

“Gone Up with a Shout: Clap Your Hands”

The words of Psalm 47:1, *“Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy.”* remind us we have reason to shout and clap our hands, as we praise our Divine Parent for all God has done for us. As the earlier Poem about faithful Women revealed, it is a high calling for Mothers to nurture and love their children and to lead them into living the New Life in Christ and the New Relationship with God and all people both through their example and their words.

An unknown author shared these following words of a mother about her calling – her responsibilities for raising her children. She said, “If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper – not a homemaker. If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness – not godliness. Love leaves the dust in search of a child’s laugh. Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window. Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk. Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys. Love is present through the trials. Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive. Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.” **“Love is the key that opens salvation’s message to a child’s heart.”** “Before I became a mother, I took glory in my house of perfection. Now, I glory in God’s perfection of my child.”

The unknown author concluded, **“As a mother, there is much I must teach my child, but the greatest of all is love.”**

The Risen Jesus spent considerable time with his original disciples prior to his ascension, so he could mother them – open their minds and bless them for the time when they would be living the New Life in Christ and the New Relationship with our Divine Parent and everyone without him being bodily present with them. Following Jesus’ going up into the heavens, the disciples were filled with joy because of all that they had experienced with Jesus before and after his resurrection. Indeed, they felt like shouting out their praise of what God had done for them through the Only Son, Jesus! They went back to Jerusalem and continually worshiped and blessed God in the Temple and in their homes. **They were filled with joy but they were also apprehensive because their Risen Lord had left them behind.** It was a strange and scary time for they worried about whether they had been abandoned, and yet, hoped they would, indeed, receive the promised gift of God’s Holy Spirit to comfort, strengthen, and guide them in their living the New Life in Christ and New Relationship with God and others.

Perhaps in anxious anticipation of what was ahead of them, the disciples asked the Risen Jesus in verse 6 of our Reading in Acts, **“Lord, will you at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?”** Unfortunately, they still clung to the incorrect hope that Jesus would soon lead an army of angels against the Roman Empire and bring the Jews back to the type of glory which they believed existed during the reigns of King David and King Solomon. **Yet, their more basic concern was about what came next.** Would God’s Kingdom be immediately fulfilled and, if not, then what?

Mothers, fathers, grandparents, and other guardians of children are sometimes needed to guide and encourage their children, grandchildren, and charges through those tough types of questions. Such as, what types of activities in the present should the child be involved in to help her or him to have a better life in the future or what college or other training is best for the high school graduate or young adult, so they might have the best life possible.

Jesus understood his disciples needed such guidance and encouragement, so he responded to their question about when the Kingdom will come – the “What next?” by saying in verse 7, **“The times and occasions are set by my Father’s Own Authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be.”** In other words, Jesus told them God’s timing of the Fulfillment of the Kingdom of God was not something for them to be

concerned about. So, instead of answering their specific question, Christ responded to their underlying concern for their future. **Jesus went on to say in verse 8, “But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”** Their call was to live the New Life in Christ and the New Relationship with God and all people, as well as, to share the invitation to live the New Life and the New Relationship with everyone in the whole world!

However, just like the disciples, who watched as Jesus ascended, and the rest of the earliest Christians, we need to get our grounding – our firm foundation and support system in place. **That is why we gather frequently for our Worship Celebrations – our dance practices – our times of singing and shouting for joy the praises of our God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ!** Although the Son of God has returned to the Divine Parent, the fact he has been raised victorious over death and the power of evil, enables us to trust God’s Agape Love for us and that we have the gift of God’s Holy Spirit to comfort us, empower us, enable us, and guide us in our living and sharing the New Life in Christ and New Relationship with God and all people!

Next Sunday, Pentecost Sunday – Confirmation Sunday – Teacher Appreciation Sunday, we will celebrate God’s Gift of the Holy Spirit and how it moves among us. We will also focus how we use that gift by making our annual Personal Dedication Commitments of how we will be offering to use our spiritual gifts and abilities in the service of our God and Christ through Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ – how we will dance again in the year ahead of us. I urge you to consider your gifts of the Spirit and how you might use them during the next twelve months or so. Are you good at singing? Join the Chancel Voices. Are you good at teaching children or youth? Help teach our Younger Children’s or Youth Classes. Are you committed to service in our Worship such as Ushering, being a Worship Liturgy Leader, Preparing and Presenting the Worship PowerPoint Presentations and/or Preparing Communion? Sign up to do those tasks. Are you gifted with time and energy for our hospitality or fellowship activities or facilities and grounds upkeep? Indicate that on your Personal Dedication Commitment next Sunday.

As we consider our call to invite others, especially those who have not known a welcoming church like ours or those who have felt rejected by others claiming to follow Christ, it might be helpful to remember how our mother’s have loved, nurtured and comforted us. Further, it is good to follow such a loving mother’s example in the way we offer God’s Agape Love, Forgiveness, Invitation, and Welcome to everyone we meet.

Washington Irving reminds us of the loving and faithful mother’s example. He said, “A mother is the truest friend we have, when trials, heavy and sudden, fall upon us; when adversity takes the place of prosperity; when friends who rejoice with us in our sunshine, desert us when troubles thicken around us,” **“still will she cling to us, and endeavor by her kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and cause peace to return to our hearts.”**

The Risen Jesus Christ has ascended – returned to the Divine Parent but we have no reason for fear or worry about what we are called to do. **God fulfilled Jesus’ promise of the gift of God’s Holy Spirit.** Our Divine Parent and the Son of God, Jesus Christ, are with us in the Holy Spirit and we are comforted, empowered, and guided to live the New Life in Christ and the New Relationship with God and all other persons – to invite and welcome them into that New Life and that New Relationship. **Let this Good News lead us to shout for joy, to clap our hands, and to dance in our praise of God! Amen.**