

# Worship Service

BY BRUCE GILLETTE AND  
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## *A Prayer for Reflection before Worship*

Eternal God, we confess that we live very individual lives.

We want to follow our own paths in life.

We want to make it on our own.

We want to find our own happiness.

We want to live by our own rules.

O Lord, even in our faith, we tend to think in very individual terms.

We talk about a personal relationship with you as if it is just about  
“you and me.”

We are tempted to think that faith is what we do in church on Sunday mornings.

Yet you show us a different way.

For in your word you teach us ethics.

You show us what it means to live in a community of faith.

You call us to care for the poor and those in need.

You remind us again and again that a living faith includes faithful actions and deeds.

Help us to live in this world in joyful obedience to you,  
out of gratitude for all that you have done for us,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## *Call to Worship* (based on James 4:8, 10)

Draw near to God,  
and God will draw near to you.

**Humble yourselves before the Lord,  
and God will exalt you.**

O Lord, help us through our worship  
to draw closer to you.

**Help us to be humble  
and to seek your way.**

## *Gathering Hymn*

“Be Doers of the Word of God”<sup>1</sup>

Be doers of the word of God,  
not simply those who hear.  
Be ones who look into God’s word,  
obey, and persevere.  
Be quick to listen, slow to speak,  
and slow to anger, too.  
Put wrath aside; instead, be meek  
and let God work in you.

Religion that is undefiled,  
religion that is pure  
will reach to help the orphaned child  
and welcome all the poor.  
If people come here poorly dressed,  
to judge them is a sin.  
The rich aren’t better than the rest;  
God welcomes poor ones in.

O Christ, you save us by God’s grace  
from having to obey.  
Then freed to love, we can embrace  
a life that seeks your way.  
May we be doers of the word;  
may faith shine through our deeds;  
and as we seek to trust in God,  
may ethics follow creeds.

*Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (2003)*

*Tune: ELLACOMBE*

## *Words of Greeting*

We welcome you to this time of worship in the name of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, who draws us, through his Body, the Church, into friendship with God and with one another. In this time of worship, let us still our minds and claim the divine promise: “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10).

## *Discipline of Silence*

### *Call to Confession*

The letter of James promises, "Blessed is anyone who endures temptation" (1:12). Yet we know that too often we give in to temptation and do what is wrong. Let us confess our sins together before God.

### *Unison Prayer of Confession*

O God, we want to have our cake and eat it, too:  
we want to be a friend of the world and still be your friend.

Yet, Jesus taught us: "No one can serve two masters."

Give us strength and courage to get our priorities straight:  
help us to seek your kingdom first.

Help us to live faithfully and joyfully in the world,  
and to be friends with the people you call us to serve.

Help us also to remember that our best relationship  
is the one we have with you,

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *Assurance of Forgiveness*

"The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy" (James 3:17). In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, and we are given a new way to live. Let us accept God's grace, and live new lives of faith, obedience, and joy.

### *Sharing the Peace*

"A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace." (James 3:18)

**Let us make peace, by sharing the peace of Christ with one another.**

The peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

### *Prayer for Illumination*

Loving God, you teach us that if we are lacking in wisdom,  
we should turn to you and ask for what we need,  
because you give to all generously and ungrudgingly.

We know that we have so much to learn about your way;  
open wide your word to us,

and give us wisdom to understand the things you want to teach us.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Responsive Reading: Psalm 1*

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
**or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;**  
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,  
**and on his law they meditate day and night.**

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither.

**In all that they do, they prosper.**

The wicked are not so, **but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

**nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;**

for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,

**but the way of the wicked will perish.**

*Gospel Reading: Mark 9:30-37*

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

*New Testament Reading: James 3:13-4:8a*

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you

covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, "God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

*Sermon: "Who Is Wise and Understanding among You?"<sup>2</sup>*

*Hymn of Response:*

"O Lord, May All We Say and Do"

O Lord, may all we say and do  
reflect the faith we have in you;  
for faith is meant to change the way  
we live our lives from day to day.

God, may we open wide the door  
and welcome people who are poor;  
and may we share with them our bread,  
for faith without good works is dead.

Just as a spark can start a fire,  
our words can damage or inspire;  
we pray for wisdom from above  
to speak and act in gentle love.

May we not covet earthly things  
or seek the riches this world brings;  
may we not boast of all our plans,  
for, Lord, our lives are in your hands.

O Lord, possessions rust away,  
but your love fills us every day;  
through prayer and service in your name,  
may we live out the faith we claim.

*Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (2012)*

*Tune: TALLIS'S CANON*

*(pp. 60-61 of this volume)*

*Litany of Thanksgiving*

O God, we thank you this day for Christians  
who seek to live out their faith in their everyday lives.

**We know that we cannot earn your love,  
but we can respond to your love.**

**You call us to live holy lives  
out of gratitude for all that you have done for us.**

We thank you for people who find joy in the midst of trials and  
difficulties:

**for the hospital patient who gives hope and inspiration to the  
visitor,**

**for the homeless person who teaches the social worker the meaning  
of faith,**

**for the family that prays together in the face of death.**

We thank you for those who endure temptation:

**for the young person who says “no” to a friend who wants to shoplift,  
for the office worker who refuses to join in negative conversation,  
for the company executive who puts justice before profits.**

We thank you for those who are ever-generous in giving to others:

**for the child who puts her allowance in the church’s mission  
offering,**

**for the young adult at a first job who dares to tithe his new income,  
for the neighbor who gets up at four in the morning to shovel his  
elderly neighbor’s sidewalk.**

We thank you for those who are quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to  
anger:

**for couples who listen to each other in love,**

**for people who count to ten before speaking their minds and then  
speak gently,**

**for people who remain calm and loving when others’ tempers flare.**

We thank you for people who live out their faith by caring for orphans,  
widows and others in need:

**for foster parents and adoptive parents,**

**for those who seek to work for peace and justice**

**so that fewer people will be orphaned and widowed,**

**for those who share a cup of coffee with a lonely neighbor,**

**for those who visit in nursing homes.**

We thank you for people who are doers of the word and not hearers only.  
**O God, may we be counted among them.**  
**Help us to hear your word and to find joy in doing what you call us to do.**  
**May we live our lives in thankful obedience. Amen.**

## *Offering*

### *Prayer of Dedication after the Offering*

Loving God, you are so generous with us,  
 and you call us to be generous in sharing your love with others.  
 Accept these tithes and offerings that we bring to you:  
 may they help those who lack daily food;  
 may they give warmth and shelter to those in need;  
 May our giving encourage in us a living and generous faith;  
 may our daily living be an offering of praise. Amen.

### *Sending Out (based on James 4:13-15)*

In James we read that we should not say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money."

**For we do not know what tomorrow will bring.**

Instead we should say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this and that."

**Our lives are in your hands, O Lord.**

**Be with us, guide us, and show us your way throughout each day.  
 Amen.**

## **NOTES**

1 Text of *Be Doers of the Word of God*, copyright © 2003 Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved. Used by permission. This hymn appears in Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, *Songs of Grace: New Hymns for God and Neighbor* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2009), 69. The first two verses are based on phrases in James 1:19-2:7.

2 The sermon is a reflection on "the wisdom from above" (James 3:17) that God generously gives to all those who ask in humility and grateful obedience to Jesus Christ.



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