Key Verse

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength.”

— Deuteronomy 6:5 (CEB)

Suggested Scripture for Worship

Deuteronomy 6:1-5, Romans 12:1-2

Key Idea

God’s version of perfection is not something to be achieved but to be received in a way that transforms.

Calls to Worship

WELCOME/SPOKEN WORD INTRODUCTION

Greetings! And welcome to worship as we continue to explore the idea of “A Perfect Love.” We are working to embrace an understanding of “perfect” that means “complete”; as in, “I’ve never met her before; she is a perfect stranger.” It’s not that the person is a flawless stranger but a complete stranger.

So, we understand that the perfection that Christ calls us to is one of being completely and wholly human, as Jesus himself exampled for us. And last week, we explored how grace and love are the perfect power that enable us to be all God created us to be.

And, I don’t know about you, but when I hear “be all you were created to be,” I get geared up, pull out my running shoes, and lace them up so I’m ready to chase after that perfection with all that I am! And it’s not that I’m trying to be flawless; I get that it’s completeness and wholeness I’m chasing after. But still, the more I chase after perfection, the more I find that it’s continually beyond my grasp.

What if God’s version of perfection is not something to be achieved? What if the completeness and wholeness that
God offers us is something to be received in a way that transforms?

As we come to worship today, may we bring our everyday, ordinary lives—our sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around lives—and place them before God as an offering. May we fix our attention on God, who is perfect love, and be changed from the inside out.

CALL TO WORSHIP#1 (RESPONSIVE)
   
   Leader: O God, our sacred source, call us home.
   People: O Christ, our faithful helper, lead us home.
   Leader: Holy Spirit, divine companion, make your home in us.
   People: Heal us, forgive us, and transform us.
   Leader: Make us to know your ways, O God;
   People: Teach us your paths, until we are at home in you. (Worship & Song #181)

Prayers, Litanies, etc.

OPENING PRAYER
   Almighty and everlasting God,
   in whom we live and move and have our being,
   you created us for yourself,
   so that our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.
Grant to us such piety of heart and strength of purpose
   that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will,
   and no weakness from doing it.
In your light may we see life clearly
   and in your service find perfect freedom;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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

Almighty God,
    we confess that we are often swept up in the tide of our generation.
We have failed in our calling to be our holy people,
    a people set apart for your divine purpose.
We live more in apathy born of fatalism than in passion born of hope.
We are moved more by private ambition than by social justice.
We dream more of privilege and benefits that of service and sacrifice.
We try to speak in your name without relinquishing our glories,
    without nourishing our souls, without relying wholly on your grace.
Help us to make room in our hearts and lives for you.
Forgive us, revive us, and reshape us in your image. Amen. (UM Book of Worship #479)

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

“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for God. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what God wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you” (Romans 12:1-2, The Message).

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

88 (W) – Maker in Whom We Live
388 (W) – O Come and Dwell in Me
410 (W) – I Want a Principle Within
422 (W) – Jesus Thine all Victorious Love
480 (W) – O Love that Wilt Not Let Me Go
500 – Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart