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Gospel lesson

Jesus had entered Jerusalem triumphantly, gone to the temple, overturned the tables of the moneychangers, and cured the blind and the lame. Now we hear about the next day, when Jesus came back into the city from where He stayed overnight (in nearby Bethany):



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-authority/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

Matthew 21:23-32

NRSVue

²³ When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”

²⁴ Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

²⁵ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’

²⁶ But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet.”

²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what

authority I am doing these things.

²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’

²⁹ He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went.

³⁰ The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go.

³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.

³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him.

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's/Interactive time>

What does it mean, “Many hands make light work”?

<Let them respond>

Every year (in South Otselic) we do a mailing to raise money for trustees' projects. We have to fold the letter, stuff it into an envelope, and put address stickers and stamps on them. The final thing looks something like this. <Show example>

Imagine having a helper folding the papers who is into origami. Would it be helpful for them to fold the letter into the shape of a paper fortune teller?

<Show example; let them respond>

What about someone helping with the labels and stamps that decides to apply them like decorative stickers?

<Show example; let them respond>

For the project to work out well, helpers need to be of the same mind as you or else they can make a complete mess of the project.

Who created the world? <Let them respond>

Who did God ask to help take care of the world?

<Let them respond>

Do humans have the same mind as God in taking care of the earth? Or even just taking care of each other?

<Let them respond>

How can we do better? <Let them respond>

May we always look to the Lord for guidance and work together – in full accord – with God’s plans [for our lives and for the world].

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<Hymn “All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King Divine”

UMH #166>

Message: In Full Accord



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/pressing-on-worship-series/week-2-eighteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-2-eighteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-pressing-on-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Amazing God who unites us for Your holy work,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That as we press on, we learn to live together better
and bring the community of Your kingdom to those who
do not yet experience it fully. Amen.

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We continue "Pressing On" in our sermon series today
"In Full Accord."

"How do we press on together? What does it take to
live well as a community?"



picture from

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/hispanic-heritage-month>

September 15 to October 15 is National Hispanic
Heritage Month. According to hispanicheritagemonth.gov,
it "pays tribute to the generations of Hispanic
Americans who have positively influenced and enriched

our nation and society.”¹ I think their cultural influence in music and art as well as contributions in science and other fields has been a great boon for this great mosaic of peoples we call the USA.

This year has been exceedingly tough on the Latino community, with ICE raids and profiling that has caused law-abiding families to be torn apart, with family members disappearing into the modern day concentration camps of ICE detention centers or deported to countries they never visited (let alone lived in or held citizenship in). The NY Times just [published an article this week on the surge of ICE crackdowns this summer](#) that did not get the publicity of the murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti.²

I think whoever promotes unlawful behavior by ICE has a very skewed idea of right and wrong, far away from the love and concern (for the least of people) that Jesus showed. I think it is driven by irrational fear and lack of trust in God.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-water-rock/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

The Israelites were driven by fear and lack of trust in God when they went after Moses about not having water in the wilderness. They had already had an issue with water resolved at Marah, they had food to collect morning and evening now, and yet they were

¹ <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/hispanic-heritage-month-outreach-resources>

² https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/25/us/ice-surge-immigration-arrests.html?campaign_id=190&emc=edit_ufn_20260925&instance_id=182566&nl=from-the-times®i_id=125626531&segment_id=227087&user_id=cfc735ae7618d3ab83177a7782859fd2

panicky and demanding instead of humble and faithful.

Moses struck the rock in front of the elders so that the Israelites would have witnesses that it was the power of God providing for them. God let them get thirsty not to be mean but to help them develop their faith further that the world could know to trust God.

Where is our faith today? Do we have enough to follow God's commands to love one another even when it seems risky to us, not in our immediate best interests?



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-authority/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

The chief priests and elders of Jesus's day were driven by fear and lack of faith in God too. They could not answer a straightforward question about John the Baptist because they could not believe the hand of God would have overturned the moneychangers' tables in their temple, and they feared – not God, but the people.

So Jesus told parables to redirect their faith, to make them think about what they were prioritizing. And if you think they were uncomfortable with this week's story, just wait until next week – He gets even more pointed.

Paul wrote to the Philippians about what living in faith looks like for Christians. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility"



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/pressing-on-worship-series/week-2-eighteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-2-eighteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-pressing-on-graphics>

and “being in full accord, of one mind in Christ Jesus.” Paul points out that even though Jesus had the power of the Almighty available, for our sakes He emptied Himself of that power, humbly enabling humans to choose even His death on a cross.

And here is the miracle of grace: God understands why we make the choices we do, and continues to love us, each of us: God loves YOU. Even when we lack faith and are quarrelsome, God is faithful to us, calmly steadfast, and takes care of our needs while enabling our choices. And God calls us to love others as God loves us.

Responding with fear and forcing others to do as we command is sinful. We need to trust God and to seek out what is right and good in God’s eyes. Jesus already told us that means loving God and loving one another – valuing others as equal to us in God’s eyes.

Which fits better with that, celebrating the benefits of our differences in something like National Hispanic Heritage Month, or celebrating raids that disrupt communities and tear families apart? May we always seek to humbly work together for God’s glory.

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<As if prayer, looking up> Please, God, grant us the wisdom and the courage we need to speak up against

evil and strive to build Your kingdom on this earth.
Amen.

A Litany for the Church and for the World UM BOW #495

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, almighty God, that all who confess your name
may be united in your truth, live together in your
love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.** *Silent prayer.*

Guide the people of this land, and of all the
nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we
may honor one another and serve the common good.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.** *Silent prayer.*

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own
creation, that we may use its resources rightly in
the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.** *Silent prayer.*

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,
and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love
one another as Christ loves us.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.** *Silent prayer.*

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind,
or spirit; give them courage and hope in their
troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.** *Silent prayer.*

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your
will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we

may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. *Silent prayer.*

We offer these prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. (*THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, U.S.A., 1979, pp. 388-389 , ALT.*)

<Doxology>

<Offertory / Pastoral Prayer>

Humble Savior, you meet us at the start of every day and invite us to take on the mind of Christ.

As we bring [ourselves] these gifts, set aside in us the need to win, to hoard, to be first.

Shape us instead for love, for shared work, for joy in serving side by side.

Use what we offer to build a community where sacrifice is natural, mercy is instinctive, and hope rises in every heart.

Keep forming us, not by force but by grace, until our living begins to look like Jesus.

We place our offerings—and ourselves—in your hands.

(above prayer from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>)

- Lord, please help {these members of the body of Christ whom we lift up} with Your healing touch and comfort:

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- -
- -
- -
- -

- Thanks for

- -

- Keep our distant family, shut-ins, and those traveling safe/healthy until we see them again.
- Lord, please help all people who struggle, especially those to whom we remain oblivious.
 - Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
 - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
- Guide our Leaders – local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church – to work toward reconciliation of the nations and care for all people, to put needs ahead of greed, grace ahead of pride, and bring peace with justice.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<The Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "The Servant Song"

TFWS #2222>

<Benediction>



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Beloved, remember: God is at work in you,
enabling you to will and to work for God's pleasure.
May God bless you with a spirit of joyful cooperation
and Christian love as together we work
with God and neighbor
for the flourishing of all God's creation. Amen.

Benediction written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, July 2026 and posted on
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/pressing-on-worship-series/week-2-eighteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-2-eighteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-pressing-on-liturgical-resources>