

Gathering Chimes

Prelude – Teresa Roorda

Welcome/ Announcements/ Time With Children

Offering of our gifts and ourselves

Offer music– Teresa Roorda

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Joys and Concerns

Time of Prayer

Lords' Prayer

“Word of God Speak” – Elevation Band

Prayer–

Lord, I agonize over what to say. I feel as though I am filled with a million things you want me to say. My heart aches for Humanity. Why do I feel so alone in a room full of people? Or how is it possible to feel so lost when I have so many plans? How did we get here? Sometimes I just feel so beat down. I see the way we muddle through life and the way we treat each other. Is it possible that we have completely lost our way? No, I can't believe that. I know that you sent your Son to teach us true Love, Grace and Forgiveness. We are supposed to be your hands and feet. Give me the strength to be just that. And the strength to encourage others to do the same.

Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

Unison Prayer

– Help me to live in the present. Allow me to be present to you as you are always present to me, each moment of each day. Allow me to be present to the gift of each moment, no matter how ordinary, so that I can be present to the joy and wonder of your loving presence, each moment of each day.

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Message—

I don't know about you, but I spend a lot of days feeling overwhelmed or consumed by emotions that I don't always care for. Where has this come from? Why have we reached this place of complete overload? And now, so many times it's filled with sadness, anger or hatred. I am sure there are plenty of reasons for the pressure we feel today. But I think we can boil it down to one simple statement. The connection is lost. And I definitely don't mean the Wifi connection! How many days do you sit back and go through the motions, only thinking about the next thing you have to do? We don't live in any single moment anymore. I remember when I was heading into College, people talked about the ability to multi task and how important it was if you wanted to be successful... and I do think it's important. But somehow we have gone to the opposite extreme! Our lives have become like a computer with too many windows open! We are always looking at what else in the task bar, or running in the background. Or if you don't work much with computers... think of a pinball machine with too many balls bouncing around as you frantically try to keep them all in play. I believe there are many reasons for this. There's just too much stuff... society tells us we are supposed to want all the best "stuff" the bigger house, the newer car, the best toys on the market. It even tells us that we need to look a certain way and associate with just the right kind of people! But what happens when we try to obtain all the best stuff and always look at what's next? We run out of time. As Dolly Parton put it "Don't get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life." And you know what else happens when we only look to what's next? We are always in competition... If you are never really content, and never really living in the moment, you are always in competition. Either with the person who has the job you want, the stuff you want, or maybe even yourself. In competition with yourself to have more stuff, feel better about something, or have better status. How can we really live in the moment, supporting and loving one another if we are always competing? The scripture Doyle just read for us speaks to this concept. "Love does not envy or boast, it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way;" Life isn't a race... is it? Striving to be better is not a bad thing, but what would happen if you paused and closed some of those windows for a while and just spent some time being content? What would happen if you removed a few balls from the pinball machine? How would it feel to not think about what's next, not worry about what else you needed to do, or what your current status is?

"Proof of Your Love" — Elevation Band

Speaking of Status... could it be possible that we are seeking status in the wrong places? A few months ago I had a moment of realization on just how much time I was spending on Social Media. As everything else, it's not all bad. It's wonderful to stay connected with those far away, or be able to reach out to those who need to be lifted up. But what happens when you are constantly engaged with your electronics? Or even spending too much time watching TV, trying to stay up on what's current in the News so that you can be prepared the next time a debate happens in your social circle! What we find on a screen is so often negative. Just like Rebecca pointed out with her touching story of the airline pilot holding a baby, helping a mom traveling alone. We heard all about the negative actions on the airplanes, but hear nothing of the story that may have restored our faith in humanity or given us a little push to do something kind for a stranger. We spend so much time tracking what other people are posting

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or doing , looking at how many likes we get, and looking at others political views and opinions that we start detaching from in the moment relationships. And when someone posts something online it's so easy to only see them for that one post. The same thing happens in person, when someone brings up their opinion on a heated subject and it's the complete opposite of yours. Suddenly you don't see them the same way you used to. They are no longer who you thought they were. We start forgetting that there is a whole human being behind what has been said or posted. And we get so consumed with arguing our point, and needing to be right, that we lose site of how much we care for that person. All the information and opinions coming at you 24/7 can make your head spin! It makes it impossible to just Live, Laugh and Love. Spending this much time "multitasking" is like living like this (hand in face) While most of us make great use of our peripheral vision, how much do you suppose we miss if we are never REALLY looking because we are watching or looking at something else? Or only listening to respond? Not listening to HEAR. Just because someone doesn't agree with everything you think or do doesn't mean you can't love them. And certainly there are things you do agree on, and things you do have in common. Your status won't change just because you choose love over arguing, hatred and anger.

"Love Take Me Over" – Elevation Band

Now, I want to make sure I get the correct message across. This is not to say we are doing everything wrong! I'm just wondering what would happen if we intentionally made more connections. Forgot about what we saw or heard, or what we don't agree on. Tried harder to focus on the things in the moment, without multitasking or thinking about what's next. Where do you find God? I know for sure it's RARELY in my phone, on my computer or on the TV. And there are plenty of other places I probably DON'T find God in my life. What are those places for you? Could you cut back on those things so that you can make more connections? I find God in my family and my children. The joy in all of their faces and the love I feel when we spend quality time together, watching everyone connect and grow. I find God in nature. In the beauty of creation. This is somewhere you can really find connection. A much different connection than we have become accustomed to.

Scripture (Philippians 2:1-8)

How powerful are those words of scripture! "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love." Let's contemplate that just a little longer "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love." And then, "in humility count others more significant than yourselves." There's not a lot of room for competing in that is there? Here's the best part of this whole thing! When we really try to make connections and dig deeper with people, with nature, and ultimately with God. We find something very powerful. The ability to be our Saviors Hands and Feet. Rebecca talked last week about rising up and raising each other up. I think we can start this by making real connections, with one another and with God. How far do you think looking someone in the eye, with out a phone in your hand or trying to multitask, and really meaning the question "How are you?" could go? And what if you truly listened to the answers? If you ask me, we

have had enough of tearing each other down, competing for the right status and looking to screens for a "connection." It's time to be present with one another and in our communities and families. It's time to reach out and stretch a little to find God. We need so much more connection in our lives... connection with real things. With fulfilling things. As our scripture reminds us "he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" Please, take this as a call. A call to close those windows, completely turn off the pinball machine! Figure out what it is that just clutters your spaces and find ways to be in the present moment loving and supporting each other. Because connections through relationships... with people, with nature and all things of creation... are the way we rise up and raise each other up! Jesus humbled himself for us and we can not take for granted what we were given, not for one second. Because life is too short, and when it's all over, we will feel like there wasn't enough time. Don't let life slip away as you try to plan what's next. As Elizabeth Elbert said "You have to participate relentlessly in the manifestation of your own blessings." So don't just live through your peripheral vision, half seeing and half listening, look up, take it all in, love and support each other and participate!

Special Music "Brother" – Steve and Kacie Wheeler

Unison Prayer—

Lord, send me forth, ready to live in the the moment and love every moment you give me. Send me forth ready to love my Brothers and Sisters and give of myself for the better of Humanity. Teach me how to cherish what you gave me when you sent your Son to be our Savior. Thank you for your forgiveness, guidance and Love. Amen

Postlude— Teresa Roared

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