WORSHIP HELPS

Calls to Worship

WELCOME/SPOKEN WORD INTRODUCTION

“When people hear the words ‘Christian’ and ‘perfection’ together, the word ‘Impossible’ immediately jumps to mind.” Right? That’s what Steven Manskar writes in the Introduction to A Perfect Love, a modern language version of John Wesley’s book A Plain Account of Christian Perfection and the primary source for our worship and sermon series in the coming weeks.

Perfection. It may be possible to bowl a perfect game, or pitch a perfect baseball game, or achieve a perfect SAT or ACT score, or set a perfect table, or <insert your favorite example of perfection here>.

But to be perfect? Even to love perfectly? Impossible. And, more often than not, life’s journey feels like one step forward, two steps back.

And, yet, Jesus taught the disciples to “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48, NRSV). And, John Wesley taught the doctrine of Christian perfection for most of his life. And, if we’ve been hanging around Methodist Christians for any amount of time, we may have heard them talk about “going on to perfection.” So, what is this kind of perfect?

As we gather today to worship the One who is flawless and faultless, without equal and in all ways perfect, may God grant us the grace to know God and God’s will more completely and more perfectly.

CALL TO WORSHIP #1 (RESPONSIVE)

Leader: We praise you with joy, loving God,

People: For your grace is better than life itself.

Leader: You have sustained us through the darkness,

People: And you bless us with life in this new day.

Leader: In the shadow of your wings we sing for joy

People: And bless your holy name. (Worship & Song, #70)
Prayers, Litanies, etc.

OPENING PRAYER

O God, in mystery and silence you are present in our lives,
    bringing new life out of destruction,
    hope out of despair, growth out of difficulty.
We thank you that you do not leave us alone but labor to make us whole.
Help us to perceive your unseen hand in the unfolding of our lives,
    and to attend to the gentle guidance of your Spirit,
that we may know the joy you give your people. Amen. (UM Book of Worship, #459)

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known,
    and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
    that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen. (UM Hymnal, p. 6)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God,
We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church.
We have not done your will,
we have broken your law,
we have rebelled against your love,
we have not loved our neighbors,
and we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (UM Hymnal, p. 8)
OFFERTORY PRAYER

Almighty God, giver of every good and perfect gift,
   teach us to render to you all that we have and all that we are,
   that we may praise you, not with our lips only,
       but with our whole lives,
   turning the duties, the sorrows, and the joys of all our days
       into a living sacrifice to you;
through our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (UM Book of Worship #555)

SENDING FORTH/BENEDICTION

May God’s perfect love uplift you.
May God’s perfect love transform you.
May God’s perfect love surround you through the challenges ahead.
May God’s perfect love convince you, in every situation, to love.
Go now to love others, even as Christ loves you. (Worship & Song #176 adapted)

Artistic Elements

HYMNS (UM HYMNAL)

Note: hymn numbers followed by (W) are written by Charles Wesley

57 (W) – O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
339 (W) - Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast
369 - Blessed Assurance
385 (W) – Let us Plead for Faith Alone
399 – Take My Life and Let it Be
473 – Lead Me, Lord (can be as a chorus before and/or after prayer)
508 – Faith While Trees are Still in Blossom
566 (W) – Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love