

# *Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners!*

J. Wilbur Chapman (1910)

*Old Orchard Church*

*Sixth Sunday of Easter*

*May 13, 2012 — 10:15 to 11:50 a.m.*

## **Refrain:**

Hallelujah! what a Savior! Hallelujah! what a friend!  
Saving, helping, keeping, loving, He is with me to the end.



We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

**Credits:** "Cover Art: The Incredulity of St. Thomas. Woodcut. Albrecht Dürer (1511).

*I will declare your name to my brothers;  
in the congregation I will praise you.*

*Psalm 22:22*

# *Celebrating the Immortal Jesus as the Resurrection Community of Praise and Prayer*

**Praise the Lord!**  
**Easter morning was the first day of a new creation!**  
**Christ is risen, Death has been conquered!**  
**All who have bowed before Jesus,**  
**Who trust in the power of his dying**  
**To be the death of their guilt,**  
**Are made children of the resurrection,**  
**Partakers of an indestructible life!**

**Whoever has tasted truly**  
**Of the powers of the age to come,**  
**Sings from the heart:**  
**Refrains of relief, carols of gladness!**

**The Pleasure of all that is to come**  
**Tunes our tongue,**  
**And our inward joys arise**  
**And turn into a song!**  
**Praise the Lord!**



## *Today's Scripture*

**Old Testament Lesson:** Ezra 3:8-13  
**New Testament Lesson:** Acts 10:1-16

## *The Ministry of the Word*

Teaching of the People of God:  
A Time for Open Praise

## *Resurrection and Prayer*

The story is quite clear: in the garden at Gethsemane the Father said “No” to his Son’s prayer to be rescued from the horrific agony of the atoning cross. But three days later, in the cemetery garden where Jesus’ dead body had been buried, God raised his Son to a life-beyond-death existence, thereby revealing that his “No” to the Son’s prayer for help was really a “Yes—but not that way.” And so, the great messianic Psalm 22 proclaims triumphantly concerning the Father’s response to his Son’s prayer:

**For he has not despised or disdained  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.** (Psalm 22:24)

The resurrection of Jesus, therefore, becomes the Great Guarantee that God hears our prayers and will not, finally, hand us over to anything that would ruin us. God rescued his Son not around the cross but through it.

I’ve always regarded myself as among the “O ye of midget-faith” when it comes to prayer, but I’m finding that the older I get, the more I want to pray and the more I do pray. Yet the struggle remains what it always has been for me: my faith heats up when I quite easily imagine what God **could** do in my life and in the lives of others I pray for and in the church and in the world, given his sovereign power over things. But then it dawns on me that so many times he hasn’t granted what I and so many others have asked for so how can I be confident that my prayers will affect what he **will** do now in this or that situation? I start wondering—and my jets start cooling: the childlike expectation of receiving something good and the excitement over “watching the Lord work” evaporates. I keep praying, but the confidence that God will really act into the situation has absconded. How can I believe God for something really specific I pray for when time and again he has demonstrated that his ways are above me, past finding out?

But if it’s true that the resurrection of the Son, in some deep and powerful way, marks the formal beginning of the fulfillment of the promise of the Ancient of Days, “**Behold, I am making all things new**” (Revelation 21:5), then I must pray on and put my confidence not in the number of specific prayers God answers for me—which easily turns into a “he loves me, he loves me not” kind of thing—but in God’s actual desire and determination to make all things new. He has set the resurrected Christ before you and me as the first installment of a New Creation. And everywhere in the world he’s at work. He’s serious about what he has promised us. And when we contemplate that, we will find—even though the devil uses our unanswered prayers to douse it—the fire of faith and confidence in God heating up again.

--Ron Lutjens