



Seward United Methodist Church

April 23, 2023

Gathering Music/Prelude

Deb Snell

Welcome and Announcements/Video

Passing the Peace

Call to Worship

L: Come, listen, hear the stories that shape our faith.

P: We will be attentive and listen with our hearts and minds.

L: These are the stories Jesus told, the parables that sneak up on us with layers of meaning and mystery and challenge.

P: We will seek beyond easy answers for the deeper truths the parables teach.

Hymn

Tell Me the Stories of Jesus

UMH 277

1. Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear;
things I would ask him to tell me if he were here:
scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea,
stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

2. First let me hear how the children stood round his knee,
and I shall fancy his blessing resting on me;
words full of kindness, deeds full of grace,
all in the lovelight of Jesus' face.

Common Prayer (in unison)

God of Word and Breath and Life, thank you for the gift of stories that teach us who you are and who you call us to be. Remind us that the best stories are worth repeating time and again and again. Open up to us the parable we hear today. Allow it to teach us anew and strengthen our faith. In the name of Jesus, who first shared the parables. AMEN.

Children's Time

Pastor Jo Ellen Axthelm

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

² He called a child, whom he put among them, ³ and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

¹⁰ "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of God in heaven. ¹² What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the will of God in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

Hymn**The King of Love My Shepherd Is****UMH 138 v. 1, 3, 4, 6**

1. The King of love my shepherd is,
 whose goodness faileth never.
 I nothing lack if I am his,
 and he is mine forever.

3. Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
 but yet in love he sought me;
 and on his shoulder gently laid,
 and home, rejoicing, brought me.

4. In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
 with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
 thy rod and staff my comfort still
 thy cross before to guide me.

6. And so through all the length of days,
 thy goodness faileth never;
 Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
 within thy house forever.

Sermon**“Precious in God’s Sight”****Rev. Dr. Mary Kay Totty****Prayers of the People****Prayer Hymn****“God Will Take Care of You”****UMH 130**

1. Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
 God will take care of you;
 beneath his wings of love abide,
 God will take care of you. [Refrain]

2. Through days of toil when heart doth fail,
 God will take care of you;
 when dangers fierce your path assail,
 God will take care of you. [Refrain]

Refrain:

God will take care of you,
 through every day, o'er all the way;
 he will take care of you,
 God will take care of you.

3. All you may need he will provide,
 God will take care of you;
 nothing you ask will be denied,
 God will take care of you. [Refrain]

4. No matter what may be the test,
 God will take care of you;
 lean, weary one, upon his breast,
 God will take care of you. [Refrain]

Sharing Joys and Concerns
 Pastoral Prayer/Lord’s Prayer

Offering

Offertory
 Doxology

Prayer of Dedication (in unison)

Thank you, God, for the greatest of all gifts, the saving action of Jesus Christ in human history. Your gift inspires our generous response. We bring our offerings and renewed commitment. Help us to be faithful disciples. Amen.

(from: “Fresh Winds of the Spirit” by Lavon Bayler, p. 52)

Sending forth of Don and Laquita McKibben

1. Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of thy redeeming love.

2. Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

3. O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.

Benediction**Postlude****Deb Snell**