes of war, famine, and natural disaster, our congregation joins with many others in standing in faith, hope, and love with

those who seek to move beyond the trauma of displacement toward the promise of healing and peace. Your generous gift will support the relief work of not only the UCC but also many other denominations united in caring for refugees, in providing medical care, and in disaster recovery efforts. Let us join in this great tradition and give generously.

FLOWERS FOR EASTER BRING COLOR TO THE SANCTUARY: Each year on Easter Sunday members and friends of Congregational UCC provide flowers for the sanctuary in memory of loved ones or to honor someone. Because so many people enjoy the burst of color, our Diaconate invites you to bring any type of spring flower—lilies, yes, but also consider tulips, daffodils, crocuses, or any other spring flower. *If you would like to have the name(s) of those remembered in the Easter Sunday bulletin, please get that information to the church office (337-4301) by Tuesday, March 26.*

A NEW MEMBER CLASS will be held after Easter. If you are interested in joining Congregational UCC or would like to know more about us, we invite you to attend these sessions. For more information, please talk with Bill Lovin or call the church office, 337-4301.

PLEASE HELP WITH PARKING IN THE CHURCH LOT: Several people currently have mobility issues and need to park in our small parking lot on Jefferson St. If you are able, please park elsewhere so that the marked and unmarked spaces can be used by those who need them. Thanks.

BIG TABLE: The Center for Worker Justice invites everyone to the first Big Table of the year—March 8, 6-7 p.m. at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church. There will be great African-French cuisine from CINAC Kitchen and Jean De Rio. Sign up [HERE: Registration Form](#) or
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1LcJK5mb4Fh6D42_eCvxqCdcwm5jfrJwMK6cc4L81GXw/viwwform?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=ac459d95-51e3-497d-a3bc-49715307b8fa&edit_requested=true

ANOTHER WAY TO HELP THE HOMELESS: Trinity United Methodist Church of Riverside Iowa has purchased a loom and is using clean, plastic bags to construct Sleeping Mats for the homeless. These are lightweight, waterproof, and easy to pack and carry. By contributing our clean, plastic bags, we can help them help others. Bring your clean, unneeded, plastic grocery bags, or trash bags, any color, any size, here, to Rockwood Hall. We will see to it that they are delivered.

SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING: If you notice something in the building that needs attention—a leaky faucet, a loose railing, etc.—please let the church office (319-337-4301) know right away. Thanks.

USHERS, GREETERS, AND HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES: There are still some opportunities to greet people coming to worship, to usher, and to provide hospitality during coffee hour after worship. Please sign up on the sheets in Rockwood Hall or call the church office--319-337-4031.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING? This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship. Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.



Want to give online? Scan the QR code for our giving app.
Your giving makes a world of difference.

WE LIVE STREAM OUR WORSHIP SERVICES AT 10:15 ON SUNDAY MORNING.

You can join us online in real time at <https://vimeo.com/event/1424751>. This streaming address is the same each week.

RECORDINGS OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES are posted after worship on Sunday at <https://vimeo.com/channels/154m7852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.

RELAX HAVE FUN ENJOY LIFE LIVE IN CHRIST

On Sunday mornings during Lent, I'm leading the 9:15 adult education time, delving into sections of the Sermon on the Mount, using brief videos from the New Testament scholar Amy-Jill Levine to start our discussion. I would like to offer this study at another time as well—possibly Wednesday at noon—for those who can't make the Sunday morning sessions. If you're interested in that, please talk with me after worship.

Let us center our hearts, our minds, and our spirits. Let us worship God.

For the Choir:

Your ways are not our ways, O God. Your thoughts are not our thoughts. Help us to see

that to be low is to be high,

that the broken heart is the healed heart,

that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,

that to have nothing is to possess all,

that to give is to receive,

In so doing, may we find

your light in our darkness;

your joy in our sorrow,

your grace in our sin,

your riches in our poverty,

your life in our death.

Amen.

[At the beginning of worship—before you say anything else, before the announcements—say:]

**“God’s love and mercy are fresh every morning,
as sure as the sunrise.”**

[Welcome everyone, especially visitors, students, and those joining us online. Introduce yourself and greet the congregation in your own words. Invite people to stand and greet one another.]

Call attention to the announcements in the bulletin.

I will have a few announcements.

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus says:

“You are the salt of the earth.
You are the light of the world.”

We come to maintain that savor.

We come to rekindle that light.

[Unison]

We come to worship God.

*HYMN 454 “Blessed Jesus, at Your Word”

*OPENING PRAYER

**As this day and week begin, O God, help us to see the new things you are doing
in our lives and in the world.**

**When we are worn out by what is immediately in front of us, lift our eyes
toward the horizon, that we might see the possibility of your realm before us.
When we are held back by what we have done or failed to do, remind us of your
forgiveness and put a new spirit within us.**

**When we are unsure of where we are going, give us strength to follow in the
ways of Jesus Christ.**

Accept our prayers and our worship as you have accepted us. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#223, vs. 1)

**O my soul, bless your Redeemer;
All within me, bless God's Name;
Bless the Savior, and forget not
All God's mercies to proclaim.**

[The Psalm this morning is a hymn, so after the congregational response you may leave the chancel and sit with the congregation.]

Gracious God, we call upon you to open our eyes and hearts to your Word and your Spirit today, so that we may be able to discern your guiding voice and to seek to be your faithful servants. Stir our imaginations and help us to share your love in word and in deed. Amen.

The first lesson comes from Amos, chapter 5.

In a time of great territorial expansion and national prosperity for Israel, during which the military security and economic affluence were taken by many as signs of God's favor, Amos came on the scene preaching harsh words in a smooth season. He denounced Israel and its neighbors for reliance on military might and shallow, meaningless piety.

This book was written after Amos was expelled from the royal sanctuary at Bethel and commanded not to prophesy there again.

Here Amos reinterprets the idea of the "Day of the Lord" as a time of judgment not only against the enemies of Israel but also against Israel itself and calls the people to the way of justice.

Listen for the Word of God speaking to you.

The second lesson comes from Matthew, chapter 5.

On these Sundays in Lent, we're taking some time to listen to the teachings of Jesus commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, found in chapter 5 through 7 of the Gospel of Matthew. In this section Jesus speaks about the characteristics of those who follow him and of their witness in the world.

One of the great joys and privileges that we have as a congregation is to share our concerns and celebrations with one another, to bear one another's burdens, and in all this to show love for one another. You are invited to use the book at the entrance to the sanctuary to add to requests for prayer.

God our Creator and Redeemer and Sustainer, we stand in awe before your wondrous. We praise you for your greatness; yet even more we rejoice that you do not forget us, that you search us and know us, that you come to care for us, your new creation in Jesus Christ. Trusting in your goodness and compassion we come to you in prayer.

At times, O God, we are like strangers on this earth, taken aback by all the violence, the harsh oppositions. We pray for those who are refugees, driven from their homes by warfare, violence, or human greed. We pray for those who live among gunfire and bomb blasts. Guide the leaders of nations in ways of compassion. Like a gentle breeze, breathe upon us the Spirit of peace. Transfigure the deserts of our doubts, and prepare us to be bearers of reconciliation.

At times we despair for our country, disturbed by the animosity and contentiousness that seems to grow daily. Help us to respect neighbors whose views differ from ours, so that without partisan anger, we may work out issues that divide us and serve the common welfare.

At times we are reluctant to call ourselves "Christian," troubled by the actions of some who claim that name. We pray for your church throughout the world. May we live in the power of the resurrection. May your Spirit work within us the redemption and reconciliation of all things. Keep us in your peace.

At all times, O God, we are grateful that we can come to you with our inner thoughts, our sad discouragements, and our heartfelt dreams, and find you here to listen, to forgive, and to renew us. Hear us as we pray in the silence.

[Silent prayer]

Hear our prayers, God of grace, and help us to fulfill them, working according to your purpose, in peace, justice, and mercy, in all that we do; through Jesus Christ, who teaches us to pray together: "Our Father..." Amen.

Heaven and earth are yours, O God,
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share:
ourselves, our time, and our possessions.
Use us and what we bring before you
to feed the world with your love;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.