



**“AS THE WORLD TURNS”**  
**SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 14: 1-12**  
**GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NC**  
**September 13, 2020, Live Streamed**  
The Rev. Dr. Marcia W. Mount Shoop, The Rev. Dr. Richard Coble,  
and The Rev. Samantha Gonzalez-Block

**CLIP01 (2:26)**

MMS: (emotional, with tissues) Wait, go back! I want to see what happens.

RC: Yea, what happens with Nicholas? (in background, you see a huge Krispy Kreme box and a 6 pack of Diet Coke)

SGB: Yea, Laura was just getting ready to say something important! (looks closely at the screen and then spots donuts) Richard, why do you have that huge pack of doughnuts? And, is that Diet Coke?

RC (suspicious): What do you mean? (dramatic pause) These are my communion elements?

SGB: No! Richard! Doughnuts?! Coke?! No, not for communion! Where's your gluten free, nut free bread? (holds up a loaf of fresh baked bread)

RC: Samantha, how dare you question my communion elements!

MMS: Um, Guys?

SGB: How dare you bring doughnuts to this worship service! And look at them, they're not even....local!

**OMINOUS MUSIC** (Everyone looks shocked!)

MMS: Samantha! Richard!

RRC: (Hiding the Krispy Kreme box) Can't you see? I'm doing the best I can, Samantha! Not everyone can live the perfect, fresh baked bread life that you have!

SGB: Perfect! Ha! You have no idea what I had to sacrifice to make this bread, Richard! Can't you see, (crying) I just wanted some semblance of our worship before the pandemic! Why do you have to judge everything I do!

RRC: Oh, here come the tears, and I'm that bad guy again. That is classic Sam...

MMS: Enough! Enough of this soap opera! You guys – none of this sounds like this Eucharistic life!

RRC: You mean last year's theme? I thought we were doing soap operas this year. We were just practicing!

SGB: Yea, You know, “as the world turns.” We’re pretty far away from September 2019!

RRC: Didn’t we say we were going to have the Lord’s supper every Sunday last year? We haven’t had communion since, what, Easter?

SGB: That’s actually why I made this bread. I know it’s not the same, but I just wanted a taste of what communion felt like last year, with our community gathered around the table.

RRC: The world has changed so much, and it feels like we are all so distant from our last Palooza, when we would gather in the sanctuary together.

MMS: But the way we’re called to live out our faith in this pandemic is exactly what we were talking about last year - Eucharist is not just about gathering around the Communion table. There really is something eucharistic about living life faithfully as the world turns! Soap operas can seem kinda ridiculous sometimes, but somewhere in all the drama there is something true about how intense and challenging life can be. How we make meaning together out of this life matters--and, as people of faith, how we create community in Christ’s name matters.

SGB: *Living life Eucharistically as the world turns....*This reminds me of what Paul was saying to the church in Rome. There were huge disagreements about what to eat as part of worship. But Paul said that those differences weren’t what worship was about.

RRC: Paul says, “Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also, those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.”

MMS: Right! Eucharist is about a disposition towards God. Not about Communion being in the sanctuary. Or even about using a certain kind of bread!

SGB: So, Richard, if doughnuts are what you need...

RRC: And if a bit of nostalgia is what you need...

MMS: If God is at the center of why and how we do things, either way we can live the Eucharistic life.

RRC: Ok, problem solved! I guess we can all do what we want to do. Christianity will adapt! Good sermon everyone!

MMS: Hold on a minute, Richard. Did you really think it was that simple?! (cut to next clip)

#### CLIP02 (1:36)

(Richard reading and looking out the window. MMS and SGB look disgusted about what they were watching in the clip)

MMS: Well that was excruciating! You know Nancy and Chris remind me, there are some ways of adapting that aren't that great!

SGB: You know when I watch that clip, I remember that the good old days were not that good.

MMS: Absolutely, there is a ton to unpack. Gender roles and stereotypes... Christianity might be adaptive, but it can certainly adapt in some dangerous ways, right Richard? Richard!

RRC: uh huh.

MMS: (yelling!) Richard, are you listening?

RRC: Hmm? Did you say something? I can (pause) get lost in my thoughts.

MMS: I feel like you are not listening.

RRC: Oh Marcia, don't feel that way. Are you all still doing the sermon? I thought we were done. Christianity adapts! Thanks be to God? (Pause) Of course. I'm listening to you. Carry on!

SGB: Come on, Richard. Stay with us! It is not just about adapting. Being adaptable can be positive, but when Christianity becomes a tool of the powerful, it can really get distorted.

MMS: That's true. History shows us the ways Christianity adapting to things like sexism and white supremacy causes real harm--Christianity has been a tool for empire, control and violence. We can even see that capacity causing harm today.

SGB: Yeah. Richard don't go too far down the soap opera rabbit hole. Snap out of it!

RRC: Whew! That was weird! I lost myself c. 1955 for a minute. I guess I really am becoming a method actor after all.

(MMS and SGB shake their heads)

MMS: Richard, now that you're back. You hear what we're saying, right?! Christianity isn't just adaptive!

RRC: Yes! The table is always about transformation--and that healing impact can get lost when we focus too much on tradition.

SGB: But Grace Covenant isn't a church that clings to tradition, right?

MMS: Yes and no. We certainly are a low anxiety church, but we continue to be a white-dominant church and that means we operate in certain ways - in white ways.

RRC: Remember at the end of the passage where Paul mentions accountability - It's not just adaptability for its own sake.

SGB: That's right. Paul really pushes against our passing judgement on the different ways others practice their faith. What is essential is the intention behind what we do - to honor the Lord.

MMS: Our intentions are essential, but we also have to account for the impact of our practices. So we don't lose ourselves in "As the World Turns."

RRC: For Paul, the church is more than a place. The church is more than a set of laws and practices. The church is adaptive because in every time and place we must continue to reimagine how we can do the hard and sacred work of breaking down systems of power that keep us from one another - that keep us from God.

SGB: Seems easy enough, don't you think?

RRC: I'll say! Do everything always to honor God. Finally, sermon done!

RRC and SGB: Thanks be to -

MMS: Not so fast!. You all don't really think we get off that easy, do you?!

### CLIP03 (1:21)

(everyone watching the clip with a concerned look on their face)

RRC: She seems really upset--and then she just wants to find someone else to blame and then destroy them. What a terrible way to live!

SGB: Yeah, just IMAGINE someone with lots of money and power always blaming other people and always looking for ways to destroy people that disagree with them--imagine if someone like that was in charge!

**OMINOUS MUSIC** (Everyone has a scared look on our face and then we all look at each other and the look becomes quizzical).

MMS: Wait a minute! That's not a soap opera, that's our country right now. And America has a history of abuse of power--and the church got too cozy with that kind of power.

RRC: You're right--look at how so many Christians believed enslaving people was ok and even used the Bible to justify it.

SGB: And that includes Presbyterians! Did you all know Presbyterians were the mainline denomination to own the second largest number of enslaved people during chattel slavery? Second only to the Episcopal church.

MMS: Christianity's capacity to adapt to different cultures and different contexts turns violent when it loses contact with how Jesus was and is in relationship to the powers

and principalities. Paul is trying to warn the Roman church about what can happen when one's is no longer centered in Christ's prophetic relationship to power.

RRC: Paul promises that, "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God." (go walk to window)

SGB: The hard question is how to avoid the church losing its way--how to avoid the church being co-opted to maintain the status quo. How does the church protect itself against that kind of adaptation?

RRC: (walking to window: slipping back in soap opera character) We have choices! I have choices! I just don't know what they are sometimes! I won't let anyone destroy everything I've worked so hard for.

### OMINOUS MUSIC

SGB: Richard, Richard! I think you're slipping back into soap opera land. Can you hear me? Can you see me? Richard?

MMS: Stay with us, Richard! (MMS looks at SGB) This pandemic is really starting to get to him!

RRC: (shakes his head) Whew! Thanks, you all! I think I was stuck c.1990 for a minute. You all were both wearing shoulder pads. It was weird.

MMS: It's ok, Richard. These are difficult times. The stress is real! But part of why these times are so hard is because our country has a dysfunctional and abusive relationship with power.

SGB: Yeah, remember power hoarding and paternalism are two of the characteristics of white supremacy culture. And those things have really showed up in the way the church and faith have been used to justify harm.

RRC: It's a difficult reality to acknowledge, but being Christian in America has made people more likely to hold onto the culture of white supremacy than for people who are not Christian. There's a new book about it. "White Too Long" by Robert Jones--we read another one of his books at GCPC a couple of years ago. In his new book, Jones uses 15 questions to develop what he calls a "racism index" — to assess attitudes toward white supremacy and toward Black people.

SGB: What Jones finds out in his polling of white Christians across denominations and contexts is that, "The more racist attitudes a person holds, the more likely he or she is to identify as a white Christian." That's true across the board--for those who go to church a lot and for those who go to church just every once in a while.

MMS: It's true across geography. It's true for white evangelicals, mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics.

RRC: Grace Covenant, this makes our work together all the more crucial. If we truly want to live eucharistically, if we truly want to follow Jesus, we have to contend with the disturbing possibility that white supremacy is baked into the roots of what it means to be white and Christian in the United States.

MMS: Healing that disease in ourselves and in our church is a choice--but it's more than that, it is God's call to us. The integrity of our faith depends on it. So, in that way--it's not a choice at all. It is a necessity. Christianity in America is at a crossroads and Grace Covenant is right there, facing down the reckoning that confronts us. Are we going to follow Jesus or are we going to be co-opted by those who want to keep the choke hold of white supremacy on our country and on our faith?

SGB: Following Jesus means his critique of power becomes second nature to us--it's how we move around the world, it's how we make meaning together.

RRC: Following Jesus means we make choices every day to stake our lives on the truth that the Eucharist teaches us again and again.

MMS: Until our brokenness is laid bare...

RRC: ... our community can't heal.

SGB: And until we fully trust in God's revolutionary love to transform us...

MMS: ...the soul of our nation and our souls as people are faith are in jeopardy.

RRC: This Fall, we take another step together to follow in Jesus' footsteps. We will take a critical look at how our faith lives and breathes "As the World Turns." Together we'll learn anew what it means that Jesus leads us into the very heart of the struggle for freedom.

SGB: He leads us into the truth of the way freedom really works. No one is free until everyone is free.

MMS: He leads us to a new way of life--a way of life none of us has ever been able to fully discover in this country-- a way of life that heals old wounds--the wounds of our ancestors, the wounds that have diminished and trivialized and distorted who the church is in the world.

RRC: Jesus is a disrupter.

SGB: Jesus is a truth teller.

MMS: Jesus is a healer.

RRC: And if this pandemic has taught us one thing, it's that Jesus hits his stride when the trappings of religion fall away.

SGB: Maybe this pandemic has finally been the reckoning that Christianity in America needed.

MMS: Maybe we're finally starting to taste and see what Eucharist is really about.

SGB: Paul says, "We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

**Will go to more vertical look here.**

MMS: And Jesus says, "Come to me all you who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Siblings in Christ, this is the joyful feast of the people of God. Christ's Table extends East and West and North and South.

RRC: Into our kitchens and living rooms and dining rooms.

SGB: Into our complicated lives, into our broken relationships.

MMS: Into our betrayal of Jesus' ways, into our need for Christ's healing.

RRC: Eucharist is gratitude for God's steadfast love--a love that abides with us "As the World Turns."

SGB: Eucharist is a way of life that has God at the center--a love that gives us courage "As the World Turns."

MMS: Eucharist is transformation--a love that gives us hope "As the World Turns."

RRC: And we're learning that Eucharist is disruption of the status quo.

SGB: Eucharist is disruption of the idolatries we've mistaken for God.

MMS: Eucharist is disruption of the habits that harm and hold us captive to cycles of rearming.

RRC: Grace Covenant, as we go to our kitchens, to our pantries to find our elements for this sacred meal together, notice what Jesus' disruption feels like. The bread you break can be a cracker, a waffle, or even a donut.

SGB: You can fill your cup with water or orange juice or tea. Notice the sensations of things shifting.

MMS: Notice what it feels like that the path you walk to Christ's table is a different one--unique to your context and, at the same time, connected to the Body of Christ through the mystery of the Holy Spirit. Notice the transformation of the familiar--and the power of God's love to meet us where we are for the healing of the world.

SGB: As Jeff plays, take a few minutes to gather what you need for this joyful feast of Christ's healing love. Bring your elements back to the screen so we can celebrate Communion. When you come back, you will see some familiar faces: the Kominski family and Marta Alcala-Williams with us from their homes, as a reminder that we are all gathered around this table together. When you hear the music stop, it will be time to pray our Great Prayer of Thanksgiving before we share this meal.

(MUSIC while everyone goes and gets stuff)  
(go back to other google doc!)

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving and Lord's Prayer (Kominskis)

Words of Institution and Communion of the People

MMS: Hold your bread high and hear again the story that transforms our lives. On the night our Lord Jesus Christ was to be arrested by the powers who wanted to silence him, he called his friends to an upstairs room to speak truth to them about betrayal and about brokenness, about love and liberation. After blessing the bread, he broke it--and showing it to his chosen family, he said "this is my body, broken for you. Take. Eat. And do this re-membering me."

RRC: Hold your cup high. After the meal Jesus took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood for the forgiveness of sins. Drink it. All of you. And do this remembering me.

SGB: Hold your bread and your cup high. Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do show forth the saving power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Until He comes again. These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

(everyone eats)

Prayer after Communion (Marta)

Nancy and her husband discuss Thanksgiving dinner <https://youtu.be/RoW9dhXYq4Q>

Link to As the World Turns openings: <https://youtu.be/bmLQa63kQCI>

Lucinda clips <https://youtu.be/PHarTCDuAG4>

Robert Jones, "White Too Long"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/18/books/review/white-too-long-robert-p-jones.html>