**February 23, 2025 7th Sunday after Epiphany 11 AM**

 **Black History Month**

![Title: Love Your Enemies [Click for larger image view]]()

**Love Your Enemies**, (2008) from Art in the Christian Tradition,

a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**OPENING PRAYER**

**HYMN #750**  “Goodness Is Stronger than Evil”

(words by Bishop Desmond Tutu)

Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate;

light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours, victory is ours through Him who loves us.

**A Litany for Black History Month**

**One:** Source of our being, manifested in Word and Spirit, we enter ever more deeply into your presence, calling on You, because You are our stronghold and our deliverer; You are our rock in a weary land; You are our balm in Gilead, and we praise You.  We worship You for your great majesty and your overwhelming love, and we thank You for Your great faithfulness unto us.

**All:   We glorify You, for You have kept us in the midst of it all.  Aṣẹ.\*\***

**One:** Morning by morning new mercies we see, we ask for Your mercy on our souls for every way that we consciously, subconsciously, and unconsciously forget you. Show mercy on our ignorance in Your sight.  We ask mercy for the desecration of earth and space, for the desecration of our bodies, minds, and spirits.  We ask mercy for worshipping the false gods of materialism, colonialism, classism, colorism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and all other forms of egoism.  We ask mercy for believing and perpetuating lies that hurt us and others, confusing the beauty of Your harmonious nature.

**All:   Have Mercy on us and strengthen us by Your Spirit.**

 **Lead us to Zion.  Aṣẹ.**

**One:** Lest we forget, we remember all who have perished in the struggle for justice.  We remember all who perished in the middle passage, dying shackled, laying in their own excrement.  We remember those who sacrificed themselves to the sea.  We remember the Martins, the Malcolms, the Medgers, the Mary Turners, the Trayvon Martins, the Eric Garners, the Mike Browns, the Marsha P. Johnsons, the Muhlaysia Bookers, and the countless others whose bodies have been claimed by acts of violence and terrorism.

**All:   Lest we forget, we remember the enslavement, the torture, the beatings, the lynching, the vandalism, the rapes, the murders, the massacres, the genocide.  We remember the psychological and physical abuse and trauma.** *[Moment of Silence]*

**One:** But You are our help. You are our lily of the valley.  We know that our redeemer lives, and that You empower us by Your Spirit.  Your blood never loses its power, and so here, we stand as intercessors bearing Your image.

**All:**   **We magnify Your restoring power in us to heal this stolen land, to purify the earth, air, and sea; to, in all mercy and humility, dismantle structures of injustice and oppression; to break every chain; to imagine and create fresh expressions of being; to build strong families; to mobilize responsible and ethical civic leadership and engagement; to promote sustainable economic development that serves the needs of all; to encourage in every way the general wellness and wholeness of the Black community; to bring life to dry bones; to walk always in remembrance of You, and thereby reconcile all to Your infinite oneness.  Aṣẹ.**

**One:** You, who are All-in-All, inflame all existence with Your transforming love. Resurrect all existence by Your abundant grace.  Embolden us to relinquish fear and do the work our souls must have.

**All:   We are Your peace, and we worship You. Aṣẹ.**

**One:** Bringing the gifts that our ancestors gave, we are the dream and the hope of the enslaved.  We rise, we rise, we rise.

**All:**   **Let all be done in accordance with Your will and may all the ancestors bless us; may all the saints, angels, and all heavenly hosts bless us; may all the holy martyrs, apostles, and prophets bless us.  We are blessed in the name of God, Source, Word, and Holy Spirit.  Aṣẹ.  Aṣẹ.  Aṣẹ.**

*\*\*Aṣẹ. comes from the Yoruba tradition of West Africa and is likened to “Amen” and “And so it is.”  It expresses the power to manifest.*

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**RESPONSE: HYMN #582**  “Glory to God”

**1** Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

 **2** World without end, without end. Amen.
 World without end, without end. Amen
 World without end, without end. Amen.
 As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

**PEACE**

Let there be peace on earth.

**And let it begin with me.**

The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

**RESPONSIVE READING** Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40 (NRSVUE)

Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers,🕈

**for they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.**

Trust in the Lord and do good; live in the land and enjoy security.🕈
**Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.**

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.🕈

**He will make your vindication shine like the light
    and the justice of your cause like the noonday.**

Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;
    do not fret over those who prosper in their way,
    over those who carry out evil devices.🕈

**Refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Do not fret—it leads only to evil.**For the wicked shall be cut off,
    but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.🕈

**Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;
    though you look diligently for their place, they will not be there.**But the meek shall inherit the land
    and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.🕈

**The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord;
    he is their refuge in the time of trouble.**The Lord helps them and rescues them;
    he rescues them from the wicked and saves them
    because they take refuge in him.

**CHILDREN’S SERMON**

**FIRST READING** Romans 12:17-21 (NRSVUE)

**17**Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. **18**If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. **19**Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” **20**Instead, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” **21**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**SECOND READING** Luke 6:27-38 (NRSVUE)

27 “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; 28 bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

**SERMON**  “Jesus’ Action Plan” Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Courter

**HYMN #753** “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”

1 Make me a channel of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord,and where there’s doubt, true faith in you.

2 Make me a channel of your peace. where there’s despair in life let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light, and where there’s sadness, ever joy.

3 O, Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand, to be loved, as to love, with all my soul.

4 Make me a channel of your peace. it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving of ourselves that we receive, and in dying that we’re born to eternal life.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH THE APOSTLES CREED**

**I Believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in**

**Jesus Christ, His Only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**

 **I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,**

 **the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

 **Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**OFFERING/OFFERTORY**

**OFFERING SONG #328**  “Praise God, All You Nations” **(**DaNase)

Praise God, all you nations. People of God, sing praise!
Praise God, all you nations. People of God, sing praise:
God’s love is great and endures forever.
Praise God, all you nations. People of God, sing praise!

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION/THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CLOSING HYMN #656** “We’ve Come This Far by Faith”

We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord,

trusting in the holy word; God’s never failed us yet.

O, can't turn around, we've come this far by faith. We've come this far by faith.

**BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**UPCOMING CALENDAR**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL - 10:00 AM** If you areinterested in enrolling your child/children, please see Karen Wood or Pat Young.

**ADULT BIBLE STUDY –** 10:00 AM, Room #7 (in-person only)

We have completed **1 Thessalonians** are now reading **2 Thessalonians** with a study guide by **N.T. Wright For Everyone Bible Study Guides**. If you are interested, please see David Barnett.

**WEDNESDAY, MID-WEEK STUDY – 7:00 PM, ONLINE ONLY** using the church ZOOM log-on and password. We are using study guide Richard Rohr’s **Jesus Plan for a New World – The Sermon on the Mount**. If you are interested, please see Jeff or David for a copy of the book.

**REMINDER:** We are still looking for **volunteers** for **worship readers** and/or **juice/coffee hour**. There is a 3-month sign-up sheet posted just outside the office.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office.

**First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills**

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 **David Barnett**, Admin.718-268-4036 **Rev. Dr.** **Jeff Courter**, Pastor,

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 **‘Cil Brewer**, Clerk of Session

Please note: we now have a public WiFi for the church, though it may only be available in the church hall for now.

**Name: CHURCH GUEST**

**Password: welcome1**

***For offerings/donations:***

1. ****Use Zelle to make Online donations from your bank account. Use this phone number to transfer to the church:**

**929-418-0958 (please note: this is a new number)**

1. **Make checks payable to *First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills* and mail check to the church office**
2. **Go to our church website:** **presbyfh.org** **and click on the “****Give Now****” icon to set up a donation; or click on the qr code above**
3. **Set up a “Bill pay” from your bank**



***Building a Community of Faith, Hope, and Love***

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