



## **“The Realm of God is Like This” Part 4 Justice from the Beginning**

Wildwood Mennonite Church // July 12, 2020

Worship Leader: Kara // Music Leader: Marg // Sermon: Austin Channing Brown (via YouTube)

### **Welcome to Wildwood...**

...or rather, thanks for welcoming us into wherever you are in this at-home worship format.

This is not where we thought we'd be this summer! We are grateful for the familiar patterns and relationships that we have been able to resume, yet we are still grieving the loss of those that have changed and we are still feeling our way through the murkiness of whatever it is that is emerging.

As people of faith, we trust that God is present in all of those spaces: in the familiar, in the grieving, in the unknown. And we are grateful that you have joined us in this place, a reminder that we never walk alone. Welcome.

Shalom: a Hebrew word meaning peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare, and tranquility

### **Music For Meditation // [One Wish](#) // Jean and David Perry**

### **Call to Worship**

Leader: In a world filled with violence and war,

**People: we gather together to celebrate the promise of peace.**

Leader: In a world filled with tyranny and oppression,

**People: we gather together to celebrate the promise of justice for all.**

Leader: In a world filled with ignorance and indifference.

**People: we gather together to learn, to grow, and to celebrate the promise of change.**

Leader: In a world where we share the same space but do not share each other's lives,

**People: we gather together to celebrate the promise of Shalom.**

Leader: In a world filled with hunger and greed,

**People: we gather together to celebrate the promise of plenty for all.**

Leader: Our hope is in the name of the Almighty God,

**People: the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of earth.**

**All: Let us worship the God of shalom!**

(Adapted from, "From Armistice to Shalom: A Service of Worship for the Unfinished Journey of Peace" from Grace Presbyterian Church in Gainesville, Florida.)

### **Peace Candle**

God of peace, forgive us when we have participated in that which turns people against each other, for fueling anger and harboring vengeance, for not listening with an open heart, for not heeding your call to love one another. We know it is you who turns our minds to thoughts of peace and love. We pray that those in conflict begin to speak, and to listen to one another, that those who are estranged join hands in friendship; that we seek the way of peace.

Strengthen our resolve to give witness to these truths by the way we live. Give to us: understanding that puts an end to strife, mercy that quenches hatred; and forgiveness that overcomes vengeance. Empower all people to live your way of love. Amen.

(Adapted from "School sisters of Notre Dame and "From Armistice to Shalom: A Service of Worship for the Unfinished Journey of Peace" from Grace Presbyterian Church in Gainesville, Florida)

### **Offering Prayer**

Every time we come to the moment of offering,  
it's a crossroads.

There is an inner struggle between selfishness and generosity,  
a pull between fear of the future and belief in God's providence.

We give our offering this morning, Lord,  
stepping out in faith down the road of grace.

We do this together, as your people,  
called and sent to be a blessing for all the world.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

-Carol Penner

**Song // [You'll Never Walk Alone](#) from Rodgers and Hammerstein's Carousel // Virtual Choir/Orchestra with 300 People from 15 Countries**



**Children's Story // [Click here for video storytime with Linda G!](#)**

Today's story is [A Brave Big Sister: A Bible Story About Miriam](#).

It is written by Rachel Spier Weaver and Anna Haggard (illustrated by Eric Elwell)

**Scripture // Exodus 1:8-22, 2:1-10 (The Inclusive Bible translation)**

*A new Pharaoh—one who did not know Joseph—came to power in Egypt. Pharaoh said to the Egyptians, “Look at how powerful the Israelites have become, and how they outnumber us! We need to deal shrewdly with their increase, against a time of war when they might turn against us and join our enemy, and so escape out of the country.”*

*So they oppressed the Israelites with overseers who put them to forced labor; and with them they built the storage cities of Pitom and Ra’amses. Yet the more the Israelites were oppressed, the more they multiplied and burst forth, until the Egyptians dreaded the Israelites. So they made the Israelites utterly subservient with hard labor, brick-and-mortar work, and every kind of field work. The Egyptians were merciless in subjugating them with crushing labor.*

*Pharaoh spoke to the midwives of the Hebrews —one was Shiphrah, and the other Puah—and said, “When you assist the Hebrew women in childbirth, examine them on the birthing-stool. If the baby is a boy, kill it. If it is a girl, let it live.”*

*But the midwives were God-fearing women, and they ignored the Pharaoh’s instructions, and let the male babies live.*

*So Pharaoh summoned the midwives and asked why they let the male babies live. The midwives responded, “These Hebrew women are different from Egyptian women; they are more robust, and deliver even before the midwife arrives.”*

*God rewarded the midwives, and the people increased in numbers and in power. And since the midwives were Godfearing, God gave them families of their own.*

*The Pharaoh then commanded all those in Egypt, “Let every boy that is born to the Hebrews be thrown into the Nile, but let every girl live.”*

*There was a man from the house of Levi who had married a Levite woman, and she conceived and gave birth to a boy. And she saw that the baby was good, so she hid it for three months. When she could hide the baby no longer she took a papyrus basket, daubed it with bitumen and pitch, and put the child in it, and placed the basket among the reeds by the banks of the Nile. The baby’s sister watched from a distance to learn what would happen.*



*Pharaoh's daughter came down to the Nile to bathe, while her attendants walked along the river bank. She noticed the basket among the reeds, and sent her attendant to fetch it. Opening it, she saw the baby—and how it wept! She was moved to pity and said, "This must be one of the Hebrews' children!"*

*Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Do you want me to go and find a nurse for you among the Hebrews to suckle the child for you?"*

*"Yes, go," she answered. So the sister went off and brought the baby's own mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child with you and suckle it for me, and I myself will pay you." The woman took the child and nursed it. After the child was weaned, she brought it to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted it as her own. She called him Moses—"He Who Pulls Out"—for she said, "I pulled him out of the water."*

### **Sermon // "Faith, Justice and Race" // Austin Channing Brown (via YouTube)**

This week our sermon series "The Realm of God is Like This..." takes a trip back to the roots of the Jewish understanding of the realm of God. From the very beginning of the Hebrew people, being part of the Reign of God has been held in contrast to the Reign of the World," exemplified by the Empire of Egypt and its ruler, Pharaoh. When Jesus' parables imagine the Reign of God as a new way of being, a new human community, it's always in contrast to the old way, the way of Egypt and Pharaoh, the way of domination and slavery.



Our "guest preacher" via youtube, [Austin Channing Brown](#), invites us to reconsider how the Kingdom of Pharaoh lives on in communities and our hearts today. Austin is the author of [I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness](#) and producer and host of [The Next Question](#), a video web series on race and justice. This is a sermon she preached at a church in Arizona in 2016.

For better and for worse, this sermon is preached primarily to an American audience in a similar-but-different context than we are living in in Canada. This means that we have some work to do in crossing that distance and making the connections from the American voice and situation into our own. Fortunately, y'all are smart people and we Canadians are well-practiced at this kind of transcontinental translation. :)

**You can watch the full sermon here: ["Faith, Justice, and Race" by Austin Channing Brown](#).**

Unfortunately we do not have a written transcript of the sermon this week.

Communion i

**The Call**

What does the Lord require of us?

**To do justice,  
to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with our God.**

Then let us remember God's ways  
and seek to walk them together.

*Micah 6:8*

**The Invitation**

Because there is one bread,  
we who are many are one body,  
**for we all partake of the one bread.**

In Christ, God breaks down the walls  
that make us strangers to ourselves,  
and divide us from one another.

**We are the body of Christ.**

At this table we bear witness to our faith.

**At this table, God brings wholeness out of brokenness,  
and healing to our world.**

Let us break bread together.

*I Corinthians 10:17*

**Prayer of Thanks**

Eternal God, Maker of heaven and earth,  
we join with all your people to give you thanks and praise.

You formed the universe in your wisdom  
and created all things by your grace.


We praise you for all your good gifts:  
the witness of prophets and those who have gone before;  
the work of faithful women and men who work for justice and peace.

We praise you for this bread, once scattered,  
now brought together and made one.

In the hope that your people  
may be brought together from the ends of the earth  
into your reign of justice and compassion.

And so, while recognizing our own brokenness,  
we gather to give you praise and glory:





**Holy, holy, holy God,  
Power of life and love!  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory!  
Hosanna through the ages!  
Blest is the One who comes to bring your justice to earth!**

### **Words of Institution**

On the night before he died,  
Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to you,  
he broke it, and gave it to those who sat with him, saying:  
“Take, eat.  
This is my body, given for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me.”

The bread of freedom. Take and eat.  
In the same way he took the cup, saying:  
“This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,  
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.  
Whenever you drink it,  
do this in remembrance of me.”

The cup of solidarity. Take and drink.


### **Prayer**

God of majesty,  
with reverent hearts we name you also  
God of self-giving love.  
We give thanks, blessing above blessing,  
for Jesus Christ,  
son of Mary, Word of life.

**We remember Jesus,  
faithful friend and living hope:  
attesting truth before the powers;  
seeking the forgotten and abused;  
setting the prodigal and the righteous  
at the one feast of forgiveness.**

**We remember Jesus,  
risen and eternal One,  
Christ who comes to meet us.**

We remember Jesus' integrity unto death.  
We remember the Easter hope of resurrection.  
We remember the promise of compassion and justice.



**Holy God, pour your Spirit on us,  
that we may know Christ in the breaking of bread,  
and that in word and deed,  
we may be channels of your love, peace, and justice  
in the world.**

[i] Slightly adapted from "Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services for The United Church of Canada"

**Communion Song // [Make Me a Channel of Your Peace](#) // Sing the Journey #56**

**Sharing Time // ["Hey Wildwood..." online sharing](#)**

Not hearing from one another in person through the Sharing Time is a significant loss for many of us. It's not the same, but one way to express your grief, anxiety, prayer requests and gratitude is through the "Hey Wildwood" link above. If you're able, join us for our Sunday Morning Zoom gatherings, or check your email for the sharing items from last Sunday. Or maybe now would be a good time to pause your reading to call someone from church or elsewhere that you haven't heard from this week.

**Congregational Prayer**

O God, you are the Ultimate Ruler of all that is, you are our Higher Power.

You are our God of Love, our God of Peace.

O God, we confess that we have lived on a heap of rubbish so long,  
That we are no longer aware of its stench.

We have treated others less than ourselves,  
We have followed the pharaohs in our world,  
the pharaohs of exclusion, fear, and scarcity,  
the pharaohs of violence and humiliation.

We have looked at our neighbours and seen only what we fear.

O God, we have lived on this heap of rubbish so long

That we don't see it, we don't smell it, we are barely even aware that it exists.

Ultimate Ruler of all,

Help us to be alert and mindful of the pharaohs in our world,

Help us to remember that we cannot stand back and let someone else do the dirty work,  
But rather to step up, and speak up, and live with compassion and tenderness.

Help us to work for justice and peace.

Help us to remember, O God, that you go before us;

That you are most present in the moments of our critical decisions

That you are working and healing and commiserating with us.

Grant us courage to refuse dehumanization and to stand against pharaoh,

To choose love instead of hatred, trust instead of suspicion,  
compassion instead of judgment, and togetherness instead of isolation.

Knowing that the brokenness of the world creates opportunities for us to be your church,  
help us to be more aware of the need around us,  
to advocate for the image of God in others,  
to be more generous, to offer more hope and more love.

This morning we remember people around the world who are living in fear because of the  
pandemic,  
or because of war or racism or so many other events that make for unsettled living.  
We pray for our neighbours to the south, for those who mourn, and especially for those in  
leadership. We pray that clear heads will prevail!

This morning we are mindful of the needs within our church,  
And particularly we remember Scott and Cheryl and their boys as they mourn the sudden loss  
of their mom and grandmother. We pray for Scott's dad who is dealing with this immense loss  
on top of his own health issues. We pray for strength and comfort and peace as they move  
ahead.

Help us as your church on earth to live together as one body,  
As in growing self-awareness we aim to bring about your realm on earth,  
Use us, as St Paul says, to spread knowledge of your love and your ways  
everywhere like a sweet-smelling perfume.  
May it be a fragrance that fills the air. Amen.

**Song // [If I Had A Hammer](#) // Peter, Paul and Mary**

### **Benediction**

May Yhwh bless you and keep you! May Yhwh's face shine upon you, and be gracious to  
you! May Yhwh look kindly upon you, and grant you shalom!

