

“Worship and Work Must Be One”
B, Pentecost 15; James 1:17-27
September 2, 2018; 10:00 am
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

James 1:17-27

¹⁷ Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.^[a] ¹⁸ In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Hearing and Doing the Word

¹⁹ You must understand this, my beloved:^[b] let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. ²¹ Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of

the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves^[c] in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵ But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶ If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Worship the Lord (by Fred Kaan)

Worship the Lord!
Praise the Creator, the Spirit, the Son,
raising our hands
in devotion to God who is one!

Raising our hands as a sign of rejoicing,
and with our lips our togetherness voicing,
giving ourselves to a life of creativeness,
worship and work must be one.

Worship the Lord...
Praying and training that we be a blessing,
and by our handiwork daily confessing:
we are committed to serving humanity,
worship and work must be one.

Worship the Lord...

Called to be partners with God in creation,
looking to Christ for each day's inspiration,
we must be ready for risk and for sacrifice,
worship and work must be one.

Worship the Lord...

Bringing the bread and the wine to the table,
asking that we may be led and enabled,
truly united to build new communities,
worship and work must be one.

Worship the Lord...

Now in response to the life you are giving,
help us, Creator, to offer our living,
seeking a just and a healing society,
worship and work must be one.

Worship the Lord...

I. WORSHIP AND WORK MUST BE ONE

Worship and work must be one!

What does that *mean*? What does it look like for each one of us, seeking to walk in the Way of Jesus? What does it look like in community? Our church family life together, as well as in our wider community—local and global?

The first thing that comes to mind, as we gather each week, is to ask: What IS worship? Is it *only* the singing and praying and preaching we do, once we “really get started on the service,” after all the *folderol* is over?

Or, are the announcements, the holy conversations about events coming up, sharing ways to be in community together, invitations to mission and ministry projects (and yes, even meetings!), all *part* of what it means to worship?

Is the sharing of life – of our Joys & Concerns, and need for prayers, support and celebrations – is that just to be *gotten through*, so we can get on with the real stuff of worship and get out of here in an hour?

Or, is *that* worship too?

What does it look like to see everything we do as work and worship, worship and work? One in the Spirit?

A. A Story of a Saved Dog

It might look like putting everything else aside to care for God's creatures, human and animal, for someone you don't even know.

An amazing story has come out this week about a dog named Bentley who suffered a trauma in a Jeep accident weeks ago, who—except for people who “walk the walk” of caring for all God’s creatures every day—would still be wandering alone in the mountains.

Many people put their worship and work into action to respond to a grieving daughter who’d just lost her mother and needed the comfort and support of her curly-haired companion and best friend.

You can read the story in the paper or on the bulletin board – it’s an inspiring tale of how it takes a village, and how much we need each other in this world – stranger and friend alike. I’ve been in touch with Sam Orr, Bentley’s mom who lost *her* mom three weeks ago, and now has been uplifted, supported and held in prayer by an entire community of people who didn’t even know her and it’s changed her life.

One woman heavily involved in the search and rescue effort described what it was like to put worship and work all into one:

“Unwavering faith in a mission is a catalyst for success. Mine was to keep going - despite community leaders brushing me off the phone saying they don’t have the resources..... it’s just a dog--despite not enough volunteers or interested folks to get involved - the mission must go on. Time

is of the essence. When one door closes- another opens. Reaching out to others to build a team in action- brought Bentley home.

Never doubt your own potential in the face of insurmountable odds. The legacy of this story is to inspire others how lost dogs in challenging circumstances can be recovered- what technique to apply- in a moment of intense pressure- how to overcome your own emotions and give leadership to the dog in his moments of total fear. Sam applied this very tactic- and she did it well. Sam Orr your momma would be proud. Thank you team.

(Monika Courtney)

Hope, angels, worship and work and rescue must be one!!!

Or, it might look like life on the farm:

B. Parable of the Corn (Author Unknown)

There was a farmer who grew excellent quality corn. Every year he won the award for the best grown corn. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors.

“How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?” the reporter asked.

“Why sir,” said the farmer, “Didn’t you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn.”

So is with our lives... Those who want to live meaningfully and well must help enrich the lives of others, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all...

-Call it power of collectivity...

-Call it a principle of success...

-Call it a law of life.

The fact is, none of us truly wins, until we all win!!

Worship and work all together, might sound like an African philosophy –a way of life that we would do well to emulate:

C. UBUNTU:

You might have much of the world’s riches, and you might hold a portion of authority, but if you have no ubuntu, you do not amount to much. — Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The philosophy of Ubuntu derives from a Nguni word, ubuntu meaning “the quality of being human.” Ubuntu manifests itself through various human acts, clearly visible in social, political, and economic situations, as well as among family.

According to sociolinguist Buntu Mfenyana, it “runs through the veins of all Africans, is embodied in the oft-repeated: “Ubuntu ngumtu ngabanye abantu” (“A person is a person through other people”).

This African proverb reveals a world view that we owe our selfhood to others, that we are first and foremost social beings, that, if you will, no man/woman is an island, or as the African would have it, “One finger cannot pick up a grain.” Ubuntu is, at the same time, a deeply personal philosophy that calls on us to mirror our humanity for each other.

Worship and work are one when we live everyday mindful of our shared humanity and interdependence.

Worship and work are one when we take every gentle step on the earth lightly—mindful of our shared Mother. When we make a spiritual practice of caring for Creation.

A new name has been given to that very old practice. My mom and dad never left home for a walk without a couple bags for picking up bottles and cans – because in Oregon you could get money back from those deposit-rich items – but also because it seemed like an earth-caring thing to do.

Now it's an official trend! A fitness craze, in fact! Called "splogging."

D. SPLOGGING:

Have you recently spotted people toting trash bags while jogging? Or their hands filled with old plastic bottles? You might soon.

Sweden's latest fitness craze — plogging — is making its way to U.S. shores. The term is a mash-up of jogging and the Swedish "plocka upp," meaning pick up. In this case, litter.

Across Europe, there are plogging groups in Scandinavia, Germany and beyond. In the United States, it's just starting to catch on among exercisers who are fed up with rubbish along their route.

"I'm not going to just let litter sit there. I'm not going

to just walk past that plastic bottle," said plogger and Alexandria resident Emily Wright. "It's not that I don't think it's gross to pick it up. I do. But I also think it's gross for a person to not take responsibility for it."

Wright, 40, has been plogging for several months along the Alexandria waterfront, but just a few weeks ago learned that what she's been doing has a name.

Her partner used to lovingly tease her about her habit of going out for a run-walk for about an hour with a trash bag and plastic gloves. "He used to call it my trash runs," said Wright, a writer and cellist. "A few weeks ago he said, 'the Swedes have a name for your trash runs!'"

She mostly picks up cigarette butts, bits of foam containers, plastic bottles and bottle caps. "There are an alarming number of full diapers," she said. "They turn my stomach the most."

Plogging not only helps the environment, it's quite good for your health. Think squats while jogging. According to the Swedish-based fitness app Lifesum, which earlier this month made it possible for users to track plogging activity, a half-hour of jogging plus picking up trash will burn 288 calories for the average person, compared with the 235 burned by jogging alone. A brisk walk will expend about 120.

"It makes me feel good for so many reasons," Wright said. "My pants fit differently. I'm more nipped in at

the waist. I think it's because of balance and flexibility.”

In Sweden, plogger Maja Tesch, 28, said she learned about plogging last year, when it became popular in the Scandinavian country. It spread through word-of-mouth, and the hashtag #plogging started popping up on social media. Tesch, a nurse, said she regularly organizes plogging events in which she and friends will pluck litter for a few hours, then spend time hanging outside together around a fire.

“I run a lot and I love to spend time in nature. When I find litter out in the woods or in the archipelago it makes me sad and a bit angry. When I heard about plogging it was a natural way to do something about that agitation,” Tesch said in an email. “It's so easy to just bring the litter and put it in the nearest bin, and it makes you feel that you're doing a difference!”

I think it can catch on here, don't you? Maybe we change the name to Plocking, or Pliking, since most of us are more inclined to walking or hiking than jogging!

E. ALTERATIONS THAT BRING LIFE

Worship and work become one anytime we bring our selves, our gifts, our talents, our experience, expertise and knowledge together to help others. To change lives for the better. To “walk each other home” on this journey of life.

My cousin would not call herself a devout, church-attending Christian – she's a little fed up with some of what masquerades as gospel these days, (as are many people!),

but she is one of the most devoted souls to family and humankind I know.

We agree that God cares a whole lot more about how we care for one another than the rules and rituals of what's typically called “religion.”

Gretchen has a ministry of modifying clothing for people who are disabled or have medical equipment that doesn't play nice with their regular clothing. I asked if I could share about this, as a perfect example of how one ordinary person brings everything they have to the Table, and makes worship and work one, for the benefit of others.

Here's how she describes it:

FABRIC OF TIME

My vision is to alter the clothing people already have to fit their unique situation. It might be pockets added for insulin pumps or mastectomy drains. It could be snaps, velcro or magnets to make dressing easier after surgery or because of arthritis. I've added openings to tank tops for Dori's g-tube and made a custom swimsuit for Mom, since she doesn't like to wear prostheses in the hot tub. It's a unique niche, and I hope I can eventually get it going. I love being able to combine my nursing degree and sewing skills. My website is fabricoftime.org

Mission: “Having health challenges and different abilities often impact what clothing works well. I'm here to help make the clothing you already own more

functional, and to create custom covers for the various tubes, bags and other paraphernalia that helps you live your life.”

I have a Bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of New Mexico, and I've been sewing since I was 14 years old. Ask my parents and they will tell you that I have ALWAYS had the makings of a nurse. Unfortunately, our family has needed me to be a fulltime mom AND nurse, so the majority of my experience has been at home and with extended family. Over the years I have helped loved ones recover from multiple surgeries and assisted our daughter with central lines, G and J tubes. I have observed the little things that make life easier, and the physical challenges that make things harder.

Now I hope to help make your life a little more pleasant, and maybe even a lot more fun, by altering the clothes you already own, to make them work better for you. Whether you are anticipating surgery and want to have some clothing ready to go, or you've got a pump, tube or bags that need to be attached throughout the day, I'd love to problem solve with you.

It doesn't matter where you live: we'll do this **all through the mail!** Get the clothes you want altered and a washable marker and we'll get started! I can make bag covers from a paper outline, and you can pick out the fabric you love. It's all about making your life better, one piece at a time!

I've asked Gretchen to consider coming here sometime to present her vision and vital ministry – perhaps at a WMS monthly program next year? Because she cares for disabled daughter that she can't leave alone, she might only be able to come “in spirit,” but we can share her vital service, offerings, and information, regardless.

II. HOW WILL WE WORSHIP AND WORK TOGETHER?

How, on this Labor Day, will we answer the call to blend our worship and work into one whole cloth – making the fabric of our lives cohesive, functional and fulfilling?

Henry David Thoreau put it well:

“It is not enough to be busy.

So are the ants.

The question is: What are we busy *about*?”

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raising our hands
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Bringing the bread and the wine to the table,
asking that we may be led and enabled,
truly united to build new communities,
worship and work must be one.

Let us gather around the Table, bringing the work of our hands, the meditations of our hearts, and our devotion to God and community together as one.

Amen.