

Immanuel United Church  
October 10th, 2021  
Thanksgiving Sunday

Welcome

Call to Worship & Prayer:

*(Each group will repeat their opening phrase until they are directed to stop and join in the part in bold type.)*

The congregation: **Hungry, hungry, food, food.**  
Responsive Reader: **Warp. Weave. Work. Worry.**  
One: Lift. Carry. No rest.

All: **Stop!**  
One: No!

All: **Why not?**  
One:  
We need food.  
We need clothing.  
The work never ends.

All: **Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?**  
One: What?

All: **Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to their life?**  
One: But how shall we live?

All: **Seek first God's reign and God's righteousness!**  
One: And then?  
All: **God will give you the things you need!**  
One: Seek God's reign?  
All: **Seek God's reign.**  
One: Learn God's righteousness?  
All: **learn God's righteousness.**  
One: Stop and be?  
All: **Stop and be... with God!**

**Holy one, help us to be who you created us to be. Help us to stop — to be with you and to be with each other. Open our lives to your love and to the knowledge that you are with us, in this time and in the time to come. Amen!**

Hymn: VU 517 *Praise God for the Harvest*

**Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field,  
praise God for the people who gather their yield,  
the long hours of labour, the skills of a team,  
the patience of science, the power of machine.**

**Praise God for the harvest that comes from a far,  
from market and harbour, the sea and the shore:  
food packed and transported, and gathered and grown  
by God-given neighbours, unseen and unknown.**

**Praise God for the harvest that's quarried and mined,  
then sifted, and smelted, and shaped, and refined;  
for oil and for iron, for copper and coal,  
praise God, who in love has provided them all.**

**Praise God for the harvest of science and skill,  
the urge to discover, create, and fulfill:  
for dreams and inventions that promise to gain  
a future more hopeful, a world more humane.**

**Praise God for the harvest of mercy and love  
from leaders and peoples, who struggle and serve  
for fairness and kindness, that all may be led  
in freedom and safety, and all may be fed.**

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and

tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will God not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the others who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

### **Message: How do you “Manifest” faith?**

Show the official trailer (<https://youtu.be/I1hNAIzkQWY>) of the 2018 NBC show Manifest, trending on Netflix.



Have you watched the 2018 NBC TV show “Manifest”? My family was so excited when Season 3 of Manifest was finally added to Netflix this fall so that we could watch it as a family viewing night. There are 13 episodes in each season, so that made 13 nights in September of us sitting together, watching a show that fascinated and challenged us.

Manifest begins with 19 passengers on Flight 828 from Jamaica to New York, all of them with a different, complex backstory. The premise is that their plane completely vanishes enroute, only to reappear five-and-a-half years later, still in flight. For the passengers and crew, the only time that had passed was a normal flight, interrupted by some intense turbulence. For the people on the ground, Flight 828 has been missing for five years. Families and loved ones of the passengers have moved on entirely, for better or worse. The show is full of biblical references and themes. Through circumstances at the airport in Jamaica, the Stone family, including young fraternal twins, is split in two. Before that happens, the grandmother quotes her favourite Bible verse, Romans 8:28:

“We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to God’s purpose.”

The plane’s reappearance causes massive disruption for the passengers, their friends and families, and society, with many flashbacks that slowly unfold the story. The passengers also experience what they call “callings”- internal promptings — voices and visions — which urge and ultimately propel them to engage with other passengers they

have not met before, and together, move a little deeper into the greater mystery in each episode.

From the first episode to the last one in season three, Min-Goo and I have immensely enjoyed the show — especially paying attention to what the characters call “faith”. (It’s a job hazard we share in common!) *Manifest* plays on the juxtaposition of faith versus science. Michaela and Ben represent opposite sides: Michaela, an NYPD detective, believes that faith explains the mystery of the flight’s disappearance and return and the inexplicable things that are happening to them, including the voices they hear that compel them to act. Ben, mathematician, a man of science, on the other hand, is convinced that there must be an earthbound explanation for everything. Is this an experience, a phenomenon that can be explained by science, by the laws of physics? Is this an extraterrestrial event, or is there some type of divine intervention going on here?

Michaela becomes the believer, and Ben becomes the skeptic. Ben’s background as a mathematician drives him to pursue the numbers in search of answers. Michaela, who once drew personal significance from her mother’s faith but has lost her own faith, begins to believe again.

Over all, as someone who watched and completed the entire series so far, (I am looking forward to the next three seasons in the future!) I see who the writer is in his own story. The creator and director, Jeff Rake, says in an interview, “As a Jewish writer, I’m inspired by Jewish themes of redemption, second chances, and *tikkun olam*.” The phrase *Tikkun Olam*, translated as ‘repairing the world’, is a common phrase amongst liberal Jewish people that reinforces the commitment to social justice. It is the belief that we need to be responsible not only for our own and our family’s moral, spiritual, and material welfare, but also for the welfare of society, the whole community on earth, including the responsibility for all creation in the world. That’s *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, embracing the whole rather than our individual needs, living the intention of compassion, generosity and loving-kindness.

I like to find the element of faith in a movie or TV show and understand how it is narrated and depicted to the general audience. In *Manifest*, faith is manifested as something that people are called to because there is “extra” to explain and explore beyond the domain of science. Supernatural. Extraterrestrial. Science primarily works with the earth-bound evidence that can be materialized, measurable and repeatable in human control. On the contrary, faith requires us to “leap” to believe; leap to put ourselves forward even if in such moments we cannot grasp the meaning of the action and the situation, how it is unfolding, how everything is connected; even if we do not have answers, trusting that all things work for good in God. Faith is blind.

It is really up to each of us how to understand faith, how we make sense of it to ourselves and navigate our world and life with it. But I wonder if the conventional perception of faith, (believing in the existence and the work of a supernatural God) might cause a crisis of faith, because there is such a gap between believing “all things work for good” and the real trauma that happens in our lives. Bad things still happen in good people’s lives.

Nobel-winning physicist Niels Bohr said, in 1958, “The common aim of all science is the gradual removal of prejudices.”

What is the common aim of faith? I would like to suggest that the aim of faith is the gradual removal of fear. Faith is the confidence and courage that our mind, body, spirit generate when we are able to move more deeply into the truth, leaving behind our fears, the shadows we try to avoid, all the things we detour around rather than confront. Faith is trusting our place in relationship to the world — the universe — with hope and confidence that we can face and vanquish our fears with integrity.

Thus faith, like science, essentially entails the process of gradually removing prejudices about ourselves, others, about God’s people and even God.

I would like to sing a song of faith, the faith that nurtures our sense of companionship in the world. There are times in our lives when we feel there’s only me; To do a task, I have to put myself forward — courage, leadership, skills, knowledge need to come from within myself. In that moment, we are assured that we are not alone. Faith as companionship teaches that it’s not just me versus the world, but God who is within me, God who binds us as friends, God who opens our eyes to see beyond our fears, God who changes us, is with us and accompanies us like light through a kaleidoscope that spreads through everything and spins with everyone in God’s illuminated circle. I believe this is what Jesus tells his disciples in today’s reading, “Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” Or “What will we drink?” Or “What will we wear?... But strive first for the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Today, how is your faith manifested? We are living in hard times; faith is not just an accessory, but a necessity. On this Thanksgiving Sunday, I pray that the gift of faith be our gentle companion; help us move deeper than fears and worries; strengthen us to *tikkun olam*, restore the world to be hospitable for all creation.

Hymn: VU 520 *We Plough the Fields*

Prayers of the People (written by Ted Dodd):

"In radical gratitude,  
the vicious dissatisfaction with life is broken.  
We begin to recognize what we have rather than what we don't...  
we awaken to another way of being,  
another kind of economy,  
the great economy of grace  
in which each person is of infinite value and worth."

*Mary Jo Leddy, Radical Gratitude*

Let it all go  
all the jostling and jousting of this day  
Let it all go  
all the cares and concerns of today  
Let it all go  
all the mistakes and self-doubt  
Let it all go  
all the worries and fears  
Let it all go  
all the pain and suffering of this world.

And breathe in  
blessing  
peace  
compassion  
grace  
joy  
gratitude

Let it all go  
all the happiness hoarded  
Let it all go  
all the good reserved  
Let it all go  
all the beauty stockpiled  
Let it all go  
all the hope hidden  
Let it all go

all the love bridled

And let  
good  
beauty  
hope  
depth  
justice  
love  
be abundant.

Hymn: MV 182 *Grateful*

<https://youtu.be/4cNT8NSG2QE>

Commissioning and Benediction:

**With heart and hands and voices,  
we thank God for wondrous things.  
We go from here so filled with the love of God  
that all the world feels the welcome of it.  
For the blessing and the love and the peace of God  
goes with us, now and evermore. Amen.**