

Message for Sunday, February 22, 2026

Title: Meditation

Scripture: Romas 12: 2; Philippians 4:8 NRSVue

WELCOME ANNOUNCEMENTS

Giving Options; Special offering is Human Relations Day; Volunteers needed for hospitality; Cookies needed for hospitality; Book Club is on Tuesday, March 3 at 10:30AM.

FELLOWSHIP OF LOVE SONG

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.

P: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust the Lord.

L: When we confess our transgressions, Christ's grace and forgiveness encompass us.

P: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust the Lord.

L: Open yourselves to the teachings and wisdom of the Spirit.

P: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust the Lord.

UNISON PRAYER

Gracious and Loving God, we seek the freedom found in the grace we receive through Christ Jesus.

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We seek to know more fully your great love. Turn us from our temptations.

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Inspire us to open ourselves to the way of Christ, that as we examine our lives and live out these days, we may become examples of your abundant love for all people.

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**May your Divine Spirit tend us as angels attended Jesus in the wilderness, and may we feel revived and sustained to follow Jesus.
Amen.**

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L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

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OFFERING SONG

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8 NRSVue

² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

L: The word of God, for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE: Meditation

The season of Lent has been an awkward season for me for the past 9 years of pastoring here at Mountain View. Before I was at this church I would never dream of missing a week of Lent, let alone two. Here traditionally the ladies of the church have covered the Sunday that is spring break, which they are doing again this year. I've also for the past several years paired up and took an additional week off right around the same time, which is happening this year as well. What this results in is a limited ability to do a specific sermon series during Lent.

Knowing this I decided this year that I was going to speak on various spiritual disciplines that are traditionally used during Lent or that you can use year-round. The purpose of this series will be to encourage you to try these disciplines if you have never done them before or to give you more depth to the experience of them to help you experience God differently this season.

Our first subject is one that the word is at least very familiar to all of us, meditation. In religious circles there are basically two broad forms of meditation. One is Eastern meditation, which follows in the tradition of Hinduism and Buddhism. The second is Western meditation, which is dominated by Jewish and Christian practice. There was a time of

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immaturity in my spiritual life where I would have told you to stay away from Eastern meditation, I will not tell you that now.

In some Christian circles, like some of the ones I went in during high school and college, would maintain that you cannot participate in Eastern meditation because of its very nature is against Christianity. Now I don't want to get lost talking about this too much because I want to focus more on us looking at Christian meditation, but theologically, I think there is something here I need to address, which will happen soon. Eastern meditation as practiced in Hinduism and Buddhism is primarily a meditative process where you are seeking to be at one with the universe, discover yourself, or reach nirvana. In its most basic action, Eastern meditation seeks for you to empty yourself of thought and feeling in order to experience that greater connectedness to the universe.

This process of emptying can be encouraged by using a mantra. If you've ever heard of saying "om" while meditating, that is using a mantra. The very nature of Eastern meditation seeking to empty one's self to experience the universal, is opposite of Christian meditation which is where we seek to fill ourselves with God. Before we go there I want to address the theological issue that I alluded to. You see when I was in college there were Pastors I heard that said you can't do Eastern meditation because if you empty yourself that leaves you up to satanic influences. Here's the problem with that. Theologically when you believe in Christ you cannot be possessed by anything else. The act of emptying yourself is not an act of demonic invitation, it can actually be a useful tool for some Christians.

Let us move on to Christian meditation. Christian meditation is about filling ourselves with an experience of God, usually through the use of scripture, focusing on what Jesus did in his life death and resurrection, or to think deeply about a passage or theology. This is distinct from the discipline practice of bible study in my opinion. Bible Study is in depth study for education and understanding. Meditation utilizes scripture to engage in a spiritual dialogue with God. Can you do research if you feel God wants you to look deeper at a verse, yes you can, I just believe there is a distinction between the two functions.

So, at its basic Christian meditation (as well as Jewish meditation) is about reflecting on what God has done or is doing and attempting to dialogue with God about this. We aren't going to pretend that we are all

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good at this type of thing are we? You see I am sometimes pretty good at meditating, but I'd often rather be studying. When I prepare my sermons and say, "I let it sit at the back of my head" really I'm talking about meditating. Allowing the scripture to speak and come alive in some way.

Our scriptures today both lend themselves to what Christian meditation is. In Philippians we are instructed to meditate on good things, while in Romans we are invited to "renew our minds...what is good and acceptable and perfect." With this verse though I want to temper the advice. You see when I hear "good and acceptable and perfect," that phrase has a tendency to over limit what I can meditate on. You all have heard me take issues with great theologians, John Wesley, John Calvin, and Martin Luther; I have issues with all of them over something. If I was staying to the scripture I wouldn't utilize their works to help me meditate and understand God because they are not perfect. Don't let perfect stand in the way of good enough. Sometimes reflecting on different ideas in the church or different ways of understanding God can lead to a deeper relationship with Christ for you.

There are a couple of different ways to meditate in our faith before we get to some suggestions of how to build a meditative practice in your life. I would like to show you some different ways we can meditate. First is Lectio Divina, this form of meditation is about slowly reading a scripture passage, ponder the meaning, and to spend time in silence so the words have time to speak to you. If you read sources on how to meditate you will find the majority of Christian sources will spend the majority of time talking about scripture. However, in Western Christianity this is not the only way to meditate. There is another form called Lectio Divina, which is reflection on art, icons, or nature. Basically, the practice of trying to see or hear what God is saying to you through other mediums.

If you want to start the process of practicing meditation there are a few suggestions that I can give you. First don't expect your first experience to be easy or something that you will just get the hang of. Our lives aren't very quiet and most of us aren't used to not being entertained or having something to do right in front of us. Your best friend in meditation is to start with a timer. Set yourself 5, 10, or 15 minutes, a small manageable amount of time for you to meditate. I suggest you don't use your phone but use a kitchen timer, especially if your phone is a distraction.

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Set yourself up someplace quiet and free from distractions. Now I am more flexible with this because I have found that I can get some great meditation when exercising while listening to music. It does not have to be silent; it has to work for you. This goes to two different things that can help with meditation, one is breathing exercise. When you first sit pay attention to your breathing, breath in, breath out, take your time before you start anything, basically quiet yourself down. Second is you can do a mantra, I know "Eastern meditation," but a mantra is simply a repeated phrase. If it helps you focus on God than use it, one of the best one's I can suggest is use Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God." If you find yourself getting distracted than repeat the phrase. If you find your mind filling with the things you need to do, write them down and set them aside.

The final suggestion I want to talk about is where to begin in scripture. DO NOT Start in Genesis! I suggest the Psalms, the Beatitudes in the Gospel, imagery in Revelation (remember your goal is not to study but to listen), and of course I would suggest Ecclesiastes. These areas of scripture lend themselves to listening rather than trying to discover. Or start with a theologian who you would read a paragraph or two, your goal isn't to read the book your goal is to listen to and experience God. Maybe starting with Henri Nouwen, a renown theologian, or C.S. Lewis. Ditrich Bonhoffer or Martin Luther King Jr. are also great options. Once you're used to the practice you can open up your experience to more theologians

Christian meditation is a practice, and I encourage all of you to dip your toes in. Most often, I find that when people don't feel they hear from God, its because they never stop long enough to listen, which is the purpose of meditation. This week, try this out at least once, I really don't believe you will regret it. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER/THE LORD'S PRAYER
SONG
BENEDICTION
SONG
GOODBYE